



Waterloo News

Tales From the Past Part II

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Above is the club house of the Sylvan Estates Country Club as it appeared in the early 1930's. Much of it burned, but the part that remains is now the Area Headquarters Building.

Spring Building Hours

The building will be open only on the days public programs are offered until the vacant park interpreter position is filled. The position is expected to be filled sometime in April.

In the meantime call ahead at 734-475-3170 before visiting the Center.

Trails and Grounds will be available
From Dawn to Dusk Daily

A change in the making...At the turn of the last century Waterloo began attracting vacationers. General storekeeper Lynn Gorton advertised the resort advantages of Waterloo, as well as the benefit of shopping at his general store.

The Sylvan Estates Country Club on McClure Rd. had its own airport and catered to the wealthy who flew in for a round of golf. It succumbed during the Great Depression. An increasing number of area farms failed as well, reaching a peak in 1933.

In response to these failures, the federal government created the Federal Resettlement Administration to purchase these lands and move the farmers to the cities where they might have a better chance of finding work. The land was to be developed for recreation.

In the final determination, 46 recreational demonstration areas in 24 states were set aside for development. The intent was to provide recreational areas in the most populated areas.

Waterloo was chosen because it was within a two hour drive or less from several major cities, including Ann Arbor, Jackson, Detroit, Pontiac, and Flint.

In 1934 the Waterloo Project was conceived. By 1936, 11,998.56 acres had been purchased for recreational use for a total cost of \$277,786.08, or about \$23 per acre.

The area was called the Waterloo Recreational Demonstration Area. In 1936, development and management of the area was turned over to the National Park Service.

(cont'd on page 2)

Tales From the Past Part II

(continued)

National Park Service acting project manager, Frank R. Coburn, 3/5/37, wrote of the importance of having more than city parks within a reasonable distance from cities. The NPS planted over 350,000 trees in Waterloo covering 1,000 acres. The Federal government spent over \$2,000,000 in improving Waterloo for recreational and game refuge purposes.

Much of the labor needed to complete projects at Waterloo and other recreation areas came from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). These workers were moved to northern areas and replaced by Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers, the majority from the city of Jackson. The project employed an average of 322 workers, each earning about \$62.00 per month.



Constructing the entrance road to the Big Portage Lake Unit in the summer of 1936. This original entrance came in through what is now the modern campground. The current entrance is about 200 yards to the west.



The Big Portage Lake Unit bath house under construction in 1936. This structure served the public for nearly 70 years.

(Tales from the Past Part III in the next issue)

BIG PORTAGE LAKE UNIT: The largest unit in the Waterloo Recreation Area was constructed in the early 1930's. This was a massive project that included raising the water level of Big Portage Lake and isolating it from the portage river system. Yards of muck were sucked from the shore line and replaced with sand to form the beach.

W.P.A. workers constructed the campgrounds, public beach, bath house and picnic area. The original bath house served the public for nearly 70 years. The beach, picnic grounds and campground are still in use today. The campground has been modernized and the bath house has been replaced.



Hundreds of WPA workers constructed the dike at the north end of Big Portage Lake one wheel barrow of dirt at a time.



A steam dredge removes muck from the west shore of Big Portage Lake to be replaced with sand to create the beach and swimming area still in use today.

Waterloo Natural History Association Programs

April through June 2011

NIGHT OF THE AMPHIBIANS
Saturday April 2, 8 p.m.



Join naturalist Carol Strahler for a lively presentation featuring frogs, salamanders and quivering masses of eggs from local ponds. Find out how you can recognize frogs by their calls. The program will conclude with a walk to a nearby pond to see and hear the frogs singing in the night. Bring a flashlight and dress for the weather.

FURRY AND FEATHERED FRIENDS
Saturday April 9, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.



Meet a delightful variety of live Michigan birds and mammals in this informative presentation by Howell Nature Center. Discover how these animals survive in the wild, and compare the characteristics of daytime feeders and nighttime predators.

MICHIGAN WOLVES
Sunday April 17, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.



Naturalist, educator and wolf advocate Dorothy McLeer will present a program on Michigan's most misunderstood mammals. Learn about the comeback of wolves in our state, the issues that arise when people live near wolves, and what the future holds for these fascinating creatures.

SPRING POND CREATURES
Sunday May 1 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.



Naturalist Tom Hodgson will introduce you to many fascinating and little-known creatures – from delicate damselflies to ferocious diving beetles. You will also learn how to find these creatures yourself and to make your own “Pour-a-Pond.”

INCREDIBLE EDIBLES
Saturday May 7, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.



Come for a walk with wild edibles expert Tom Jameson and get acquainted with samples from Mother Nature's kitchen. Tom will share some of his gourmet cooking after the hike. Limited to 35 people.

MICHIGAN SNAKES ALIVE!
Sunday May 15, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.



Fact or fiction? Learn the truth about the misconceptions that surround these intriguing creatures. Nature Discovery will bring a variety of live snakes and discuss their habits and characteristics. You will have a chance to handle these surprisingly gentle reptiles at the end of the program.

For more Programs, Turn the Page

View this newsletter in color at www.wnha.org

Waterloo Natural History Association Programs

April through June 2011

LIFE IN A BEE HIVE

Sunday May 22, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.



Beekeeper and educator Jane Levy will present a program for all ages on how bees work together to make honey and why they do it. Children will have a chance to try on a beekeeper's suit. Following the program, Jane will be available to discuss setting up your own hive.

ROCKHOUND BASICS

Sunday June 5, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.



Discover what you can learn about ancient Michigan from looking at a rock. Geologist Larry Bean will show you how to "read" the story told by rocks and help you to identify specimens at a local quarry. We will meet at the Discovery Center before driving to the quarry to do some collecting.

NATURE'S TANK THE TURTLE

Sunday June 12, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.



Naturalist Tom Hodgson will introduce you to Michigan's turtles with several live specimens for you to observe. Learn about turtle biology and life cycles as well as what to do when turtles are encountered in the wild.

DON'T FORGET!!! Advance Registration is required for all programs. To Register call 734-475-3170. Admission is \$2.00 per person or \$5.00 per family. WNHA members admitted free.

Message From The Chair

Hello everyone, I hope that everyone has thawed out from the cold winter we've had and are looking forward to Spring.

As this new year is upon us we are hoping that the Naturalist/Interpreter position at the Center will be filled quickly. As I write this the position has been posted and we are waiting for the hiring process to unfold. Jon Spieles is the DNRE Manager for this position in the various centers throughout the state and he has assured the Board that filling the Discovery Center position is a high priority with him to start the year.

I am pleased to report that the membership drive mailing that the Board undertook last October has yielded 43 new memberships. The members of the Board were quite pleased with the results. As always, if you are aware of a family or an individual that may be interested in joining the WNHA please encourage them to join our association and support the Discovery Center.

As a last note, I would like to report that Sue Phare, a long-time member of the Board and the Gift Shop Coordinator will be retiring from the Board in November of this year. While we wish Sue all the best in her future endeavors, her departure also leaves us in a bind.

We will now need a new Gift Shop Coordinator for the Center, so I am asking anyone in the membership out there if they would be interested in taking over as the new Gift Shop Coordinator for the WNHA.

If you are interested please let a member of the Board know as soon as possible. The Gift Shop is also our main revenue source for the WNHA. And as the Maple Syrup season is upon us I hope to see everyone as I tend the evaporator for the one day Maple Syrup Festival on Sunday March 13th.

Gregg V. Burg, Chairperson



The Great Blue Heron

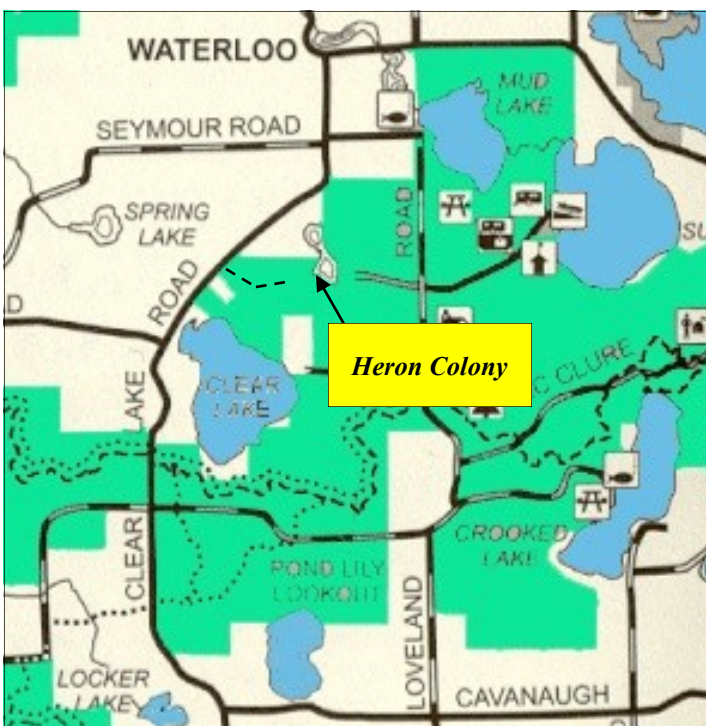
Several Colonies of Michigan's Largest Heron are found in Waterloo

The great blue heron is the largest and most widespread member of the heron family in the western hemisphere. It can be found from Alaska to Central America. Great blues nest in colonies called heronries. There are several in the Waterloo Area. The most visible is found along the shores of Little Mud Lake on the east side of Clear Lake Road, south of the town of Waterloo.

The Little Mud Lake heronry includes about 40 nests, and can be best viewed in April before the trees leaf out. There is also a great deal of nest building activity at this time. There is an unmarked access to Little Mud Lake on the east side of Clear Lake Road with room for one or two cars. From there it will be necessary to carry a canoe or kayak about 200 ft. to gain access to the lake. Paddling to the south east corner of the lake will bring one close enough to view the heronry with binoculars or to photograph with a long lens, but not so close as to disturb the birds.



Heron carrying nesting material (left). Nesting pair at the Little Mud Lake heronry (above). Heron exhibiting typical flight profile with neck in S curve and head resting on shoulders (below).



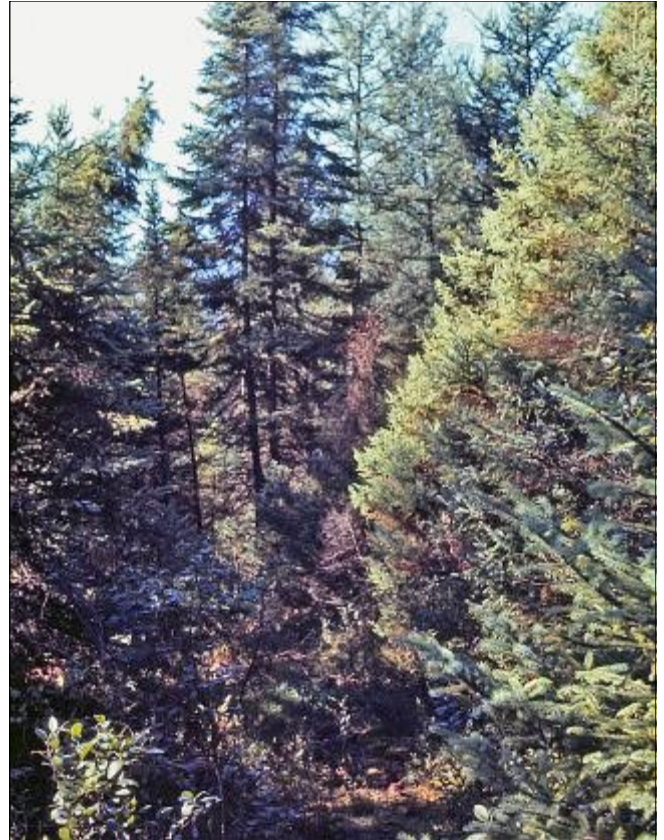
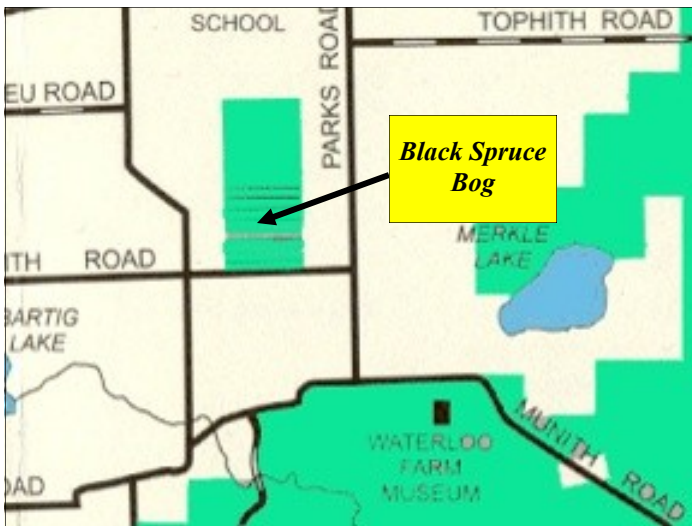
Waterloo's Black Spruce Bog

Black spruce bogs are normally associated with Northern Michigan, the upper peninsula and Canada. Few people realize that the Waterloo Recreation Area is home to the southern most example of a black spruce bog in Michigan.

The bog is located on the north side of Waterloo Munith Road just west of Parks Rd. in the northern part of the park. It includes forty acres of bog plus additional land to the north that provides drainage that keeps the bog supplied with water. The bog has probably existed since the end of the last ice age some 10,000 years ago. As the climate warmed other Southern Michigan spruce bogs disappeared, but this one has survived.

In addition to the towering black spruce, the bog is home to sphagnum moss, pitcher plants, sundews, and the pink moccasin flower orchid. The diminutive saw-whet owl is also found there on occasion.

The bog is surrounded by heavy brush and swamp hardwoods and cannot be seen from the road. There is no trail that leads to or through it. To get in and out safely, one must have a compass and some waterproof boots, and be willing to crash through a lot of pucker brush.



The black spruce bog (above) is sometimes home to the saw-whet owl (below). It is also habitat for the pink moccasin flower orchid (lower left).



Happy Birthday WNHA!

This is a landmark year for the Waterloo Natural History Association as it celebrates its 30th Anniversary. Just as Michigan is currently suffering through an economic crisis, a similar situation existed in the early 1980's. Only four years after establishing the Waterloo Nature Center, the DNR was forced to close the nature center due to budget restrictions. Part-time naturalists Emily Polens and Carol Strahler did not want to see this wonderful facility closed and were determined to keep the Center open. With the encouragement of Tom Hodgson, then director of the center, and lots of help from many interested community members, the Waterloo Natural History Association was formed in January of 1981 to continue operating the center. The DNR leased the building to the WNHA for \$1.00 per year in exchange for the WNHA being responsible for all building and trail maintenance.

During that first year, volunteer staff was kept busy promoting the Center to civic organizations in order to recruit sponsors and members who would help support the Center's activities through donations. Not only were volunteer naturalists presenting programs to thousands of school children, they were also kept busy hosting special events. By March of that year, the First Annual Maple Sugar Festival was established as a successful event with over 700 people in attendance.

During the summer months, the Center offered 2 weeks of Day Camp nature activities to area youth. Weekend programs attracted hundreds of people who came to learn about the local flora and fauna or just have fun constructing a birdhouse or creating a wreath. Tom Jameson was recruited to do his first ever "Wild Edibles Walk". Little did he know he would become our resident expert with a following of devoted fans! Due to the efforts of WNHA volunteers, almost 10,000 people visited the Center and explored the trails during our first year of operation.

Due to increased demand for interpretive services, a Volunteer Assistant Naturalist Program was instituted. The response was excellent and after training, dedicated volunteers felt knowledgeable enough to lead both weekend and weekday programs. Volunteers also helped maintain the Center building and trails, and helped run the center on weekends. In the spring of 1982, the WNHA was recognized as the "Outstanding Government or Non-Profit Organization for Environmental Achievement" by the Michigan Audubon Society.

During 1982, the WNHA increased its fund-raising efforts. Many schools were in a financial bind and could not afford field trips. The WNHA sponsored a county-wide Nature Art Contest for all elementary school children. The winning artwork was reproduced on a calendar, whose sales went to support field trips to the Center. During the crisp days of autumn, a Hike-a-Thon was held to help raise funds to pay the bills! Hikers found sponsors who pledged money per mile, the challenge being to hike the entire 17 miles of the Waterloo Hiking Trail from Portage Lake to the Nature Center. That first year we netted over \$2000.00.



The observation deck used by thousands of Discovery Center visitors each year, was funded by the WNHA and private donors, and constructed by volunteers. Just one of many ways WNHA supports the Discovery Center and Waterloo Recreation Area.

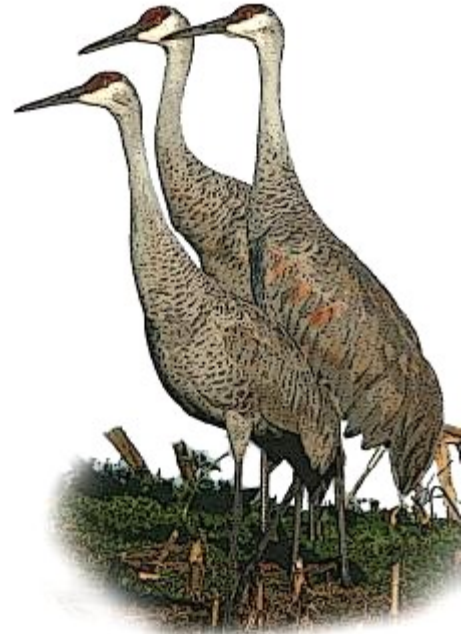
The WNHA continued to successfully operate the Center until the fall of 1984. At that time it was decided to close the Nature Center building indefinitely until funds could be appropriated to reopen its doors. WNHA naturalists continued to conduct programs for school groups and the general public throughout the Waterloo Area. In 1989 the Nature Center was remodeled by the DNR and reopened and operated by the DNR as the Eddy Geology Center. A gift shop was constructed at that time and Board member Ray Steinbach was instrumental in its successful operation, with funds generated being used to support operations of the Center and WNHA activities. Today the gift shop, currently managed by Sue Phare, is still WNHA's most important revenue generator.

Thirty years later we are still providing support for the park. The Waterloo Nature Center has seen many changes through the years, evolving into the Eddy Geology Center and currently the Discovery Center. The WNHA continues to present interpretive programs. Fees from membership and gift shop profits are used to construct interpretive displays in the Center, pay naturalist fees, and purchase birdseed and equipment for the Center. Major projects have included the construction of an osprey nesting platform and the deck which overlooks Mill Lake. We have our members and volunteers to thank for our longevity!!!

Waterloo Natural History Association
17030 Bush Rd.
Chelsea, MI 48118



Official Newsletter of the Waterloo
Natural History Association



MEMBER'S CORNER

The Waterloo Natural History Association gratefully acknowledges the support of the following new members and those who have recently renewed their memberships:

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Angela & Dave Johnson/Beck

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Gregg & Laurie Burg
Peter & Grace Duren
Don Enderby
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Elsie Swanberg
Wayne Uckele
Lisa Adams
Alexandra Moore
Kimberly Sipperley
Barbara & Don Webb
Maggie O'Sullivan

Please Remember

*When renewing your
motor vehicle registra-
tion, be sure to opt
in to the Recreation
Passport.*

*Now more than ever
the future of our
state parks depends
on your support.*