

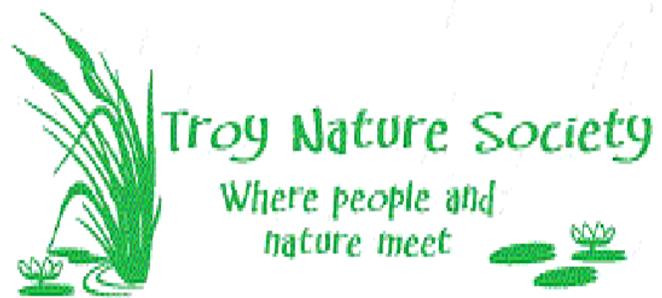


# *Where People And Nature Meet*



**June 2013  
Annual Report**

***Supporting the Educational Nature Programs and Activities Of  
The Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center  
6685 Coolidge Hwy.  
Troy, MI 48098***



## A Message From The President Of The Troy Nature Society

Dear Mayor, City Council Persons, and Members of the Troy Nature Society:

The Troy community is continually ranked as one of the best places to live across the nation. In fact, Troy was named by CNN as Michigan's best community to raise a family. Often cited as reasons for this recognition is the quality of life provided to the residents. The Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center is one of the crown jewels in a system developed to meet the varied and growing needs of our diverse and active population. The Troy Nature Society is proud to be the stewards of this truly unique and beautiful facility.

This is a wonderful time for the Troy Nature Society and the Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center. With added support from the City of Troy, we were able to move our Executive Director to a full time position and add another Naturalist. Center hours were expanded and a variety of new programs added for children, schools, scouts and adults. Last year over 13,000 people visited the Nature Center to attend the varied programs or to take a leisurely walk through the idyllic setting. New partnerships were developed with corporate and civic groups and old ones expanded. Miller Vein, REI, Sierra Club, Kelly Services, Whole Foods, DNR and The Troy Historical Village are but a few examples of these relationships.

The Executive Board of the Troy Nature Society developed a clear vision and mission this year. This vision will drive our continued efforts to be the destination for nature education and leisure for members of our community.

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Report, which provides key information on the progress for the Troy Nature Society and the Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center.

Stuart Redpath  
President  
Troy Nature Society



## In The Beginning

Land for The Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center (SNC) was originally purchased by the City of Troy in the 1970s and is located at 6685 Coolidge Hwy. in Troy just south of South Blvd. At the time of purchase, there was an older home on the property that was initially used as the nature center building. In 2002, the old structure was demolished and the current 8,200 square foot interpretive nature center building was constructed from funds received from a federal grant to the City of Troy. This center for learning contains classrooms, a public research library, an observation honeybee hive, wildlife viewing area and an exhibition lobby. The headwaters of the Rouge River flow through this unique 100-acre preserve. More than 145 plant and animal species may be viewed throughout the grounds. An outdoor play area features climbing boulders, and a paved path provides wheelchair access to the streamside forest. Within its boundaries are two miles of trails, which pass through upland forest, meadows, streamside wetlands, and a cattail marsh.

In 2010, in response to the planned closure of the Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center by the City of Troy, a small but devoted group of citizens came together to create the Troy Nature Society, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Board of Directors immediately began raising funds to support operations. The society assumed operational management of the nature center on July 1, 2011 and began offering educational nature and science programs.

This was a critical time in the transition of this valued community resource from City government to non-profit management and funding. The Troy Nature Society sought members, volunteers and financial supporters to ensure that the community may continue to enjoy the benefits of time spent in the out-of-doors. In July 2011, the society hired Debbie Williams as its Lead Naturalist to organize and conduct educational nature and science programs along with several program instructors engaged as needed for scheduled programs. In March 2012, a Volunteer Coordinator was contracted to help recruit, organize and schedule the many volunteers that support the various TNS activities. During the first fiscal year of operations, TNS provided services for 8,253 visitors, students and program participants.

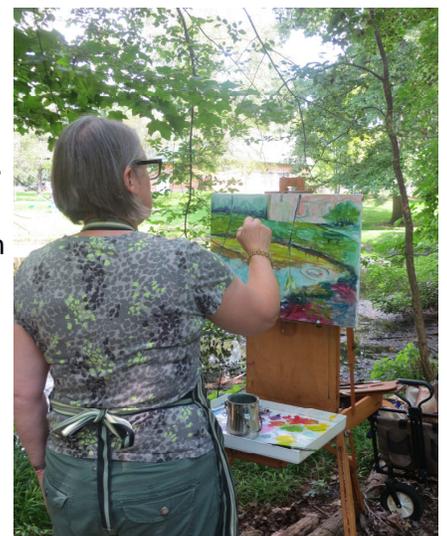
## TNS Now

Activities at the nature center include monthly public programs geared toward families, toddlers and senior adults. Additionally we conduct programming for school and community groups along with guided nature walks and targeted school outreach nature studies. The preserve is a valuable community asset offering quiet solitude to solitary observers, couples, Scout groups, families, and school children who come to enjoy the natural beauty of the preserve. Some people come to sit on a bench, some to count nesting bluebirds - others to test water quality, monitor pond life, or tap the sugar maples. Many take the opportunity to capture photos of the wildlife for their own collection.

In the fiscal year ended June 30, 2013:

- TNS provided services for 13,575 visitors, students and program participants, a 60% increase over the previous year
- TNS volunteers donated an amazing total of 2,533 hours in support of educational programs, trail maintenance, administrative support and other areas of need
- TNS Membership rose from 65 Charter Members in FY11 to 190 Members in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, nearly a 300% increase
- Multiple Clean-Up days are held annually throughout the year to maintain and beautify the trails and grounds

The trails of the nature center are open daily dawn to dusk. The nature center building is open Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 am. to 3:00 pm and Saturday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. The building is also open whenever special programs are offered.



## Leadership

### Board Members

This vital program is supported by a volunteer board comprised of educators, administrators, a geologist and those with backgrounds in wildlife preservation, law and finance. Financial support is a board requirement for which 100% of the society's members comply. All members serve on at least one of five board committees; financial oversight, educational programming, fundraising, personnel management and board development. All members are involved in strategic planning, fundraising, program development and program evaluation.



Stuart Redpath – President  
Tom Lakocy – Vice President  
Mary Creager – Secretary  
Cindy Wymer – Treasurer  
John Ragan—Assistant Treasurer

William W. Blachford  
Roger Kowalski  
Craig Lange  
Keith Lenderman  
Ann Neuser

### Program Staff

The administration of the society includes an Executive Director hired in July 2012 with over twenty years nonprofit management experience, responsible for oversight and fundraising activities. The society has two Naturalists employed full time with extensive backgrounds in nature education; organizing, executing and evaluating educational nature and science programs. Additionally, three to five program instructors are employed “as needed” to help support the many TNS educational programs as they are offered throughout the year. Additionally, we have two part-time employees; a Program Assistant provides administrative support for the Naturalists and a Volunteer Coordinator recruits, schedules and trains individuals in all areas of organizational and program support.

Carla Reeb – Executive Director  
Debbie Williams – Naturalist I  
Layne Brown – Naturalist II  
Chelsea Schmidt – Volunteer Coordinator  
Sherrill Jackson – Program Assistant

Lori Brown – Instructor  
Lisa Ferdubinski – Instructor  
Linda Friedman – Instructor  
Stacy Fisher – Instructor  
Nancy Youngerman – Instructor

### Volunteer Corps

The society has a dedicated corps of 150 volunteers, comprising 98% of our work force, devoted to supporting TNS in various areas from educational program assistance, trail maintenance, Spring Clean-up projects, the annual Maple Syrup event, fundraising events, blue bird monitoring, front desk reception and administrative support.

## Mission

Our overarching mission is to provide resources and education to inspire the appreciation and preservation of nature. Specifically, the objectives of the society are to:

- Provide healthy outdoor experiences and educational activities for individuals of all ages
- Create an understanding of the value and necessity of stewardship of our natural environment
- Preserve and protect the Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center for future generations



## Vision

The Troy Nature Society will become the exemplary community resource for nature education and preservation in the Troy area. We believe in making learning fun! To reach our vision, the Society will continue to monitor and assess our performance in the following areas:

### - Education

- Innovative programs developed from current research, national trends and community needs
- A wide range of program offerings for people to view and interact with the natural environment
- Recognition by the community as a resource for nature related questions

### - Preservation

- Maintain and improve the Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center
- Provide physically safe, peaceful and well-maintained environment for visitors of the Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center

### - Collaborative Relationships

- Cultivate relationships with community organizations
- Recognized as leader in the community as a forward thinking and challenging partner
- Develop a vibrant and involved support base
- Cultivate relationships with organizations having similar purpose

## Program Benefits

Along with providing educational programming, our nature center and its activities provide numerous benefits including:

- Active and passive recreational opportunities
- Direct health benefits for individuals
- Protection for important natural systems
- Natural features and spaces important to defining community image and distinctive character
- A facility that contributes to educational and cultural benefits
- Healthy lifestyles enhancement by facilitating improvements in physical fitness through exercise, and also by facilitating positive emotional, intellectual and social experiences

# Making a Positive Difference In Our Community

## *Public Programs*

TNS offers the public a variety of educational nature and science programs geared for all ages - toddlers to senior adults - on a year round basis. These programs help children and adults increase their understanding and stewardship of our natural environment. We accomplish this by interpreting the natural world around us and acting as an educational resource in biology, ecology and natural history for all our students, young and old. One of our most popular public programs is our week-long Summer Day Camp sessions offered to reinforce children's learning experience during the summer months.

## *School Programming*

TNS offers educators a variety of programs at the nature center that meet students' academic needs. Each program provides students with hands-on experience in nature and is designed to enhance the school's core curriculum. We utilize animal mounts, pelts, skulls, shells and other bio-facts to ensure a first-class view of the world around us. Every program is designed for participants to learn about nature and science and includes indoor classroom instruction followed by outdoor activities and/or a guided hike through the preserve.

## *School Outreach*

Our naturalists bring TNS programs right into the classrooms of local schools. We offer a variety of outreach programs that fulfill the instructional and educational needs of the school. Like the programs held at the nature center, all outreach programs are designed to enhance the school's core curriculum and include hands-on interaction with mounts, pelts and other bio-facts.

## *Scout/Groups*

As a support to organized troops and groups, we offer programs that meet requirements for members to come and complete their nature related badge or achievement. Current programs include those geared toward Scouts, Brownies, Junior Girl Scouts, Bears and Webelos.

## *Junior Naturalist Club*

This very popular award-winning program is dedicated to teaching children from 4 years of age to the fifth grade about nature with members meeting monthly from September to July. Club members receive educational instruction along with a naturalist kit and participate in hands-on activities and crafts at every session. The eleven month program concludes with five consecutive day-camp sessions. On the final day of the camp, club members and their families gather to enjoy games and are treated to a barbecue followed by an awards ceremony. Club members receive awards for completing projects, doing work at home, submitting book reports and program attendance.

## *Maple Syrup Event*

March is a special time for TNS and the families of our community. TNS holds its annual Maple Syrup Event for three consecutive Saturdays every March. This fun educational event is typically attended by 1,000 individuals who venture into the woods on a guided tour, visit an historic sugar camp to learn how maple trees are tapped and see for themselves how the sap is harvested. Guests sample sap, learn more about syrup making and visit our sugar shed to see a wood-stoked sap evaporator in action. After the tour, guests are treated to mini waffles topped *with delicious maple syrup*.

## Public Awareness

TNS reaches out to our community through direct mailings, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), media events, the TNS website and participation in local fairs such as Troy Daze. We also partner with the Troy Historical Village and other organizations serving similar populations.

Public program announcements are placed in the city's premiere magazine "*Troy Today*" which is distributed to approximately 32,000 households and businesses quarterly.

Information packets on School and School Outreach programs are mailed annually to school districts across the tri-county area.

PSA's are distributed monthly to local papers to create community awareness of TNS programs, activities and volunteer opportunities which are also advertised on the TNS website.

In 2012, TNS held its first Annual Ice Cream Social Open House. In August 2013, nearly 400 people attended this free community event where they were introduced to TNS, toured the exhibit hall, enjoyed ice cream sundaes and participated in family activities, crafts and guided trail walks.

Additionally, the Executive Director speaks at local community groups throughout the tri-county area making them aware of fund raising opportunities along with educational programs and activities offered at the nature center.

## Program Attendance

| <b>ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2013</b> |               |
|--|---------------|
| Group Visitations (Schools/Scouts/Senior Groups)             | 3,425         |
| Outreach Programs & Lectures                                 | 1,823         |
| Public Programs & Special Events                             | 2,640         |
| Birthday Parties   | 388           |
| Walk-In Visitations  | 5,299         |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>13,575</b> |

## Program Evaluation

Program evaluations from each student participating in the program are collected and surveyed. Educators and parents helping with programs evaluate the program for academic effectiveness. Teacher comments provide both quantitative and qualitative information regarding the overall impact of the program.

## Funding

Funding for TNS programs and activities comes from individuals, foundations, the City of Troy, corporations, membership fees, program fees, fundraising events and facility room rental fees. Contributors currently providing financial and/or in-kind support for TNS programs and activities include:



Alpha Delta Kappa  
 Anonymous Foundation  
 Jim and Shelly Green  
 Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc.  
 Kelly Services Foundation  
 Miller Vein  
 Larry and Nancy Piotrowski  
 REI  
 Starbucks Foundation  
 TCF Bank  
 Tringali Sanitation  
 Troy Garden Club  
 Walmart Foundation  
 Whole Foods of Troy

In addition, we have an established Wine and Beer Tasting fundraiser with nearly 300 guests who attend. There are approximately 190 TNS Members supporting our programs and activities.

## Financials

In 2011, the society began operating the nature center under a two year agreement with the City of Troy. The agreement called for approximately \$35,000 annually in support of city services, building maintenance and supplies for the nature center. In the spring of 2013, the City of Troy allocated a \$50,000 financial investment to TNS in the FY14 fiscal year and entered into a four year operating agreement with the society.

| Revenue & Expenses           | FYE 6/30/13       | FYE 6/30/2012    |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Donations & Grants           | \$ 37,793         | \$ 23,778        |
| Fundraising                  | 18,030            | 12,365           |
| Membership Dues              | 9,720             | 9,200            |
| Program Fees                 | 36,517            | 34,412           |
| Retail Sales                 | 2,477             | 0                |
| City Investment (Seed Money) | <u>2,154*</u>     | <u>12,111*</u>   |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>         | <b>\$ 106,691</b> | <b>\$ 91,866</b> |
| Wages & Payroll Taxes        | 81,069            | 35,957           |
| Contract Services            | 4,904             | 11,321           |
| Program Expenses             | 13,757            | 7,435            |
| Administrative Expenses      | <u>14,915</u>     | <u>13,435</u>    |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>        | <b>\$ 114,645</b> | <b>\$ 68,148</b> |

\*Does not include \$35,000 for other City services charged and supplies.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



***How is the Society funded?*** TNS operates on the contributions it receives from members, foundations, City of Troy, corporations, individuals, community organizations and fund-raising events.

***What kinds of programs does TNS offer at the nature center?*** High quality nature and science programs are offered year round to the public, local schools and community groups. We also offer our award-winning Junior Naturalist Club program for children ages 4 through the fifth grade along with programs for Brownies, Scouts, Cubs and other organized groups. All programs are offered for a minimal fee.

***How is the organization staffed?*** Currently, the organization has an Executive Director who oversees operations and fund-raising activities; two Naturalists oversee all educational programming; five program instructors assist with programs as they are scheduled. A Volunteer Coordinator oversees the recruiting, training and scheduling of volunteers.

***What types of volunteer help do you need?*** Individuals offer support in areas such as educational program assistance, various support committees, trail maintenance, park clean-up projects, our annual maple syrup event, fund-raising, blue bird monitoring, photography club, front desk help and administrative support.

***Is there a fee to visit the center?*** At this time, there is no fee to walk the trails or visit the nature center building. Donations are accepted and greatly appreciated.

***What are the hours of operation?*** Trails are open to the public year round daily from dawn to dusk. The nature center building is open Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with the exception of holidays. Additionally, the center is also open to the public when special programs and classes are offered.



P.O. Box 99302  
Troy MI, 48099  
Phone: (248) 688-9703  
Fax: (248) 879-9241  
[www.troynaturesociety.org](http://www.troynaturesociety.org)

*Supporting the Educational Nature Programs  
and Activities At  
The Lloyd A. Stage Nature Center  
6685 Coolidge Hwy.  
Troy, MI 48098*

