

President's Report: The Future of the Royal Oak Nature Society

by Don Drife

At our 2018 fundraiser I was asked if the Royal Oak Nature Society had a five-year plan. While we have a master plan with long term goals posted on our website, I wonder if the Nature Society will even exist in five-years. At sixty years old, I'm the youngest Board of Director's member. The other members are in their 70s or 80s. We are slowing down and need assistance. No one is coming up through the ranks to replace us. Our Nature Society is a fragile group. If we lost a single member of our tiny core group our program would drastically change. We need a larger corps of volunteers. Bob Muller and I have known these nature areas for over forty years. In many ways Mary Fredricks knows the parks better than we do. Ted Vickers has been involved with the nature society for two decades. I am not sure that the Nature Society will continue unless we find the next generation that we can help train. Bob Gasiowski trained Bob and I in the 1970s and provided valuable assistance when the nature program was rekindled.



The Royal Oak Nature Society is unique among city run nature programs in the fact that we have no paid staff and receive no financial support from the city. We rely on volunteers for everything we do. We manage to keep our core programs running: nature walks, speakers programs, fundraisers, and trail and fence maintenance. However, much more should be done.

Volunteer Opportunities Still Available

Lead or assist in leading nature walks. If you desire to learn about the parks and are willing to read and study, we can teach you. You don't need to know everything about the parks. Start by attending our walks. Discover a topic you want to learn more about: fungi, trees, pond life, birds, insects, forest ecology... I find it rewarding to share my knowledge. In particular, we need more help with our two most popular programs: fungi walks and pond studies. These programs could be enhanced with a little support. Doing a pond life program requires carrying the equipment into the park and helping to catch subjects from the pond. As we age, these activities become increasingly demanding.

Monitor what is in our Arboretum collection and look at the health of the plants. Are the plants we put in still alive? Are they healthy? This could take a few hours a month.

Monitoring Invasive Species: We need help monitoring invasive species in both parks and the Arboretum. We can teach you the species to watch for.

Maintain our Arboretum collection's database. This person could work at home and enter data provided to them. This would only require a few hours a year.

Arboretum Gardeners: Volunteers weed, water, control invasive plants, clear trails.... Our volunteers meet on Tuesday morning from May to September. We also have tasks that you can do when you have time. Get an assignment. Work when it fits your schedule.

Park Stewardship: We need people to monitor the fence in Tenhave. It is a simple job but it takes time and commitment. If there is a problem with the fence all you need to do is report the fence post number and we can go and repair the fence. We need more people just walking the trails in Cummingston and reporting what they find. We need people to help with maintenance in the parks: clearing trails, fixing fences, maintaining signs... When we use power equipment in the park the city requires us to have at least two people.

Education: We need help to do outreach to area students. Should we have after school programs? Should we do a nature night? Special youth nature walks? If you have an education background and enjoy working with children this could be your chance to make a difference.

Fundraisers: We have been doing our Annual April fundraiser by committee. We need someone to spearhead this event. We also need someone to explore new fundraising opportunities for the Nature Society. We are spending \$5,000 a year on invasive species management and this keeps them in check. We need additional funding for the next five years.

A Call to Action

If you are willing to donate even a few hours we can use you. Tell us your skills or your interests. Without our nature society our two natural gems are lost. Nature walks and programs will not happen. Trails will fall into disrepair. Invasive species will take over. Deer will destroy the wildflowers. The time is quickly coming when the torch needs to be passed to a new generation. If you value what we have built, then please help us out.

Contact Michelle Watson by [email](#) or by phone the Nature Society at 248-246-3380 and leave a message.