

The Year in Review

In 2002, Seven Ponds Nature Center had another successful year as a nature sanctuary, environmental education center, and affiliate of the Michigan Audubon Society. The nature center maintained its usual busy schedule of day-to-day activities for schoolchildren, members, and the general public, with over 20,000 people taking part in programs. At the same time, the nature center tackled several new projects identified in the center's Strategic Plan, adopted in August, 2000.

The nature center continued to emphasize environmental education for children during the year, and served nearly 11,000 young people. Children from preschool age and up came out to Seven Ponds to learn about the natural world using the center's woodlands, fields, ponds, and prairie. Other school children received in-classroom presentations when our naturalists brought a bit of the nature center to their site through our Traveling Naturalist program. Many area young people also attended the center's Summer Field School program, coming out to the center for in-depth activities throughout the summer. Special day-long programs on fossils, insects, and astronomy were also offered. All of these programs exposed students to the wonders of the natural world, complemented school science curriculums, and helped raise the environmental awareness of the young people participating in the activities.

Members and visitors were treated to a variety of programs in 2002. Presentations titled **All About the Fox** (Gordon Lonnie), **Florida Travelogue** (Roger Bajorek), **Michigan Birds of Prey** (Wildlife Recovery Association), **The People of the Three Fires** (Nokomis Native American Cultural Center), **Birds of our Lakes, Marshes, and Seashores** (Jim Simek), **Fly Tying** (Dale Vronch), **Ecology of the Great Lakes** (Chuck Barnes), **Michigan Warblers** (Roger Eriksson), **Peru** (Terri Chapdelaine), **Winter Gulls** (Dave Stimac), and **Aquatic Insects** (John Keeler) provided excellent opportunities for learning. Staff and volunteers added workshops on **Taxidermy, Astronomy, Aquatic Plants, Grasses, Bird Identification, Bird Nests, Arizona Birding, Hawk Identification, Nature at Night, Canoeing, and Prairie Planting**. Many additional educational activities were provided by the center's special interest groups: **Friends of Herbs, Butterfly Gardeners, Astronomy Club, Eastern Michigan Collectors, and the SPNC Birding Club**. Sunday walks at 2:00 p.m. for members and the general public continued as a regular feature in 2002. Finally, the nature center offered several special events during the year. This year's events were **Winterfest, Spring Festival, Heritage Harvest Days, and Birdseed Weekend**.

Seven Ponds completed four natural history field tours in 2002, traveling to Newfoundland, the Smoky Mountains, the Bruce Peninsula, and Southwest Michigan. Participants in these trips not only enjoyed the special natural features of these locations, but were also exposed to conservation issues and efforts in other parts of the state, country, and world.

Seven Ponds worked on three large projects on the grounds during 2002. First, a quarter-mile boardwalk trail was completed through wetland habitat in Paul's Woods. When combined with existing trails, the boardwalk creates a loop trail for visitors walking in this portion of the center. The new trail has become very popular with visitors as it provides access to swamp habitat and views of Miller Pond. Second, the Herb and Butterfly Gardens were relocated. In late May, the gardens were moved to the open area adjacent to the driveway and they are already well established in their new homes. Third, preparation began

for the planting of the final two acres of Earl's Prairie, with plans to complete the project in 2003 or 2004. Work included brush removal, mowing, and seed collecting.

The center worked on a variety of other projects on the grounds in 2002. We made additional progress on the natural landscaping demonstration at the Director's Residence, removed non-native plants, such as purple loosestrife and autumn olive, from center property, and monitored over 100 nest boxes used by bluebirds, tree swallows, house wrens, and others.

The nature center conducted a number of fundraising events in 2002 including the **Lapeer County Birdathon, Stingers Rummage Sale, Heritage Harvest Days, Birdseed Weekend, Special Gifts**, and the **Holiday Auction**. These events were all very successful, thanks to lots of hard work and great participation.

Throughout the year, members and friends of Seven Ponds were kept abreast of the nature center's programs, projects, and fundraising efforts through the quarterly newsletter, *Heron Tracks*. The newsletter also contains articles about natural history and Seven Ponds. Titles of this year's lead articles were: "The Red-winged Blackbird", "Through the Swamp to Miller Pond", "Botany and Birds in the Bruce Peninsula", and "The Subnivean: A Snowy Winter World".

As always, the people of Seven Ponds really came through during the year. Our staff of nine (full and part time) worked very hard, often putting in extra effort during busy seasons or before special events. The nature center again received thousands of hours from hundreds of volunteers. The Assistant Naturalists (ASNATS), women's auxiliary (Stingers), Board of Directors, and others contributed many hours of time in education, habitat management, trail and garden maintenance, clerical work, fundraising, and governance. Our special thanks to each and every one for helping make the year 2002 a productive one at Seven Ponds.