



# THE Chinquapin

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WINTER 2003-04

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY

## Royal Oak Nature Society Bird Expert

Some of the grants that the Nature Society have and will be applying for require knowing what kind of birds in recent years have been seen and reside in our two nature parks.

If you have experience in indentifying birds, both visually and by sound, and are interested in being in charge of maintaining and updating our bird list, please contact Kristine Hammond at 248-577-5171.



## Membership Director

The Royal Oak Nature Society is looking for a volunteer to take over being in charge of membership. This is a board position and involves maintaining the Society's membership list, monitoring the e-mail account and recruiting volunteers when other committees are in need. If you are interested and would like further information, please contact Heather Muller at 248-442-6718.

## The Royal Oak Nature Society's Beautification Committee Activities

BY JACK KERBY

The Royal Oak Nature Society's Beautification Committee is charged with improving the appearance and utilization of Royal Oak's two Nature parks, Cummington Park and Tenhave Woods, formerly Quickstad Park. Maps to these two Nature Parks are shown on the back page of this Newsletter.

Members of the Beautification Committee who have been most consistent in helping with all the ongoing beautification work have been George Aldea, Joyce Bowen, George and Joanne Braund, Jack Kerby, Bill and Pearl Richardson, Dena Serrato, and Ken Wolak.

The initial activity of the Beautification Committee was to conduct general cleanup of both parks to clear out much of the accumulated litter. Following that activity, and working with Greg Rassel of the City Administration, new playground equipment was purchased and installed by the City at the southeast corner of Cummington Park.

In order to increase the utilization of Tenhave Woods, Mr. Andrew Mast completed a large section of trails in the park as his Eagle Scout service project with assistance from the members of his Boy Scout Troop 1629.

Cummington Park had a history of flooding problems that made walking through the park almost impossible



Joanne Braund and Bill and Pearl Richardson working on cleaning up the trails in Cummington Park.

during the spring and early summer. With the help of Mr. Rassel and the City of Royal Oak's Water and Sewer Department, a new drain was installed along Meijer Drive to aid in allowing the standing water to run off. The effectiveness of this drain is under observation given the past two years of low snowfall and rainfall.

The Beautification Committee next tackled the overgrown appearance of the Cummington Park entrance by removing most of the invasive wild honeysuckle that had taken over the entrance area. Later another Eagle Scout candidate James Hutton and his Troop 1619 built a series of hiking trails through the eastern section of the park.

This spring the Beautification Committee cleared out the meadow

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## Why Dogs Are Not Allowed in Our Nature Parks

Recently, we received an e-mail inquiry about dogs in Tenhave Woods. The following is the e-mail message and our accompanying reply.

*Hello, I am a new resident to Royal Oak. I come to the city with two well-trained dogs. I have been actively looking for a park to take my dogs and I thought I found Quickstad to be the right one except for the NO DOGS ALLOWED sign. I was wondering what the official explanation is for this and who made the decision. Also, I was wondering if your society supports this ban and if so, why? My dogs are well trained, ALWAYS clean up after them, and they can't harm the park anymore than I can, walking on the trails. Thanks, Andrew*

Andrew, Both of our nature study areas have not allowed dogs for as long as I can remember. Both nature study areas have had signs (removed now for repair) since at least the early 1970s saying no domestic animals. When we restarted the nature programs back up in 2000, we found that both parks were used heavily by off leash dogs & owners. We tried for one year to correct this problem with signs stating, dogs must be on leash. This had no effect. We then had to add signs on the fences at all gates saying no dogs (on or off leash). This did not change park policy; it simply

posted it in more places. This eliminated about half the dogs, which did not solve the problem.

The problem is that we have lost all of the ground nesting birds in both nature study areas. Dogs in Cummingston have killed a family of foxes and in the last year we have seen only one rabbit in each study area. There are more rabbits in southern Royal Oak backyards than in our nature study areas due to the maze of fences blocking the pursuit of dogs. Without rabbits, (an animal that should have a rather high population in both parks) certain plants grow rather than being eaten. This is slowly altering the plant community in both study areas to what is not normal for a southern Michigan forest. We are trying to prevent the degrading of the nature study area's flora any further.

These two nature areas are unbelievably rich in diversity, this coupled with the fact that they are in one of the heaviest population areas in the state, make them of extreme value. Personally I believe them to be the most valuable property in the city of Royal Oak. They would be impossible to replace at any cost.

We hope to get the nature areas

back to a level where they will be used by the Royal Oak schools as outdoor classrooms. In the last three years, we have gotten hundreds of people into the park on nature walks. Our volunteers staffing these programs have put in hundreds of hours. We have had untold hours put in by Scout groups building trails, bat and birdhouses.

We will never achieve our goals if we cannot control the dogs. Personally I would like to eventually see non-barking dogs on leash allowed in study area. This is impossible until we have full time naturalists on duty. The only way to control the problem now, is to be able to ticket anyone with a dog in the park. If you represent a dog group, I would be willing to give your group a "leashed dog nature walk" and explain complexities of these forest. I am sure I could get permission for this as a special program.

The city has over 50 parks of which I believe five have dog run areas. We only have two nature study areas to try and save. I hope I have answered your questions on the nature study areas. If not, please contact me.

— Bob Muller, Naturalist and Program Director, Royal Oak Nature Society

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# Royal Oaks Wild Side

BY BOB MULLER

## What's Happening in Cummingston Park and Tenhave Woods

Fall color has passed and the leaves have fallen. To some, the forest seems to have lost its beauty. Even I will admit that the stark look of a winter forest is in sharp contrast to the brilliance of autumn. The color is gone; the world is more black and white. Now is the time to see the hidden details of the woods.

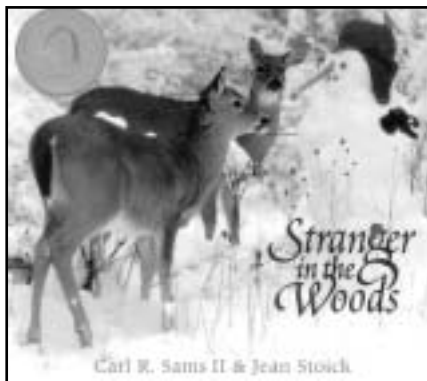
To paraphrase an old saying, you can't see the trees for the leaves. It is now time to walk through our nature parks looking for our largest trees. Looking up into the trees will reveal magnificent spreading crowns with massive limbs, many having taken more than a hundred years to form. There is a powerful beauty in the shapes hidden from view the rest of the year. Look at the details, the complex textures and patterns of bark. Look even closer and see what hidden colors occur in buds. Look around in winter, you can see how small our nature parks are.

In all directions you can see out of the parks to the developed city around you. These small parcels are all that's

left of what the area was like when the first settlers arrived.

The topography of the parks is now visible, especially in Tenhave. Notice the ridge running across the park. This is an old beach ridge or sandbar of Lake Warren. Use your eyes and mind as a time machine and view all of Royal Oak under one of the original Great Lakes only 1200 years ago.

Escape the developed world, take a breath, feel the stress fade away and take a walk in the woods. Check out Royal Oak's wild side.



Read a review on page 5 for this book.

BEAUTIFICATION continued from page 1

section of Cummingston Park just east of the main entrance, to allow the return of native wildflowers that had been choked out by wild grapevines. This has allowed a large number of wildflowers to make their reappearance this summer.

The Beautification Committee's current activity is to perform trail maintenance on the existing park trails to clear them of debris and repair the logs that line the trails. We are also working to eliminate the debris situation at the west side of Cummingston Park which seems to be emanating from the existing businesses along the west side park fence.

Future activity will include

redesigned entrances to the parks to create a more attractive and pleasing appearance to the park visitors.

The Beautification Committee is anxiously awaiting word on our DNR Block Grant request for funds to build a nature trail linking the Royal Oak Senior Center to Tenhave Woods. With these funds the City will be able to build a hard surface trail to a new entrance located at the southwest corner of Tenhave Woods.

The Beautification Committee is always looking for volunteers to help with the continuing beautification projects. If you would like to be a part of this activity please call Jack Kerby at 248-280-0186.

## Thank You to Our Sponsors

The Royal Oak Nature Society would like to thank **Staples** located in Clawson Center and **Wild Birds Unlimited** for their support. Staples supplies us with the paper for printing our newsletter. Wild Birds Unlimited donates birdseed to fill our Tenhave Woods birdfeeder during the winter.



## Winter Speaker Programs

### "Wildlife of Tanzania"

**Dec 3rd** \* Spend an evening with Kathy & Bill Thomas exploring the African Serengeti. Their program takes a look at the migration of wild animals throughout the Serengeti. Sit back and enjoy the Thomas slide presentation on the animals and people of one of the world's great wildlife areas. Kathy tells of one of her greatest experiences while being over there, was the awe of standing in the middle of a herd of over one million animals.

### "Deer Throughout the Seasons"

**Jan 7th** \* The whitetail deer is perhaps the most popular of Michigan's Wildlife. Learn from Roger Bajorek, Supervising Interpreter of Stony Creek Nature Center, on how to locate deer and follow them throughout the seasons. Discover how they grow and where they find food and shelter.

continued on page 4

SPEAKERS continued from page 3

While viewing this unique collection of slides, some important ecological lessons are dealt with.

### **"Four Seasons of Michigan Birds"**

**Feb 4th** \* Jim Simek, nature photographer and writer, will take you through four seasons of Michigan's birds; starting in late summer and ending with the spring migration and the beginning of the breeding season. Included are well over 180 outstanding images of native birds (and some mammals) in their natural habitat. This diverse program spans the wide spectrum of Michigan's birds; from owls to warblers to waterfowl and everything in-between. Special emphasis is placed on the birds that can be attracted to and found in our own backyards.

## **General Meeting with Speaker Programs**

**Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. – Leo Mahany/Harold Meininger Senior/Community Center**

| Date    | Speaker(s)                                                                                                                     | Program                          |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Dec 3rd | Kathy Thomas, Naturalist at Independence Oaks Nature Center & Bill Thomas, Supervising Interpreter at Wolcott Mills Metro Park | "Wildlife of Tanzania"           |
| Jan 7th | Roger Bajorek, Supervising Interpreter at Stony Creek Nature Center                                                            | "Deer Throughout the Seasons"    |
| Feb 4th | Jim Simek, nature photographer and writer                                                                                      | "Four Seasons of Michigan Birds" |

## **Nature Walk Programs** Meet at the park

| Date     | Day      | Time       | Location         | Theme          |
|----------|----------|------------|------------------|----------------|
| Dec 6th  | Saturday | 10:00 a.m. | Tenhaven Woods   | Big Trees      |
| Jan 10th | Saturday | 10:00 a.m. | Cummingston Park | Winter Trees   |
| Feb 7th  | Saturday | 10:00 a.m. | Tenhaven Woods   | Resident Birds |
| Mar 6th  | Saturday | 10:00 a.m. | Cummingston Park | Woody Plants   |

## **Nature Society Teams**

If you are interested in becoming actively involved with the Nature Society, one or more of our teams may appeal to you:

- **The Beautification Team** tackles tasks such as surveying the parks, defining and maintaining a trail system, park clean up and removing invasive species.
- **The Communications Team** provides publicity about organizational activities to the general membership and the public. It also recruits and coordinates volunteers for service and special events. The team is also responsible for publishing a quarterly newsletter.
- **The Education Team** focuses its efforts on education outreach programs that promote understanding and appreciation of the environment by involving children in our local parks and nature programs.
- **The Program Team** coordinates and schedules nature walks and nature oriented speaker programs, develop programs for outside organizations and catalog plants, trees & birds.
- **The Ways & Means Team** investigates means of fund raising and grant solicitation and then follows through accordingly.

Please call on any of our team leaders to get more information. Their phone numbers are listed on page 6 of this publication along with our other board members.



Read a review on page 5 for these books.

# Nature Books

COMPILED BY ANN WILLIAMS

## A Trip to the Bookstore yields Holiday Gift-Giving Ideas

The books I find interesting might be of interest the members of the Royal Oak Nature Society. The following are three books on sale now at Barnes & Noble. I hope you enjoy these reviews as much as I had fun stumbling upon them literally with a toddler in tow.

### A Guide to Birding

By Joseph Forshaw, Rich Stallcup, Terence Lindsey, Steve Howell, and introduction by Greg Butcher

**Hardcover • Price: \$9.98**

This book aims to inform and inspire, and features text by international experts and beautiful color photographs, maps, and illustrations. It examines the origins, anatomy, classification, and behavior of birds. There is advice on attracting birds to your

garden, and on observing them there and in the wild. Also included is a field guide to 148 species of birds, grouped according to their habitats. For beginner and experienced birders alike.

### Audubon Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges: Northern Midwest

by Tom Powers and John Grassy

**Paperback • Price: \$3.99**

This guide book profiles 43 of the region's refuges, which take in glacial lakes, sandhills, swift rivers, deep bays, and open prairies that shelter an astonishing diversity of plant and animal species, including hundreds of bird species. The authors offer remarks on the refuges' histories, the animals and plants they harbor, and the ongoing struggle to expand and

maintain the national refuge system in a time when so much of the region is being developed. Anyone who has been entranced by the call of a loon will want to follow the authors' suggestions on where to go and what to see.

### Stranger in the Woods: A Photographic Fantasy

By Carl R. Sams, Carl R. Sams II and Photographer, Jean Stoick

**Hardcover • Price: \$11.97**

A vivid picture book that captures the magic of wintertime and the beauty of nature. Expert photographer Carl R. Sams II and his wife, Jean Stoick, create a cozy charmer about a snowman that suddenly appears in the woods after a winter storm. A delightful book of the animals and birds reaction to the snowman who appears in their woods. This is the perfect gift for children and adults who love nature.

## Membership Notice

If you haven't paid your yearly membership dues, now would be the perfect time to do so. With the end of the year quickly approaching, a donation would not only be a benefit to the Nature Society, but is also tax deductible.

The Royal Oak Nature Society is asking for a minimum \$5 donation for membership for an individual or family. This will cover the printing and mailing of *The Chinquapin*. A donation of \$10 or more will make you a supporting member. Not only will this cover our newsletter cost, but it will help to fund educational programs that we provide.

Those who choose not to continue as members are invited to attend our monthly speakers program as well as the nature walks. Those are and always will be free to anyone who enjoys learning about nature.



B-Z-Z



## Want to Join The Royal Oak Nature Society?

Please make checks out to:

**CITY OF ROYAL OAK  
MEMO: ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY**

Mail completed form and donation check to:

**Royal Oak Nature Society  
1708 Northwood Blvd.  
Royal Oak MI 48073**

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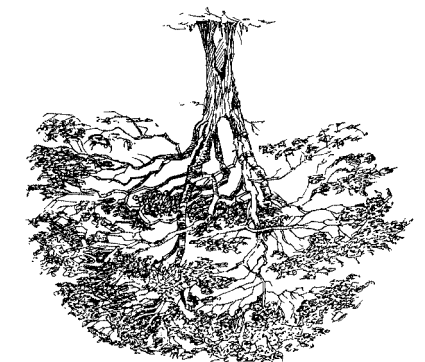
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**1-year membership rates: (Sept-Aug)**

☐ Individual/Family: \$5.00

☐ Supporting: \$10 and up

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



The Royal Oak Nature Society  
1600 N. CAMPBELL ROAD  
ROYAL OAK MI 48067

The *Chinquapin* is published quarterly by the The Royal Oak Nature Society, a volunteer group working to protect and promote Royal Oak's nature preserves, while enjoying and sharing environmental education with the community.

The *Chinquapin* is a type of white oak also known as a *yellow chestnut oak*. We chose to name the newsletter after the *Chinquapin* oak we have located in Cummingston Park. Colleen Hilzinger, artist and member created the beautiful oak tree logo.

### Board of Directors

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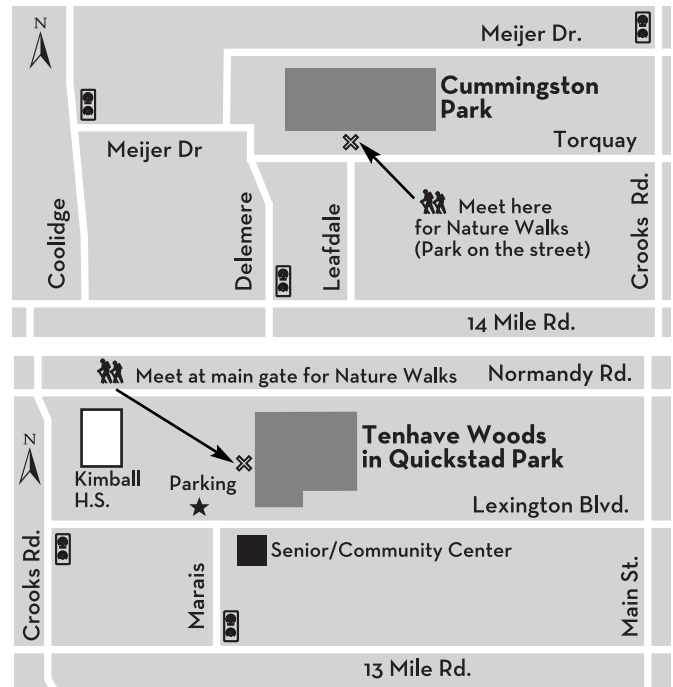
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## Our Nature Parks & Senior/Community Center



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