

Haehnle Sanctuary News



Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary

Owned By Michigan Audubon

Maintained and Operated by The Jackson Audubon Society

Preserving and Protecting our Natural World

Spring 2021



Honey Bees A Success At Haehnle

By Dr. Meghan Milbrath

The honey bees at Haehnle enjoyed a strong season and made a lot of honey last year.

Michigan bees make a lot more honey when we have good rain. More water for plants means that they can spare the moisture to make nectar (which the bees can collect and turn into honey!).

The wet winter and spring meant that a lot of plants were not stressed for water and made a lot of nectar to attract the bees and other pollinators (this is also why wetlands are really important for pollinators - the flowers there do not get as drought stressed).

While we beekeepers like rain overall, it is also really important that we have lots of dry days for foraging. Bees prefer hot dry weather for flying, and dry weather to dry down the nectar into honey.

Some of the most important nectar plants only bloom for a short period. It is really important that it is dry during that time so the bees can get all the nectar before it is washed away.

The black locust tree is one such plant. Its flowers are shaped in such a way that their nectar can be easily stripped away during hard rains.

Black locust usually blooms the first week in June, which can be a very rainy time. Last year was one of the few years when we had great weather during the black locust bloom, and the bees were able to store a lot of lovely black locust honey.



Dr Meghan Milbrath, Entomologist at MSU and Coordinator of Michigan Pollinator Initiative, is shown working with her beehives at Haehnle.

The black locust tree, like a lot of plants that produce a lot of nectar for bees, has a complex relationship with the restoration at Haehnle. Because it is a nitrogen fixing plant, it can change the soil and disrupt conservation efforts to restore land to ecosystems like oak savannas and prairies.

It is important to make sure that any project that removes flowering trees, shrubs, or invasive flowering plants, replants the area with flowers to support the loss of pollinator food.

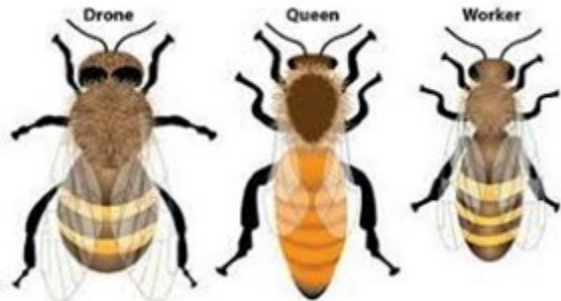
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Haehnle Honey Bees (continued)

Many native trees already at Haehnle provide flowers for pollinators. In addition, the Prairie Restoration Project has increased native plant species and, expanded the food supply for honeybees and other pollinators.

The Haehnle bees were featured in a PBS special this year! <https://www.pbs.org/video/blm-meadworks-mbctwk/> They took some drone shots which are really beautiful

We have had a few nice days already in 2021, and the bees have been able to take a spring cleansing flight. It looks like we had great survival again this winter (so far!), and are looking forward to another good year at this lovely place.



A member of the prescribed burn crew is guarding the hives to make sure fire does not jump the burn break and endanger the them. The native prairie plants are a good source of pollen for the bees and require scheduled burns to help them flourish, and to control invasive species.

Retirees Rock The Wooster Grassland Barrier Project!

Phil Clark is the organizer of the weekly work crew at Haehnle. As with many of their projects, *his article* illustrates all the time spent in planning, designing and acquiring the materials required prior to the actual work on a project.



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Retirees Rock The Wooster Grassland Barrier Project!

The Wooster Road Grassland Barrier Project came about because left-over party trash was found there on a regular basis, as well as signs of illegal ATV traffic accessing the grasslands. On further inspection it was obvious that the utility poles and railroad ties placed as parking lot boundaries had sunk and rotted and were no longer doing the job..

I decided to call Consumers Energy to see what they did with their old, out-of-service utility poles. That first call was pretty short: "Sorry. Due to liability because the poles are filled with creosote, we cannot give them out any more." I tried to explain they were just going to be used as a parking lot barrier. Well that didn't go well. "Thank you for your time and have a good day!" Always be nice!

A month went by and there were signs of more parties - that we were not invited to !- and they left their trash behind. So I called Consumers again getting someone new but, once more, I was shut down. Then I sent two emails to the company and even tried Amtrak, but no results. Finally, after eight or ten calls, I talked with someone in the Flint area [Consumers] who was very helpful and transferred me to a department in Jackson County. I again explained how we were going to use the utility poles, only to be told, "No poles." I kept explaining why we needed the old utility poles, what was happening at the Wooster Road Grassland, a part of the Phyllis Haenhle Audubon Sanctuary

When I mentioned that Gary Siegrist is Chair of the Sanctuary Committee, click, a connection was made! The person I was talking with had worked with Gary on the Cabernet and Cranes Project. That's when the phone call took another direction and I was asked "You're a non-profit?" Yes! "Well let me make a couple of calls and I'll get back to you." After ten more back and forth phone calls between July and September, 2020, I was able to procure some old, out-of-service utility poles.

Apparently the jobsite location on Wooster Road was lost in our many phone conversations. One day when I was at the Seymour Road west side parking lot cutting invasives, two big Consumers trucks rolled in. I thought they were there on a lunch break. But one truck backed up in the most south west area of the west side parking lot; extended the trucks outrigger pads, and unloaded ten partial poles ranging in length from 8 feet to 12 feet.



These old, rotted posts had seen better days and were no longer barriers to anyone.

Ultimately, we used Paul's skidster to load the poles onto Paul's trailer, moved them to Wooster Road, attached Paul's new log tong with a chain to the trailer hitch of my truck, and we pulled the poles off Paul's trailer. Once the poles were delivered Jim, Paul and I met up many times before the actual construction of the barrier.

First, we had to figure out the best design and how to build it. Once this was decided we had to lay out the post placement. Another day we cut down Sassafras trees and prepared them for use as top rails of the barrier. Then I contacted Miss Dig to verify the location was free of utilities.

As the installation day approached, I was getting nervous with no word from Miss Dig. Luckily, two days before, we received confirmation that our jobsite was clear and we were good to go.

Installation day was Saturday, October 24, 2020. We planned for a small crew to limit any accidents. Paul rented an 18-inch auger attachment for his bobcat. I met at Paul's house at 8am and hooked up his trailer to my truck. Paul had Mighty Bob (his bobcat) on his other trailer hooked to his truck. and off we went.

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Wooster Barrier Project Continued

We met Jim Rossman at 8:30am at the Wooster Road grassland to trim the utility poles and get things laid out, so when our crew arrived they could hit the ground running. After clearing the nails and bolts from the poles, we trimmed the poles down. Paul and his Mighty Bob moved the poles to their individual placement in the ground.

Then we changed the grapple to the auger bit so we could start drilling holes. Our game plan was to use the two biggest utility poles and leave a 14-foot gate opening in case any vehicles needed future access. These utility poles were roughly 8 to 9.4 inches in diameter, by 6 feet 3 inches to 12 feet in length.

Our first gate post hole went in really well. Mighty Bob was able to auger down about 30 inches into mostly sand and that's when things stopped. The auger had hit a Sandstone boulder, more like a layer of Sandstone. After chipping away some of the sandstone with our trusty spud bar, we started thinking this was probably as good as it was going to get. We were able to auger and chisel down about 36 inches. One down thirteen more to go.

After we got the first gate post set in the hole Dave Lukasik arrived at 9:30am. At 10am Barb and Paul Wilcox arrived with Gary Siegrist right behind them. Barb and Paul provided us with some much-needed energy booster - doughnuts! - because the next holes were not going to be so easy with a thick layer of sandstone below.

Barb, Dave, Gary and Paul W. were outstanding! As soon as Paul R. and Jim would clear the auger bit from a hole the crew was on it.

When a hole needed to be widened or deepened, Dave and Gary would grab a shovel or the 6-foot 30 pound spud bar, and they would take turns chiseling or clearing rock chips or dirt out of the hole. Then someone would flip the post into the hole, someone else would grab the level, another would steady the post, and someone would start throwing dirt in the hole and then someone would tamp the soil around the post. The Crew was like a well-oiled machine!

With the work progressing so fast, Jim started cutting the set posts to the desired height. Barb and her hubby, Paul, and Gary began to line up the top rails. Then, after Dave trimmed the top rails to length and notching them to sit flat on the posts, this crew drilled pilot holes and attached the top rails.

I was working on closing the gate opening with some 3/16 inch cable that has been sitting in my garage for 25 plus years. Barb helped me cut and twist two cables together to close off the gate opening.

By 1pm we were loaded up and leaving behind a new parking lot barrier at the Wooster Road Grasslands. Another project completed!



Thanks For Another Job Well Done!

Volunteering at Haehnle

As so aptly described by Phil Clark in his article on the Wooster Road Grassland Barrier earlier in this issue, volunteers are the heartbeat of Haehnle. Some enjoy the fellowship of groups like the weekly work crew. Others join in the annual spring and fall work bees at Haehnle.

Some friends of Haehnle form teams of two on weekends in October and November to greet visitors who have come to view the Sandhill Cranes flying over and into Mud Lake Marsh during fall migration. Others participate in the weekly crane count group in the fall. Fifteen individuals assemble with Gary Siegrist as members of the Sanctuary Committee, reviewing the needs of the sanctuary and making the decisions for its maintenance and growth.

Several volunteer as individuals at the Sanctuary, devoting their time and expertise. Dr Meghan Milbrath, Entomologist at MSU and Coordinator of Michigan Pollinator Initiative, tends several beehives at Haehnle.



For many years Gary Childs has driven his John Deere from Grass Lake and mowed all the trails at Haehnle and continues to do so. Dennis Morton, a nearby neighbor, keeps an eye on the property for any questionable behavior. This is the tenth year that Tom Hodgson has been the capable and devoted editor of The Haehnle Sanctuary Newsletter.

Some friends of Haehnle live at a distance and support the sanctuary with their donations. There are various on-going projects that always need continued upkeep and support. Regular controlled burns are essential for the growth of prairies. Invasives like buckthorn require aerial spraying: both necessitate the assistance of professionals.

The new boardwalk from Eagle Lake to the newly-established North Prairie involved the purchase of construction materials. Sometimes acreage adjacent to Haehnle's borders becomes available for sale and funds are needed to protect the sanctuary from encroachment.

However you choose to become involved with the Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary, we are grateful for your efforts, whether it is by helping repaint the benches at a work bee, become a greeter for fall visitors, write an article for the newsletter, or lend your support through donations. All forms of volunteerism are necessary for the sanctuary to continue and flourish and all are greatly appreciated!

Gary Siegrist, Sanctuary Chairperson

Thanks to the Following For Their Generous Donations

Larry Schultz
Melanie Hilliard
Jason Montz

Ellen Herr
Glen & Maryanne Belyea
Frank Bulwin
Bill Steusloff
Angela Johnson
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Jeanette Childs Memorial

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Janet Cameron

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Paul Brencher Memorial

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Myrna Berlet Dietrich Memorial

Gary and Nancy Siegrist

FAMILY PAGE

It's warming up - Let's get outside
and explore the trails at Haehnle!

Nature SCAVENGER HUNT



RIDDLE:

What kind of bird can carry the most
weight? 😊

(The crane!)



Never eat a
mushroom
you find
without
asking an
adult!



A good book for kids: Life Cycle of a Mushroom
by Angela Royston



Baby sandhill cranes are called COLTS, because of their long strong legs. Sandhill cranes mate for life and lay two eggs that incubate for about a month. Both parents take turns sitting on the eggs. A day after hatching, the colts are able to travel with their parents.

You Can Become a Citizen Scientist

By Ross Green

There are many opportunities for nature enthusiasts to share their observations with others and further scientists' understanding of the world around us. Cornell University Labs is at the forefront of this effort in bird studies. They have established several projects that encourage citizen participation in several areas of ornithology.

One of them is the Big Backyard Bird Count. The GBBC that was launched in 1998, is an inter-organizational effort between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, and Birds Canada. Each February, for four days, the world comes together for the love of birds. Over these four days birdwatchers are invited to spend time in their favorite places watching and counting as many birds as they can find and reporting their data to Cornell at www.birdcount.orgNew



We also ended up seeing a nice flock of winter field birds which included Snow Buntings, Lapland longspurs and Horned Larks. I spent the rest of the weekend birding in or near Jackson County, visiting the Dahlem Center, MacCready Reserve, Clark Lake at the point, Downtown Jackson and Hawkins/Dalton Rd. area. I also continued to watch my feeders while at home.

In Michigan during the four days of the Great Backyard Bird Count 138 bird species were reported as seen/heard. I ended up observing 70 species, which was the most in the State by a single birder. Sixty-nine bird species were seen/heard in Jackson County during the same time period. I ended up observing 51, which was the most in the County by a single birder.

Another Cornell Lab citizen science project is eBird. Birding enthusiasts can log on and report bird sightings at ebird.org. This data is collected and shared by scientists around the world to determine trends in bird populations.

This winter I collected and reported sightings on various bird irruptions that I had seen in Jackson County. On October 19, 2020 I had 41 **Pine Siskin** at/under my feeders in eastern Napoleon township. After that day I had single birds several days, with three on November 19th

On October 27, 2020 I visited Lathe Chaffin's feeders and estimated seeing 50 **Evening Grosbeaks**.

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This year I participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count February 12-15-21

On Friday the 12th, I started the morning by watching my feeders for a few minutes, and then headed to Ypsilanti to check out the waterfowl on the Huron River at Waterworks Park. There was a pretty good variety of ducks and geese, with the rarest species being a Cackling Goose.

We then drove to the Wayne County down river area of Wyandotte and Trenton to look for an Eared Grebe that had been seen in the area for several days. We were not able to find the grebe, but we did see a great variety of ducks, geese, and swans.

Become a Citizen Scientist (cont'd)

The next day Lathe counted/reported a minimum of 68. On November 1, 2020 I had 12 Evening Grosbeaks at my feeders most of the day. This is the first time I have seen them at my feeders in Napoleon.

On November 4th 2020 I observed 24 **Red Crossbill** and one **White-winged** Crossbill at Cedar Lake Campground. They continued to be seen there through January, 2021.

On November 24, 2020, I observed 15 Red Crossbills flying in the pines at MacCready Reserve. On January 19th, 2021 I saw two White-winged Crossbills visit a feeder on Bath Mills Rd. in western Jackson County where they remained for several days.



*Common
Redpoll*

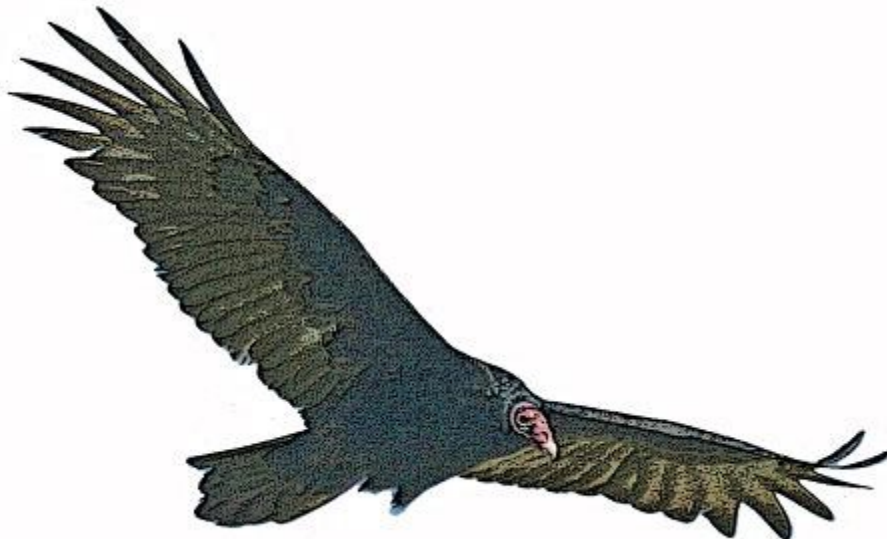
On December 8, 2020 I had 6 **Common Redpoll** at my feeders. This is the first I have seen Redpoll at my feeders in Napoleon. I have had between 1-3 visit on a semi-regular basis since then with two visiting in February.

On January 22, 2021 Brenda Wineman first reported a large flock of Redpoll on Stepladder Rd. in Parma Township. I and several other birders went there later in the day, and found around 135 Common Redpoll and as many as 3 **Hoary Redpoll**. Several other flocks of Redpoll have been reported around the county this season.

These are just a few examples of ways in which we can all enjoy the world of birds and share our findings with scientists. To learn about other citizen science opportunities at Cornell, visit their website at www.birds.cornell.edu/aabout-the-projects.



White-winged Crossbills





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| <input type="checkbox"/> | Benefactor | \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | \$ _____ |
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Thank You



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*Official News Letter
For The
Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary*

