

Water's Edge

Gratiot Lake Conservancy News

Volume 27

Fall 2025



Capturing Gratiot Lake and Bammert Farm Stories



Bammert Farm circa late 1800's. Photo courtesy of the Keweenaw County Historical Society, Margaret Hoffenbecker Collection and Frank Carlton.

The natural, land, and human history of Gratiot Lake and the of the Gratiot Lake Conservancy are fascinating and complex interwoven stories. Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson is working with MTU Archives staff, GLC members, and the Gratiot Lake community to help bring these stories to life with an interactive online **StoryMap**. As this project unfolds, GLC is seeking information on the natural/earth science story (geology, ecology, limnology) and the land story (from historical perspectives all the way to current times). Please direct comments, contributions, and questions to: Bonnie Hay: bonnie@gratiotlakeconservancy.org and Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson: djlizzad@mtu.edu

GLC is offering a virtual one hour workshop. There are two February sessions to choose from. Find out more about the GLC StoryMap and app. Bring your story or photo and learn how story maps are made. Find workshop details on page 4!

Thanks to YOU

Members, Donors, Volunteers, and Others who make GLC Tick and help care for the lake!

Here are some "Thanks to YOU" shout outs...

for invasive plant removal: KISMA weed crew at Gratiot Lake.

for assisting with the Cooperative Lake Monitoring Program: Dorothy Asher, Garri Budynsky, Jim Hay, Dorothy Jamison, and Claudette Walton. See lake data at www.micorps.org.

for removal of trash from Gratiot Lake shoreline during the September shoreline cleanup: Winona Asher, Mary, Mike and Bill Bingham, Diane and Dave Gothard, Jim and Bonnie Hay, Dorothy Jamison, and Mark Lewandowski (and all who pitched-in).

for pro bono services: Jim Tercha

for planning and implementing GLC programs: Daniel and Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson

for presenting programs: Kenny Larsen ("Beavers and Wetlands" at Members Meeting), Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson and Abe Stone (Roots&Rocks field trip)

for guidance and oversight of GLC: GLC Board and Officers: Bonnie Hay (President), Louis Lizzadro (VP & Treasurer), Gina Nicholas, (Secretary), Tony Lizzadro, Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson, and Will Lytle

for faithfully stewarding GLC land: Keweenaw Community Forest Company

for proofreading and editing this newsletter: Ben and Jim Hay

for minding the GLC website: Ben Hay

for contributing photos: Marie Celona, Lisa Bergman, Jim Hay, Dorothy Jamison, Amanda and Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson, and Gina Nicholas.

for attendance at GLC Members Meeting. Special thanks to all who brought refreshments and assisted with meeting tasks.

for administrative assistance: Celia DeMarois

GLC Gratefully Acknowledges Donors

November 1, 2024 to October 31, 2025



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William Bingham and Laura Cison
Bonnie and Jim Hay
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Jim Tercha



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Ring-Neck Duck Flotilla. Photo by Jim Hay

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Young Pied-billed Grebes. Photo by Jim Hay

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Bernice Smith

Clyde and Lloyd Wescoat

GLC Fund: Keweenaw Community Foundation

Michael and Mary Bingham

We Remember friends and neighbors who recently passed away...

Gratiot Lake neighbor **Ella Budynsky** was a generous GLC volunteer. She enthusiastically eradicated invasive weeds alongside the KISMA crew at the GLC Preserve, volunteered for September shoreline trash removal, and participated in many GLC educational programs.

Jim Francisco was a Gratiot Lake neighbor for many decades.

David Owens frequently shared his musical expertise for the enjoyment of the Keweenaw community. He was a longtime member of GLC.

Artist **Susan Robinson** was known for her beautiful, sensitive depictions of Keweenaw plants, animals, and rocks. She freely shared her talents with GLC and other local conservation organizations.

Geologist **Bill Rose** was supportive of GLC's mission. He was an inspiring teacher and mentor who advocated for the conservation of Keweenaw's geo-heritage. He did pro bono work for many Keweenaw conservation organizations including GLC and led a wonderful geology field trip by pontoon boat at Gratiot Lake.

William "Pat" Ryan and **Mary Jean Ryan** were founding members of GLC. Pat enjoyed woodworking and provided wood duck/merganser nestboxes for GLC.

Pamela Shaughnessy loved the Keweenaw where she grew up. She lived most of her life too far away to visit often, but was a long-time supporter of the GLC's education and conservation mission.

Learn the Art of Geospatial Storytelling

We invite you to attend an hour-long virtual geospatial storytelling workshop led by Dr. James Juip and Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson from Michigan Technological University's Geospatial Research Facility (GRF). Dr. Juip – an expert on community participatory mapping and geospatial storytelling– will present on 'The Art of Geospatial Storytelling' and how to map one's story using a webGIS storytelling application developed at the GRE, tailored for the Gratiot Lake Conservancy. GLC is offering two separate dates to participate in this workshop. Each session will include a brief presentation and a hands-on demonstration for creating web-based geospatial story points using your smart-device or computer. These stories will focus on the people, memories, wildlife, history, research, and other connections to the Gratiot Lake Conservancy. Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson will provide a demonstration on how to access and utilize the new GLC WebAtlas and the GLC Community Storytelling Map.

Select the date/time most convenient for you:

1. Wednesday, February 11th, 2026 (7pm–8pm eastern)
2. Saturday, February 21st, 2026 (2pm – 3pm eastern)

To receive the workshop link contact Bonnie Hay:

bonnie@gratiotlakeconservancy.org . Please indicate the date you would like to attend. You will receive more info and a secure Zoom link with passcode. Questions about the workshop content can be directed to Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson: djlizzad@mtu.edu



Janet Marr introduces GLC workshop participants to aquatic vegetation at Gratiot Lake. Photo by Bonnie Hay

Aquatic and Wetland Plant ID Workshop Planned

On August 15, 2026, botanist Janet Marr will teach a one-day, field-based workshop geared towards land managers, conservationists, botanists, and other environmental professionals and students. She will focus on aquatic and wetland plants through exploration of Gratiot Lake environs and sharing of plant samples gleaned from other Keweenaw locations. Marr has held previous workshops on plant identification both for GLC and for the Isle Royal Natural History Association. In 2005/2006 she surveyed aquatic vegetation at Gratiot Lake and authored the handbook, "Guide to Aquatic Plants of Gratiot Lake and Other Keweenaw County Lakes." Over the years she has completed numerous botanical surveys for GLC and other conservation organizations.

The Aquatic and Wetland Plant ID Workshop **group size will be limited, and preregistration is required.** The fee is \$50 (member) \$70 (non-member).

Scholarships are available. For information and preregistration contact:

Bonnie@GratiotLakeConservancy.org

Gratiot Lake Conservancy – Roots & Rocks Program

Daniel J. Lizzadro-McPherson

In August, the Gratiot Lake Conservancy offered a Roots and Rocks guided field trip which focused on the geology and plant communities at two of the newest land additions to the Gratiot Lake Preserve. Botanist Abraham Stone (MNFI) and geologist/geospatial research scientist Daniel Lizzadro-McPherson (MTU-GLRC) led a diverse group of 13 participants on guided nature hikes at Creek 932 (Gratiot Ridge) and the Sager Court Wetlands to showcase the unique ecological and geologic features of these areas.

The 'hairpin turn' on GLC's Creek 932 land located on the north shore highlands above the lake was the focus of the morning hike. A very special thanks goes out to GLC members Jud Swenson and Mary Knight for granting easy hiking access across their property to this site. The group meandered along a primitive trail, stopping periodically to discuss interesting plants, fungi, trees, glacial boulders, and the historical landscape, before reaching the significant geosite at the 'hairpin turn' in the creek. The Creek 932 geosite is a structurally complex zone within the core of the Keweenaw fault system, featuring deformed Jacobsville sandstone (steep, fault-induced folds) in contact with basalt and trachydacite, a very rare copper-bearing, fine-grained volcanic rock. Lizzadro-McPherson and Stone point out the copper-bearing volcanic outcrop in the photo at right. (This rare rock was featured in an article Lizzadro-McPherson wrote for the [2024 Water's Edge Newsletter](#) which is available on the GLC website.)



Photo by Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson



Photo by Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson

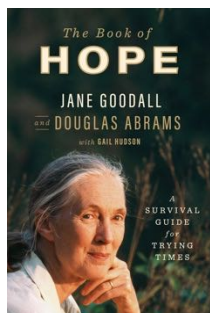
After enjoying a relaxing bag lunch at the Lizzadro-McPherson camp, the group headed to the south side of Gratiot Lake to explore the variety of plant habitats present at the Sager Court Wetlands. Viewed from Gratiot Lake's southern side, the shore's flat lowlands of Jacobsville sandstone are juxtaposed against the steep topography of the volcanic highlands across the lake. Hikers-traversed a succession of habitats from-aquatic, to emergent/shoreland plants, to herbaceous plants and shrubs, to young "disturbed" forest, and ultimately to a mature mixed hardwood forest with enormous Eastern Hemlock, White Pine, and Yellow Birch. In the photo at left, Stone discusses emergent/shoreland plants. This session truly engaged all the senses: tasting wild ripe dew berries, touching

and smelling chaga mushrooms, and listening to the whistling wind in different habitats.

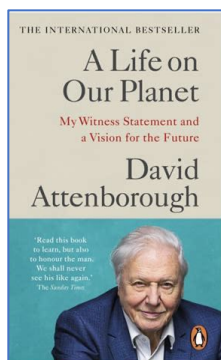
A post-trip survey revealed that some participants desired a longer and more rigorous hike, the inclusion of wildlife themes, and different levels of technical sophistication for those looking to dive deeper on specific topics. Stay tuned for more opportunities to go on guided, interpretive hikes with GLC.

Calling all Page Turners: GLC Book Club Picks

The GLC Book Club meets virtually to discuss natural history and environmental books that have relevance to the Keweenaw. To join in the book club's virtual discussions email: director@GratiotLakeConservancy.org. All discussions take place on Saturdays from Noon to 1:30 Eastern Time on Zoom. Although participants are encouraged to read the book ahead of the discussion, it is not a requirement. Also, there is no expectation for book club members to participate in the discussion for every book.



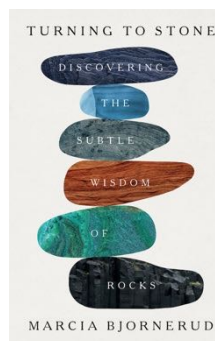
January 24th, 2026: *The Book of Hope: A Survival Guide for Trying Times* by Jane Goodall and Doug Abrams, 272 pp., published 2021. Through personal stories from her career and research, Goodall explores "Four Reasons for Hope": The Amazing Human Intellect, The Resilience of Nature, The Power of Young People, and The Indomitable Human Spirit. Goodall's recent death will add poignancy and depth to our discussion of this, her final book.



March 28th, 2026 : *A Life on Our Planet: My Witness Statement and a Vision for the Future* by David Attenborough, 282 pp., published 2020. Attenborough's "Witness Statement" details the decline in biodiversity and the rise of climate change in his lifetime. He doesn't leave the reader hanging on in despair. He suggests hopeful steps that can be taken in the second section, "Vision for the Future".



June 27th, 2026: *Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark* by Leigh Ann Henion, 333 pp., published 2024. Discover what nature reveals only in darkness. Nature writer Henion explores nighttime biodiversity such as salamander migrations, the glow of bioluminescent fungi, foraging bats, and the courtship of lightning bugs. Henion also authored *Phenomenal: A Hesitant Adventurer's Search for Wonder in the Natural World*. She has written for the *Smithsonian*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *Southern Living*, and *Garden & Gun*.



October 24th, 2026: *Turning to Stone: Discovering the Subtle Wisdom of Rocks* by Marcia Bjornerud, 320pp., published 2024. "Marcia Bjornerud's life as a geologist has coincided with an extraordinary period of discovery. From an insular girlhood in rural Wisconsin, she found her way to an unlikely career studying mountains in remote parts of the world. As one of few women in her field, she witnessed the shift in our understanding of the Earth, from solid object to an entity in a constant state of transformation. In the most tumultuous times of her own life, a deep understanding of our rocky planet imbued her life with meaning." (from *Goodreads.com* review). Bjornerud was awarded the 2025 John Borroughs Medal for exceptional natural history writing.

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Water's Edge Newsletter is published once a year by Gratiot Lake Conservancy. Bonnie Hay is newsletter editor. Submissions of articles or ideas for future content are welcomed. Please contact: Bonnie@GratiotLakeConservancy.org with comments, questions, and corrections.



At 7" in height, the Saw-whet is the smallest owl in Michigan. It is especially fond of a white footed mouse dinner but will eat other small mammals, small birds, and large insects. Saw-whets are usually reclusive and very hard to spot. The Saw-whet pictured once grazed a window of our house, presumably going after a hummingbird feeding late at the feeder. Stunned long enough for its picture to be taken by Jim Hay, the little owl was then quickly on its way, empty clawed.

Who's Calling? Meet Your Owl Neighbors!

Owl songs are not all alike. A series of deep, sonorous hoots may be a Great Horned Owl and a rapid "hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo- hoo hoo, hoo, hoo, Auwwwww" is likely a Barred Owl. To complicate matters, an owl species usually has more than one song. Owl calls are not all hoots. For instance, the Barred Owl not only "hoo, hoo, hoo, hoo's" but can also sound very much like a grunting chimpanzee! If you hear the sound of a knife being sharpened on a wet leather strap, or an hours-long series of toots, or a sharp screech, it may be a Saw-whet Owl. The best way to discover what owl you are hearing is to consult an ornithologist or get a bird call identification app such as Merlin Bird ID. Alternatively, consult the Cornell Lab website: www.allaboutbirds.org or the Audubon website: www.audubon.org/bird-guide

We cannot easily see Keweenaw owl neighbors because most are active primarily at night. Owl feathers provide tree-bark like camouflage which conceals them as they quietly rest on tree limb perches. Sometimes these roosting owls are roused by observant corvids such as ravens or crows. Once a corvid spies a roosting owl, the clever corvid will "caw-call" in some support, and the resulting corvid flock will loudly harass the drowsy owl. Corvids rightly view owls as predators and let owls know they are not welcome. If you witness such a Corvid kerfuffle, then you may be able to spot the owl!

Fall and Winter are perfect seasons to listen for owls. Both the Barred and Great Horned Owls are finding or reconnecting with mates and establishing territory then. The Copper Country Bird Club installed a Great Horned Owl nesting box at the former Jutila building in Hancock. In late January or February the camera that is trained on the open side of that nest box goes live online so that the courtship and rearing process from egg laying to fledging can be observed. Once the young have left the nest, they spend a long "internship" with their parents before they are equipped to survive on their own. You can find that nest cam link and lots more info about Keweenaw birds: www.coppercountryaudubon.org/ When hunting in the dark, owls rely on acute hearing and specially adapted wing feathers that dampen flight sound. The classic circular array of feathers around an owl's face acts like a satellite dish to direct sound to its ear holes (no external ears on owls). By rotating their heads nearly 270 degrees, their ability to scan for sound and precisely locate it is enhanced. Owls are experts at capturing small mammals under snow. They hear animals moving about under snow, swoop down, and thrust their feet through the snow to forcefully grasp their prey and kill it. Such dramatic captures of prey sometimes leave evidence in wing prints left on the snow.

Owls that may be seen or heard in the Keweenaw include Great Horned Owl, Great Gray Owl, Barred Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Saw-whet Owl. Some species only drop by in spring or fall and breed elsewhere, some species head a bit south in winter for a better food supply, but some, like the Great Horned Owl may be seen or heard year round.



This large owl (up to 2' height and 3' wingspan) is opportunistic and eclectic in its choice of prey. The Great Horned Owl's range covers the lower 48 states and much of Canada and Mexico. This powerful owl will not pass up an easy-to-catch mouse but often goes for larger mammals such as hares, raccoons, and skunks. It will eat large waterfowl, other owls, and occasional snakes and frogs! In winter may store extra prey, coming back later to thaw out a frozen carcass by "incubating" it! (Photo above by Jim Hay)



The Barred Owl is more active in daylight than many owls. It prefers to nest in mature coniferous/deciduous woodlands near water but increasingly is found in suburban neighborhoods. Barred Owls love to dine on small mammals including mice, voles, and flying squirrels. We often hear Barred Owls at Gratiot Lake.

Dr. Yunger's small mammal population surveys on the GLC preserve have shown an abundance of the staples of a Barred Owl diet. (Photo above by Marie Celona)

Membership is Due don't forget to Renew!

Gift memberships make good stocking stuffers!



P.O. Box 310

Mohawk, MI 49950



Season's Greetings!

Renew your support for 2026!

Mail: Click here to download and print form to mail in with your check.

OR

Online: click here to Join/Renew with Credit Card
<https://GLC.WildApricot.org/Join>

This Red-backed Salamander was photographed by Amanda Lizzadro-McPherson at Sagar Court Wetlands on the August Roots & Rocks field trip (details on page 5). Much of this salamander's life is spent under rocks, leaf litter, and decaying logs. In cold weather or in drought the salamander will retreat under the soil. Eggs are laid under rocks or logs. Females usually lay coiled with their eggs until the eggs hatch. The Red-backed Salamander has protective, anti-fungal bacteria on its skin. These bacteria are being studied for clues about how other salamander species can be protected from the threat of deadly fungal infection.



Donations of any size and memberships are appreciated!

Donate \$100 or more and have the option to receive notecards with Jim Hay's photos.



This Red Fox kit and its siblings put on quite a show this past summer as they played and snoozed by their den located right next to Gratiot Lake Road. Many photos were snapped including the one above by Jim Hay.

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