



WHERE PEOPLE AND NATURE MEET



Supporting the educational nature
programs and activities of the
Stage Nature Center
6685 Coolidge Hwy.
Troy, MI 48098
248.688.9703
www.troynaturesociety.org

A Message From The President Of The Troy Nature Society

Since my children were youngsters, my family has enjoyed visiting the Stage Nature Center. We have had a fondness for this unique preserve and the variety of educational programs and activities it offers. In 2011, I became involved as a Board Member of the Troy Nature Society (TNS), and have been continually awed by the dedication of TNS Board Members, members, staff and volunteers. Their commitment and passion for the organization and its mission is truly remarkable. Through the generosity of these many devoted TNS stakeholders the organization has greatly increased services to our community in the 2015 fiscal year. More than 18,000 program participants and visitors enjoyed the beauty of the Stage Nature Center and participated in activities at this wonderful community resource. TNS offered the public 147 different age-appropriate educational programs serving 5,808 individuals two years of age to senior adult. Additionally, educators arranged 118 school/school outreach field trips that served 5,204 K-12 students with educational programming. These figures indicate a substantial increase in all areas of service from the previous year.

TNS was pleased to participate in special events held in conjunction with the city's 60th Anniversary Celebrations with other events still to come throughout this calendar year. Many existing and new partnerships were established or expanded during the fiscal year. TNS is delighted to once again have the city's partnership and financial commitment as we move forward with important initiatives that benefit learning for individuals of all ages while supporting the nurturing of our nature environment. We are pleased to have the continuing patronage of Jim and Shelly Green, Tringali Sanitation, Starbucks Foundation, Walmart Foundation and Whole Foods Market Troy among others. A few of our new supporting partners include Consumers Energy Foundation, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Village Club Foundation, Field & Stream and Hollywood Market Troy.

The TNS Board of Directors, along with members of the Strategic Planning Workgroup worked hard to develop the organization's Strategic Plan with broad involvement and guidance from many stakeholders; TNS staff, volunteers, members, donors and constituents. This enormous effort was facilitated by team members from Consumer Insights, Inc. (CSI) a Troy-based marketing research and strategic planning consultancy. Through CSI's generous pro bono services and expertise, TNS is in the process of completing a 3-year road map for financial viability, organizational development and innovative programming to best serve our community as we go forward.

Serving students with educational programs that increase awareness of nature and the environment has been one of our top priorities, a goal that we take seriously. In 2015, we began an important collaborative initiative with the Troy School District to align our programs with the new Michigan Science Standards. With this new educational initiative underway, we expect to see an increase of 20% in the number of students and educators attending through school field trip programs in the coming year.

Many other exciting programs and events await us during the next fiscal year. We look forward to offering the community such popular programs as our fun-filled Maple Syrup event in March, the award-winning DNR Junior Naturalist Club for youngsters throughout the school year and our Annual Wine & Beer Tasting fundraiser in November at the beautiful Somerset Collection South Atrium.

The strength of our organization is founded on the level of involvement by our community, members, volunteers and supporters. We look forward to your continuing support and involvement and hope you have an opportunity soon to visit the nature center and enjoy the trails and exhibits for yourself.



Tom Lakocy
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 acquisition, 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 using funds received from a government grant to the City of Troy. This center for learning contains classrooms, a public research library, an observation bee hive, a 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 the nature center 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 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 Debra 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 and school groups. In March 2012, a Volunteer Coordinator was contracted to help recruit, organize and schedule the many volunteers who 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 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 retreat 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 use and to enhance the society's publicity materials.

In the fiscal year ended June 30, 2015 set high records for program attendance and visitors enjoying the beauty of the preserve along with its healthy outdoor activities:

- TNS provided services for 18,308 individuals, students and program participants. A 10% increase over the previous year.
- The organization conducted 106 school field trips at the nature center and 12 school outreach programs to local teaching institutions. These school/school outreach programs served a total of 5,204 PreK-12 students. An amazing 30% increase from the previous year.
- The organization conducted 147 public and group programs at the nature center and other venues, serving 5,808 individuals (ages two years old through senior adult) with age-appropriate programs. A 23% increase over FY2014.
- A dedicated corps of 225 volunteers donated an amazing total of 3,878 hours in support of educational programs, trail maintenance, administrative support and other areas of need. An increase of 14% over the previous year.
- TNS Membership rose to 225 members in the fiscal year, an increase of 10% over the 2014 fiscal year.
- Multiple Clean-Up days are held annually throughout the year to maintain and beautify the trails and grounds.

Leadership

Board Members

The Troy Nature Society 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 with which 100% of the society's board members comply. Board 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.



FY2016 Board Members Tom Lakocy – President

Dr. Mary Creager — Vice President
Larry Littman — Treasurer
Roger Kowalski—Secretary
Arnold Braver
William W. Blachford
Nicole Fleming

Jennifer Gottlieb
Karen Greenwood
Susie Kowalski
Ann Neuser
Danielle Roush
Harvey Whitehead

Program Staff

The administration of the society includes an Executive Director responsible for oversight and fundraising activities. Carla Reeb was hired in July 2012 with over twenty years nonprofit management experience. The society has a Lead Naturalist employed full time with an extensive background in nature education: organizing, executing and evaluating educational nature and science programs. Additionally, seven program instructors are employed “as needed” to help support the many TNS educational programs as they are offered throughout the year. Additionally, a part-time Program Assistant provides administrative support for the program staff along with acting as the organization's Volunteer Coordinator.

Carla Reeb – Executive Director
Debra Williams — Lead Naturalist
Hanna Doniger — Program Assistant
Layne Brown – Instructor
Lori Brown — Instructor

Danielle Durham — Instructor
Lisa Ferdubinski — Instructor
Linda Friedman — Instructor
Michelle Golembieski — Instructor
Sarah Grange — Instructor

Volunteer Corps

The society has a dedicated corps of 225 volunteers, comprising 98% of our work force, devoted to supporting TNS in various areas. Volunteer activities include 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.

Members

During the FY15 fiscal year, TNS membership grew to 225 members. All membership revenue supports the programs and activities of the society. Membership benefits includes voting rights at the annual meeting and discounted fees when participating in certain TNS programs.

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 Stage Nature Center for future generations



Our 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! While striving to achieve our vision, the Society will continue to assess our performance in the following areas:

- Education

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

- Preservation

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

- Collaborative Relationships

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

Program Benefits

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

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

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.

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. Additionally we partner with such groups as Michigan DNR to provide classroom facilities for public outdoor education programs.

School Programming

TNS offers educators a variety of programs at the nature center that meet public, private and home-schooled 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 materials 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 Instructors 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 biofacts.

Scouts/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 Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Junior Girl Scouts.

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 a week long day-camp. 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 educational family event is typically attended by 1,000 guests 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. Participants sample sap, learn more about syrup making and visit our sugar shed to see a wood-stoked sap evaporator in action. After the tour, everyone is treated to mini waffles topped with delicious maple syrup. This sweet month concluded on the last Sunday in March 2015 with a Pancake Breakfast fundraiser



Public Awareness

TNS reaches out to our community through direct mailings, local distribution of brochures, public service announcements (PSAs), media events, the TNS website, Facebook page and participation in local events such as the City of Troy's 60th Anniversary Celebration. 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 emailed and direct mailed annually to over 300 school and 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.

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.

In August 2014, TNS held its fourth annual Ice Cream Social Open House Event. Nearly 300 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, scavenger hunts and guided trail walks.

Program Attendance

ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2015	
Group Visitations (Schools/Scouts/Senior Groups/Home School Groups)	5,400
Outreach Programs & Lectures	1,627
Public Programs & Special Events	3,985
Birthday Parties	511
Walk-In Visitations	6,785
Grand Total	18,308

Program Evaluation

Program evaluations from each student participating in the program are collected and tabulated. 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 programs along with providing direction for future programs that promote education, healthy lifestyles and good stewardship of our environment.

Funding

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

In addition, we have an established annual Wine and Beer Tasting fundraiser with nearly 300 guests who attend. There are approximately 225 TNS Members supporting our educational programs and activities.

FY2015 Supporters

Alpha Delta Kappa	Miller Vein of Troy
Battle Creek Community Foundation	Bruce and Nancy Papet
Community Foundation For Southeast Michigan	Larry and Nancy Piotrowsk
Consumers Energy Foundation	Daneille Roush
Consumer Insights, Inc.	Starbucks Foundation
Steve and Jennifer Gottlieb	Tringali Sanitation
Jim and Shelly Green	City of Troy
Hollywood Market Troy	Troy Garden Club
Kelly Services Foundation	Village Club Foundation
Tom and Michelle Lakocy	Walmart Foundation
Christal Lewandowski	Dr. and Mrs. Stephen Wang
	Whole Foods Market Troy



Marsh Tower

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 city support of services, building maintenance and supplies for the nature center. In the spring of 2013, the City of Troy renewed its operating agreement with the society through 2017. In addition to the City of Troy services support of the nature center shown below, a \$75,000 financial investment was made to TNS in the 2015 fiscal year.



Revenue & Expenses	FYE 6/30/2014	FYE 6/30/2015
Donations & Grants	\$ 24,719	\$ 70,120
Fundraising	17,757	15,391
Membership Dues	7,655	7,925
Program Fees	44,662	52,010
Retail Sales	1,118	1,619
Interest Income	7	47
City Investment*	<u>50,000</u>	<u>75,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 145,918	\$ 222,112
Wages & Payroll Taxes	79,911	116,247
Contract Services	2,910	2,047
Program Expenses	15,649	13,303
Administrative Expenses	<u>56,301</u>	<u>56,191</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 154,771	\$ 187,778

*Figures do not include \$35,000/annually for other city services provided in support of maintaining the nature

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 fundraising 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, Webelos and other organized groups. All programs are offered for a minimal fee.

How is the organization staffed? Currently, the organization employs an Executive Director who oversees operations and fundraising activities; a Lead Naturalist oversees all educational programming; seven program instructors assist with programs as they are scheduled. A Program Assistant supports programs and manages 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, fundraising, blue bird monitoring, photography club, front desk help and administrative support.

Is there a fee to visit the center? 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. The center is also open to the public when special programs and classes are offered.



*The Stage Nature Center
is managed by the
Troy Nature Society (TNS),
a non-profit organization*

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