

# ***The Royal Oak Nature Society***

*Protecting Our Nature Parks and Educating the Community*

## ***Why Is an Organization Needed to Protect Royal Oak's Two Nature Conservancy Parks (Cunningston Park and Tenhave Woods)?***

The City of Royal Oak and its citizens are blessed with about 50 acres of nature preserves. Unfortunately, many residents are not aware of their existence. The City, while doing a great job of maintaining the other 48 parks in Royal Oak, does not have the staff or resources to adequately maintain and promote recreational and educational opportunities within these two conservancy parks. People who care about these natural areas in our community need to step up and take responsibility for them. In a landlocked community such as Royal Oak, these two pieces of vacant land are habitat for flora and fauna that are unlike our other parks and should not be considered as opportunities for development. Since these parks have never been developed, the landscape resembles the pre-settlement vegetation of Oakland County. They have been utilized for education and appreciation of nature for many years and need to remain so for many more years to come.

***Who Are We?*** The Royal Oak Nature Society is a non-profit, volunteer citizens group working with the City to protect the management of Royal Oak's two nature preserves. Our mission is to foster the awareness and usage of these natural areas by maintaining and promoting recreational and educational opportunities within them. We are also in the process of developing an arboretum/wildflower garden behind the Senior/Community Center. This garden will become another area that can be utilized for education and the appreciation of nature.

***What Can You Do To Help?*** We need residents and non-residents to join our volunteer effort! You could become a Nature Society member, volunteer your time to help us, or just be a strong Nature Society supporter who believes in the conservation of these parks. But most of all, we just want the public to spend time in these great nature areas. This could include looking for wildflowers in the spring, observing beautiful fall color or just enjoying a pleasant walk through the woods anytime of the year. By being actively involved, we can make sure that our two conservancy parks stay vibrant and remain as nature preserves for future generations to use and enjoy.

## **FORMATION OF THE ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY**

The actual impetus for the formation of the Nature Society occurred during the writing of the 1999 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The consultants assembling the plan noted that Cummingston Park & Tenhave Woods were under-utilized and needed work.

Based on this finding, the Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in February 2000 made a recommendation to the Royal Oak City Commission that both parks become Conservancy Parks. Later that month, the City Commission approved the recommendation that said, "protection and management of the natural/cultural environment will be the primary focus with recreational use as a secondary objective." With this new position, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board would assign an ad hoc committee to figure out how to best utilize these natural areas. The Advisory Board specifically recruited volunteers to represent certain areas within the city. This group of citizens who wanted to keep Cummingston Park and Tenhave Woods as natural areas, first met in June 2000. The group's charter as determined by the Advisory Board was "to work together to develop a program for the proper development of Tenhave Woods and Cummingston Park." The two major objectives that were agreed on

were to preserve and enhance the natural attributes of these two parks and to develop a curriculum for a broad range of audiences, including formal (classroom) and non-formal (signage) training to promote environmental education. Then work began to develop ways to implement these objectives. High priority was placed on a formal kick-off for the organization and attracting new members. The committee recommended that its name become the Royal Oak Nature Society and that this organization would carry out the goals for the nature parks.

On January 17, 2001, the Royal Oak Nature Society was officially formed with a kick-off meeting at Starr Elementary. The response was overwhelming as over 70 people showed up! On March 7, 2001, the Nature Society had its first general membership meeting along with its' first speaker program, a slide show on wildflowers, presented by botanists Don and Joyce Drife. The Nature Society board of directors was approved at a general meeting in February 2002.

In January 2002, the Nature Society presented its Master Plan for the two parks to the Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. After being approved, the Plan was presented at a public hearing in March 2002. The Royal Oak City Commission subsequently approved those plans in April 2002.

### **ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY ACTIVITIES**

**Nature Walk Programs:** Walks in Royal Oak's two nature areas, Cummington Park and Tenhave Woods plus the Fred A. Arboretum, are led by Royal Oak Nature Society naturalists. There is at least one walk per month with more per month added during the spring wildflower and fall color seasons. An emphasis is put on understanding the different forest types found in these parks, individual plant and animal species found there, and the geology and human history of the area.

During the spring wildflower walks, Red & White Trillium, blue & yellow violets, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Bloodroot, Trout Lily, Wild Geranium, Spice Bush, Spring Beauty, Wood Poppy, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, & Wood Anemone can be found. These walks are usually held on a Saturday or Sunday.

**"Owl Hoots"** are held in the evenings during the winter. At these programs, we attempt to lure in or have the screech and great horned owls answer tape recordings of their calls.

**Pond Study Programs** are scheduled in the spring at Tenhave's Dragonfly Pond. This popular program attracts both adults and children. Water samples are taken from the pond to see what is living in it and viewing trays are available to examine what we find.

**Mushroom Walks & Programs** are held throughout the year. They are scheduled by Mary Fredricks, the Nature Society's mycologist. For information about the walks & programs, please go to "[Royal Oak Nature Society Friends of Fungi](#)".



Pond Study Program

For additional information on upcoming Nature Walks, Owl Hoots, Pond Study & Mushroom Walks, please check out the following link: <https://www.romi.gov/411/Nature-Walks>

**Speaker Programs** As of now, our speaker programs are done virtually via Zoom. Our programs are usually Power Point presentations focusing on various natural history topics. If you watch nature programs on PBS or the Discovery Channel, this is better because you can meet with the speakers afterwards and ask questions. There is no cost for these programs, but preregistration is required. For more information on upcoming Speaker Programs, please check out the following link: <https://www.romi.gov/422/Speaker-Programs>

**Special Nature Park Programs:** The Nature Society provides nature walk programs for school classes, scout troops, service clubs, neighborhood associations, etc. This can be a general nature walk or requests for a walk on special subjects can be arranged.