

Seven Ponds Nature Center

2019 Annual Report



SEVEN PONDS NATURE CENTER

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Mission

The mission of Seven Ponds Nature Center is to conserve the natural environment of the nature center as a sanctuary for native plants and animals, as a living classroom for environmental education, and as a peaceful retreat for its visitors. The nature center's mission, further, is to foster an understanding and appreciation of our natural world, and to develop an environmental ethic in the people and communities of Southeast Michigan through education, service as a community resource, and responsible stewardship of nature center and adjacent lands.

2019 Board of Directors

Nancy Buck, Chairman, Member-at-large

Joanna Pease, Vice-Chairman, Grosse Pointe Audubon Representative

Paul Messing, Secretary, Macomb Audubon Representative

Greg Gossick, Treasurer, Oakland Audubon Representative

Daryl Bernard, Ex Officio, Executive Director

Mike Butterfield, Member-at-large

Kathy Churchill, Member-at-large

Emory Clark, Member-at-large

Sandy Cornell, Member-at-large

Bill Haney, Member-at-large

Gisela Lendle King, Detroit Audubon Representative

Mike Mercier, Lapeer Audubon Representative

Lois Rheame, Member-at-large

Jocelyn Scofield, Member-at-large

Susie Stroh, Member-at-large

Terry Toland, Member-at-large

Nan Toppin, Member-at-large

Lisa Yarema, Member-at-large

Charlie Turner, Lifetime Member

2019 Staff

Daryl Bernard, Executive Director

Carrie Spencer, Director of Environmental Education/Chief Naturalist

Mike Grappin, Maintenance

Stacey Holinsworth, Weekend Receptionist/Gift Store Manager

Nancy Kautz, Seasonal Naturalist

Katie McKiernan, Naturalist

Karen Page, Seasonal Weekday Receptionist/Media Specialist

Diane Rankin, Office Manager

Cathy Wesley, Naturalist

SEVEN PONDS NATURE CENTER

2019: The Year in Review

INTRODUCTION

Seven Ponds Nature Center strived to fulfill its mission in 2019 by offering a wide range of unique and innovative educational programs, tried and true family events, and opportunities for growth and learning.

The year was a successful one at Seven Ponds Nature Center, where the focus continues to be that of connecting people with nature. Our mission to serve Southeast Michigan guides us forward: as a sanctuary for native plants and animals, a living classroom for environmental education, and a peaceful retreat for our visitors. Thousands of school-age children took part in a wide variety of educational opportunities, including school field trips, Traveling Naturalist programs, Annie's Big Nature Lesson, scout programs, Knee-high Naturalists, Camp Seven Ponds, and weekend activities. The nature center offered a wide range of trail walks, workshops, classes, field trips, club activities, and field tours, intended for audiences ranging from pre-school children to families to adults, and open to members and non-members alike. A number of projects were completed at the nature center, each intended to improve either our visitors' experience or enhance the grounds for native wildlife.

As we move into a new decade full of both promises and challenges, let's take a look back at the year now behind us.

LAND STEWARDSHIP

For more than five decades the staff and volunteers of Seven Ponds have worked to nurture and care for the land and water around the nature center. As such, we are the proud stewards of nearly 500 acres of forests, fields, grasslands, ponds, and wetlands. The nature center serves as a living textbook of the natural communities found in Southeast Michigan. Working to preserve native species, remove invasive species, and maintain the

trails, nesting boxes, prairies, and woodlands is an ongoing challenge and requires the efforts of the entire naturalist staff, maintenance crew, and numerous volunteers.



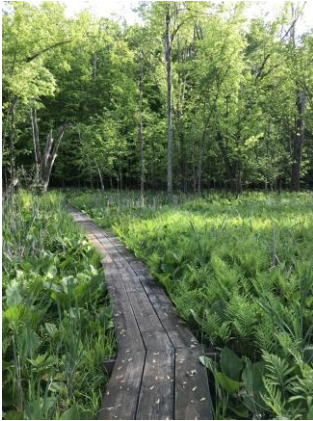
The year marked the eighth in a row of a tree planting project called “Forest of the Future,” which is intended to improve the woodland around the interpretive building and beyond through the planting of native tree species. Funds were obtained through the nature center’s “Buy-a-Tree” campaign and various native trees were purchased for the planting. In 2019, 30 trees were planted, with focus given to the Woodland Wildflower Area and the woods to the north of the interpretive building. We continued to remove fencing from trees planted in the earlier years of the project, which allowed us to re-use these enclosures and save funds in the process. A special planting of five white oak trees was done just to the south of the building to help create a buffer between the back parking lot and the trail to the Woodland Wildflower Area. This new “trail” will help guide visitors to the Woodland Wildflower Area and will prevent parked cars from blocking the view of the trail. It will be fun to watch these trees grow in the coming years and decades.



Seven Ponds continued its tradition of offering and managing well over 100 nest boxes for songbirds and Wood Ducks. Our songbird boxes were utilized by Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds, House Wrens, and Black-capped Chickadees. With a cadre of volunteers, each checking their own assigned section, the boxes were monitored weekly over several months, with results and data submitted to NestWatch, a national project coordinated by the

Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. By participating in the NestWatch program, Seven Ponds contributes to the scientific endeavor to better understand the status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds. In addition to songbird nest boxes, Seven Ponds maintains more than 40 larger nest boxes, which are utilized by a wide range of birds and other animals, including Wood Ducks, Eastern Screech-Owls, Gray Squirrels, and other critters.





The nearly seven miles of trails throughout the North-80, Paul's Woods, Earl's Prairie, and areas around the interpretive building provided access to a wide diversity of habitats for both members and non-members. The Miller Pond Boardwalk (pictured, right) traverses along the shore of Treetop and Miller ponds, and provides access to an interesting swamp forest habitat with cattails, skunk cabbage, ferns, and views of both ponds. Our visitors enjoyed visits through all four seasons and a wide range of weather. The trails were available to members from dawn to dusk, every day of the year.

The never-ending battle against non-native, invasive plants continued in 2019. These plants spread at will if not kept in check, often out-competing native species, to the detriment of all the native animals for which native plants form the basis of the food web. Nature center staff and volunteers worked on at least fifteen species of invasive plants, including garlic mustard, glossy buckthorn, honeysuckle, crown vetch, oriental bittersweet, autumn olive, Canada thistle, dame's rocket, and purple loosestrife, in areas throughout the nature center's property, including near the building, in the North-80, in Earl's Prairie, around the lakes, at Richie Pond Preserve, and at Jonathan Woods. The effort against invasive plants was spearheaded by naturalist Cathy Wesley, who coordinated with volunteers and a local contractor.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

A key part of our mission is to act as an outdoor classroom for environmental education. In 2019, the nature center continued several successful endeavors aimed at connecting people of all ages to nature through many high quality environmental education programs. A wide range of programs were offered throughout the year, including school field trips, homeschool programs, scout programs, Knee-high Naturalists, Traveling Naturalist programs, outreach, seasonal walks, and other special programs for children and families. Annie's Big Nature Lesson and Camp Seven Ponds both provided more in-depth opportunities for students.



Annie's Big Nature Lesson is one of the premier environmental education opportunities conducted at Seven Ponds. Provided through the generosity of a grant from the Four County Community Foundation, students from Dryden Elementary (5th grade, one week), Leonard Elementary in Oxford (5th grade, one week), and Borland Elementary in Imlay City (4th grade, three weeks) spent an entire week – five full school days – at Seven Ponds Nature Center with our naturalists, their teachers, and parent chaperones. In essence, the building and grounds of Seven Ponds became their classroom for a full week. It was truly an impactful experience they will benefit from and remember fondly for a very long time.



Throughout most of the summer, the nature center was filled with kids enjoying Camp Seven Ponds! Week-long day camp sessions were offered for several age groups, including Pint-Sized Explorers (2-3 years old), Knee-High Naturalists (4-5 years old), Young Explorers (6-11 years old), and Junior Naturalists (12-15 years old). The younger age groups enjoyed nature-based games, crafts, stories, and investigations. Young Explorers could choose from four different offerings, including Icky Nature, Adapt & Survive, Land of Six Legs, and Let's Get Furry. Junior Naturalists spent their week exploring nature through canoeing, hiking, games, activities, art, and more.

Knee-High Naturalist classes, aimed at children around 3 or 4 years of age, were offered throughout the year. Each class included nature fun, like walks, crafts, games, stories, snacks, and more. Sessions offered in 2019 included: Quiet Eggs, Squirrely Squirrels, Insect Chant, Salamanders, Bloomin' Flowers, When Winter Comes, Art in Nature, and Five Senses.

Seven Ponds conducted numerous outreach programs, traveling into the surrounding communities to represent the nature center at various events and festivals. During these outreach days, Seven Ponds naturalists interacted with visitors, answered questions, displayed teaching specimens, and provided information about the nature center. Among the many outreach events this year were Woods-n-Water Outdoor Weekend (Imlay City), Lavender Festival (Armada), Earth Day Event (Flint), Clinton River Water Festival (Oakland University), Family Fun Day (Lapeer), Strawberryfest (Leonard), CTC Earth Day at the Chrysler Building, Whiting Forest Birding Festival (Midland), and presentations at several elementary schools, libraries, garden clubs, and Audubon clubs.

The popular Winter Series continued this year, featuring unique presentations on six successive Sunday afternoons from late January through February. Topics during this year's series included *Reptiles from Around the World*, *Bats of Michigan*, *Identifying Michigan Beach Rocks*, *Michigan Road Trip*, and *A Year in the Life of a Chickadee*.

Four clubs continued their association with Seven Ponds: Astronomy Club, Beekeeping Club, Birding Club, and Photography Club. Each of these clubs offered opportunities for learning, exploring, and engaging with other like-minded people. During 2019 the clubs continued to meet, mostly at Seven Ponds but occasionally off-site, generally on a monthly basis. On any given Tuesday, Friday, or Saturday evening, the nature center's parking lot may have been overflowing with visitors, as these clubs' activities are very popular. Seven Ponds clubs participated in our *Party at the Ponds*, where club members offered demonstrations.

The nature center offered five field tours in 2019, including three birding field tours and two natural history field tours. In January, a group of intrepid birders crossed the mighty Mackinac Bridge for a three day trip to the eastern Upper Peninsula. Despite temperatures as low as -21°F, the group enjoyed more than 30 Snowy Owls, plus a Northern Hawk Owl and many other hardy feathered denizens of the frozen north. Seven Ponds led a birding field tour to Oregon in May, where birders were wowed by the splendor and beauty of this state along with its stunning birds, from the rocky coastline of the Pacific, across the Cascade Mountain range, to the grasslands and deserts of the east. Come June, naturalists from Seven Ponds led a



group of explorers into the rugged and striking landscape of Acadia National Park in Maine, where mountain hikes, coastal adventures, and a whale-watching trip filled their days. August found Seven Ponds birders in southeast Arizona, the U.S. mecca of birding locations, where participants marveled at the stark landscape, the Sky Islands, and the many special birds that call this area home – including thirteen species of hummingbirds. Fall colors abounded during a natural history field tour to Indiana's Turkey Run State Park in October. Each of these tours provided our guests with an opportunity to travel, explore, learn, and enjoy the company of fellow travelers and Seven Ponds leaders.



SPECIAL EVENTS

Once again, the nature center hosted five events throughout the seasons, including WinterFest, Eco Days & Native Plant Sale, Party at the Ponds, Enchanted Woodland, and Birdseed Saturday. This year's activities were augmented by a new event, Celestial Skies over Seven Ponds, hosted by our Astronomy Club.



WinterFest was held on the first Saturday in February in 2019. For the first time in several years we had true winter weather, and conditions around the nature center were perfect for a day of cold-weather activities. Naturalist Katie McKiernan headed up the event, and the day went off without a hitch. Ice on Treetop Pond was smooth and slick, and many people laced up their skates and enjoyed a skate. The ice was 8-10 inches thick – ideal for demonstrating traditional ice-cutting methods. The snow was deep and great for packing, which led to several creative entries in our snowman-building contest. Kids and kids-at-heart took their turns throwing snowballs at our target. And a toasty bonfire helped ensure hot dogs were roasted to perfection, and s'mores were prepared to everyone's satisfaction.

As is tradition, spring was celebrated in May as we hosted our Eco Days & Native Plant Sale, a weekend of nature-based activities and a sale of native grasses and wildflowers. In 2019, the weekend agenda included owl pellet dissecting, chalk murals, aquatic critters from the ponds, microscope investigation, trail mix making, seed bombs, bird house building, flower press making, and more. The Stingers held a bake sale and Resale Shoppe. Naturalist Cathy Wesley coordinated the event, and Chief Naturalist Carrie Spencer was on hand to assist prospective native plant purchasers with knowledgeable advice and suggestions.



In June, the Seven Ponds Astronomy Club hosted the first-ever Celestial Skies over Seven Ponds. Astronomy Club members were on hand to answer questions and offer viewing with their telescopic equipment, noted experts gave presentations and demonstrations, and crafts were offered. Although the night skies were not conducive to quality viewing, well over 100 people attended and everybody had a wonderful time despite the clouds overhead. The club looks forward to hosting a bigger and better (and hopefully clear sky) event in 2020.

In August the nature center staff hosted our annual Party at the Ponds, a summer celebration of all things Seven Ponds. As always, this event was presented free of charge, and provided a full day of fun, adventure, and discovery intended for the entire family. A children's area hosted games and activities. The Stingers offered their Resale Shoppe and their highly regarded gingerbread with lemon sauce. Seven Ponds club representatives were on hand to answer questions, provide information, and conduct demonstrations. Among the nature-based activities were naturalist-led trail walks, golf cart tours, canoeing the ponds, prairie wagon rides, field netting, and pond dipping. For the first time ever, a local food truck (Tacos el Torete) was on hand with great food available for purchase. A good time was had by all!



Always a favorite on the event calendar, the Enchanted Woodland was held in early October. Once again the evening was a fun and educational Seven Ponds tradition for the young and young-at-heart alike. Coordinated by Naturalist Nancy Kautz, the event consisted of an escorted walk along a candlelit trail where children met creatures of the nighttime forest. This year's Enchanted Woodland featured appearances by Raccoon, Eastern Gray Squirrel, Luna Moth, Beaver, and Red Eft (Eastern Newt). These costumed characters delighted their visitors with an entertaining and informative performance. The trail walk ended inside the nature center where hot cider and donuts were available. Like many of the events and activities that take place at Seven Ponds, this event relied heavily upon a cast of volunteers, and the staff truly appreciated their dedication and commitment.



Birdseed Saturday, conducted in October, was an opportunity for our patrons to purchase various bird seeds from Seven Ponds at a reduced price. Although the event was scaled back somewhat this year, attendees were delighted and entertained by Joe Rogers and his staff from *Wildlife Recover Association*. The stars of Joe's show, of course, were the many rehabilitated raptors he brought along, allowing audience members to be up close and personal with several hawks and owls. The Stingers were also on-hand with a bake sale and used book sale.

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS

Winter activities and programs offered in 2019 included three Winter Bird Walks, Behind the Scenes at Seven Ponds, Lapeer County Christmas Bird Count, Adult Learners Class – Property Management, Evening in the Wild for Young Adults, Walking in Winter, Snowshoeing the Trails, Wee Readers – *Stranger in the Woods*, Nature Sketching, Uniquely Snowflake, Chasing Tracks, Instagram Photo Competition, and Chestnut Trivia Night.

Spring activities and programs offered in 2019 included four Spring Bird Walks, Nature Walk with Your Dog at the Polly Ann Trail, Coyote Song, Shamrock Planter Building, Yoga at the Ponds (six sessions), Wee Readers – *What Joe Saw*, Craft Day, Morning Paddle at the Ponds, Walking in Spring, Her Day, two Land Stewardship Help Days, Behind the Scenes, Sensory Bike Hike on the Polly Ann Trail, Adventure Gang, Evening Paddle at the Ponds, Golf Cart Tours, and Topsy Naturalist. A *Self Care in Nature* series was offered that included Journaling in Nature, Homemade Body Care, and Soap Making for Beginners.

Summer activities and programs offered in 2019 included three Summer Bird Walks, Adventure Gang: Beekeeping, Wee Readers – *Lost in the Woods*, Stand Up Paddle Board Education, Firefly Light Night Hike, Yoga at the Ponds (six sessions), Rocks, Seven Ponds' Trail Rally, Butterfly Count, Golf Cart Tours, Prairie Stroll, Hop-Run-Fly – Let's see Jonathan Woods in July, Painting at the Ponds, Family Pond Dipping, Morning Paddle at the Ponds, Adventure Gang: Canoeing, Evening Paddle at the Ponds, and three Land Stewardship Workdays. Three birding field trips were offered, including An Evening at Nayanquing, A Bird Drive on the Wild Side at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, and Wednesday at the Wastewater (Muskegon).

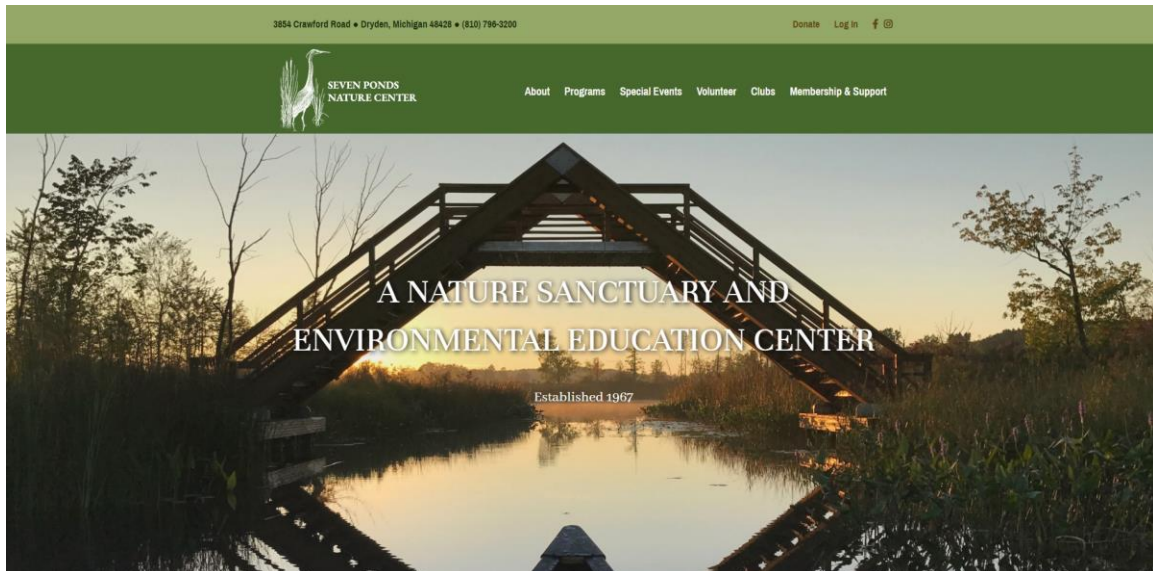
Autumn activities and programs offered in 2019 included three Fall Bird Walks, A Walk in the Woods, Yoga at the Ponds (six sessions), Golf Cart Tours, Bike Hike the Polly Ann Trail, two Land Stewardship Workdays, Webelos Badge Day – Into the Wild, Brownie Badge Day – Bugs, Wee Reader – *Leaf Man*, Owl Prowl, Prairie Seed Collecting, Nature Walk with Your Dog on the Polly Ann Trail, Jonathan Woods Fall Color Walk, Coffee with a Naturalist, Prairie Seed Collecting, Tea Time, Natural Ornament Making, and Adventure Gang: Owl Prowl.

MEDIA & COMMUNICATION

Continuing a tradition of more than five decades, the nature center continued to produce its quarterly newsletter, *Heron Tracks*, which was sent to all Seven Ponds members. As usual, the newsletter consisted of an informative natural history article written by a Seven Ponds naturalist, a seasonal program schedule, acknowledgement of grants, gifts, donations, memorials and honorariums, club news, fliers for upcoming

events, field tour information, volunteer news and opportunities, and information about many other happenings at the nature center. The staff, led by media specialist Karen Page, worked hard to get the newsletter mailed out and in the hands of our members prior to the start of each new season.

A brand-new web site was launched on April 24, marking a new era in Seven Ponds' web presence. The site is fully manageable by nature center staff, allowing for quick and easy changes and updates. Included on the site are the nature center's programs, events, volunteer opportunities, trail reports, nature center history, information about our staff and board of directors, tips for visitors, and more. The site features online registration for programs and events, the ability to open a new membership or renew an existing membership, and the opportunity to donate to various fundraising campaigns. This new site was enthusiastically received by our members and supporters, with many positive comments received by nature center staff.



Naturalist Cathy Wesley managed the nature center's social media presence, including Facebook and Instagram. These internet mediums were used for education, information, and as a way to highlight the happenings at Seven Ponds.

Numerous fliers and brochures were published and printed as a means of advertising the various events and opportunities provided by the nature center, such as WinterFest, Eco Days & Native Plant Sale, Party at the Ponds, Birdseed Saturday, Enchanted Woodland, Camp Seven Ponds, Trail Rally, birding and natural history field tours, birthday parties, club activities, etc.

Local newspapers such as the *Tri-City Times* and *The County Press* were notified of our schedule, and were regularly invited out to Seven Ponds to report on the happenings at the nature center. Press releases were sent to several news agencies regarding special events and grants received. We appreciate the coverage in our local media.

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

Signs for the Times

Our signs up front announcing the nature center and listing information, hours, etc. had become quite worn, showing their age, and they were in need of replacing. We worked with a local sign company and within short order we had shiny new signs in



place. Added to the back side of the information sign was a "Thank You for Visiting Seven Ponds, Please Come Again" sign.



LED Lighting Project

With funding raised from the spring Bird-a-Thon, our maintenance staff (Mike Grappin) set out to replace all of the fluorescent lighting in the main level of the nature center building with LED lighting. Providing much greater energy efficiency as well as a significantly longer life-span, this project will provide savings for many years to come.

Vandalism on Crawford Road

On the morning of July 20, we were both shocked and saddened to find that our large "Seven Ponds Nature Center" sign on the corner of Crawford Road and Lake George Road had suffered extensive damage at the hands of vandals. Shortly after sharing our bad news on the nature center's Facebook page, a friend and supporter of Seven Ponds started a Facebook fundraiser to help offset the cost of replacement (estimated at \$300). Much to our wonderment and surprise, nearly \$2000 was raised over the next few days!



Front Boardwalk replaced with Concrete Walkway

After battling the boardwalk for many years, the nature center decided to replace the wooden walkway leading up to the interpretive building. The boards that made up the walkway, having been subjected to intense summer heat and the whims of the weather, had warped and twisted to the point of being difficult to keep nailed down,

and thus had become not only unsightly but also a safety hazard. A new, wide, completely flat walkway made of exposed aggregate concrete proved a perfect solution. Evening visitors get to see the glowing stones scattered throughout the concrete, which appear as tiny shining stars underfoot.

Wooden Swing

In honor of dedicated members past and present, the Stingers purchased a beautiful cedar swing for the nature center. Sitting on a small rise behind the Butterfly Garden, the swing offers visitors a serene view of the garden and grounds as they relax and enjoy the peaceful retreat that Seven Ponds offers.



North-80 Tree Service Work

Crews from a local tree service spent quite a bit of time in the nature center's North-80 during late summer, trimming trees and clearing power lines on behalf of DTE Energy. The end result was a stark clear-cut under the power lines in the woodlands and grasslands along the entire length of Crawford Road and Calkins Road.

FINANCES & FUNDRAISING

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Seven Ponds depends largely on the generosity of our supporters and the commitment of our members. The nature center's annual budget is based on earnings from our Endowment Fund and Reserve Fund, as well as membership fees, program fees, donations from supporters, contributions from local service groups and other organizations, and grants from community foundations. To supplement these revenue sources, the nature center holds four special fund raisers: Bird-a-thon, Corks & Caps, Holiday Auction, and Special Gifts Campaign.

On a Saturday morning in May, a squadron of top-notch birders rose well before dawn, searching first for owls and birds that begin singing in the pre-dawn darkness. Throughout the rest of the day, this team traveled Lapeer County far and wide looking for birds, and in so doing placed a check mark next to more than 100 species names on their bird list. For their efforts, the Seven Ponds Bird-a-Thon team raised approximately \$2,700 in support of the nature center's LED lighting program.

At the end of May, the fourth annual Corks & Caps Fundraiser (formerly the Wine Tasting Event) was held at the *Metamora Golf and Country Club*. Perfect weather and a careful planning on the part of the Board of Directors' Development Committee combined to make a wonderful and memorable evening. Live auction items, presented by professional auctioneer Brian Rowley, provided both entertainment for the crowd and revenue for the nature center. Along with ticket sales, raffle tickets, and donations, the event netted an unprecedented \$37,000 for nature center programs and operations.

Our annual Holiday Auction and Christmas Party took place on the first Saturday in December. The festive event is open to both members and their guests. Wine, beer, and food were all provided, and a good time was had by all. Items were donated by members and other supporters and were displayed for silent auction, with a select number of high-quality items and experiences up for bid during the evening's live auction. By the end of the evening, the nature center had raised nearly \$22,000 in support of programming and operations.



During our year-end Special Gifts Campaign we sent an appeal to our members and supporters around mid-November. Over the next six weeks or so gifts and contributions continued to arrive at the center – some large, some small, every single one very important and greatly appreciated. By the end of the year donations had reached in excess of \$38,000, supporting our operations and helping to ensure a successful fiscal year at Seven Ponds.

Several organizations supported Seven Ponds through financial donations and grants in 2019. The *Four County Community Foundation* granted \$16,500 in support of school field trips, Annie's Big Nature Lesson, and a training workshop for teachers. *Lapeer Optimist Club* (\$2,500) and *Lapeer Kiwanis Club* (\$3,000) provided funds in support of Lapeer area school children attending field trips to the nature center. The *Rochester Garden Club* awarded the nature center just over \$400 to pay for equipment and supplies supporting our educational programming.

STAFF, BOARD, & VOLUNTEERS

A small but dedicated staff continued to do what needed to be done in order to make everything happen in 2019. The staff was augmented, of course, by a committed group of volunteers who stepped in whenever needed, proving the adage "many hands make light work."

The naturalist staff consists of Chief Naturalist and Director of Environmental Education Carrie Spencer, full-time Naturalists Cathy Wesley, Katie McKiernan, and seasonal Naturalist Nancy Kautz. Diane Rankin is the nature center's Office Manager, administering payroll and bookkeeping among other duties. Media Specialist Karen

Page and Gift Store Manager Stacey Holinsworth also serve as the center's receptionists, greeting visitors at the front desk and checking in participants for programs. Mike Grappin oversees the maintenance of the building and grounds. Daryl Bernard is the Executive Director.

In November of 2019, Naturalist Cathy Wesley submitted her resignation, having accepted a position with West Bloomfield Parks & Recreation as their Park Naturalist. Cathy's nearly six-years at Seven Ponds prepared her well for her duties at West Bloomfield, and we wish her much success in her new endeavor. A search began for a new Seven Ponds Naturalist, and after many applications had been reviewed and several candidates interviewed, Nicole Kopas was hired to take the position of part-time Naturalist, with her Seven Ponds career scheduled to begin in January of 2020. Welcome, Nicole!

The Board of Directors welcomed new members Lisa Yarema and Terry Toland, and returning member Nan Toppin, as Kelly Heyner took a hiatus after concluding her second consecutive three-year term. Mary-Sue Weber stepped down as board chair, having completed six years in that position. The following officers were elected: Nancy Buck as Chair, Joanna Pease as Vice-chair, Paul Messing as Secretary, and Greg Gossick as Treasurer. Long-time board member Emory Clark resigned his position in October, as he and his wife Christina sold their home in Metamora and moved to South Carolina. The board met six times throughout the calendar year to discuss nature center business and policies, review finances, and consider future opportunities. Two committees – the Finance Committee and the Development Committee – met several times during the year to discuss pertinent issues and opportunities.

The staff held a Volunteer Appreciation Picnic in July, where our dedicated volunteers were honored for their many contributions to the operation of the nature center. Each group was recognized for their efforts. Kelly Eastin was presented with the Volunteer of the Year Award for her many hours spent at the nature center in 2019 working in animal care and doing various deep cleaning projects.



The Stingers, formally known as the Friends of Seven Ponds, contributed to the nature center's activities and events in many ways. They once again held their annual rummage sale in mid-June, as well as book sales and bake sales at various nature center events throughout the year. As usual, the Stingers were also key volunteers at the nature center's Holiday Auction and Christmas Party in December. This year they recognized the contributions of Stingers past and present with the donation of a beautiful cedar swing.

Two long-standing volunteer groups, the Friends of Herbs and the Butterfly Gardeners, continued their efforts to enhance the nature center grounds, maintaining the Herb Garden and Butterfly Garden, respectively. Both of these volunteer groups depend on the dedication of their members to maintain their beautiful gardens.



As always, the nature center staff depended on a cadre of volunteers, who helped us in so many ways. Live animal care, *Heron Tracks* mailing, building maintenance and housekeeping, seed jug filling, trail work, invasive species removal, nest box monitoring, gift store inventory, and special events are just a few of the ways our many volunteers contributed their time and talents to the nature center. We truly appreciate the dedication of our volunteers!

CONCLUSION

With the year – and the decade – behind us, we look forward to the new year and new decade with renewed hope and enthusiasm. We are bolstered by the strong continued support shown for the nature center by our members and the community at large. We face the challenges before us with hope and confidence in what we have done, with the knowledge and understanding that new and innovative strategies will be necessary to meet those challenges.

Rest assured, however, that even as we grow and change, Seven Ponds will continue to be what it always has been: an organization dedicated to preserving a piece of pristine Michigan woods and wetlands, a staff committed to providing high quality environmental education, and a place where visitors can always enjoy a peaceful retreat.



Seven Ponds Nature Center Investment Funds

Endowment Fund

Market Value on 01/01/2019	\$2,077,396.18
Market Value on 12/31/2019	\$2,633,397.81
Income to General Account in 2019	\$105,713.96

Reserve Fund

Market Value on 01/01/2019	\$313,720.41
Market Value on 12/31/2019	\$356,636.03
Income to General Account in 2019	\$15,877.80

Seven Ponds Nature Center Activity Report

2019 - Seven Ponds Nature Center Activity Report

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	TOTAL	2018	2017
School and Youth Groups															
Seasonal	0	0	0	131	110	79	34	54	105	46	0	0	559	621	821
Explorer	0	0	0	0	505	272	0	0	236	979	405	20	2417	3173	3493
Traveling Naturalist	51	485	297	659	639	87	20	30	41	274	161	49	2793	3113	1461
Scouts	0	0	14	33	40	32	12	45	29	68	37	26	336	367	388
Homeschool	30	21	17	31	15	6	0	0	28	25	5	8	186	84	97
Birthday Parties	0	0	0	15	0	67	0	12	21	24	0	0	139	187	180
Annie's Big Nature Lesson	0	107	520	297	108	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1032	936	975
SUBTOTAL	81	613	848	1166	1417	543	66	141	460	1416	608	103	7462	8481	7415
Misc. Adult/Fam Programs															
Nature Center	15	0	0	0	0	116	0	4	15	86	28	3	267	200	144
Outreach	5	0	53	505	189	101	1250	115	1009	34	138	0	3399	2525	2273
SUBTOTAL	20	0	53	505	189	217	1250	119	1024	120	166	3	3666	2725	2417
Member & Public Activities															
Camp Seven Ponds	0	0	0	0	0	46	85	45	0	0	0	0	176	143	176
Knee-High Naturalists	24	16	11	22	0	0	0	0	16	19	14	17	139	156	168
Pgms/Videos/Etc.	181	210	96	85	32	94	63	29	47	61	29	7	934	605	1102
Special Events		157	0	120	425	0	0	200	0	264	0	125	1291	1318	3123
Field Trips	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	26	0	0	0	0	32	22	12
Field Tours	11	0	0	0	8	14	0	9	0	12	0	0	54	45	26
Rentals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62	100
SUBTOTAL	216	383	107	227	465	160	148	309	63	356	43	149	2626	2351	4707
Volunteer & Interest Groups	221	192	247	267	342	213	192	160	166	184	140	127	2451	2466	2752
Casual Visitors	368	158	366	465	591	731	706	739	575	705	312	261	5977	5868	5986
TOTAL	906	1346	1621	2630	3004	1864	2362	1468	2288	2781	1269	643	22182	21891	23277