
CONSERVATION CHRONICLE

Created by: Brigitte Wierzbicki, Lead Conservation Steward – Ganondagan State Historic Site

SEED COLLECTION PROGRAM UNDERWAY

A seed collection program is in the works, based at Ganondagan State Historic Site. Collecting native seed on-site and locally ensures that seed used for restoration is of a local ecotype. This means that the species collected have evolved here in the Finger Lakes Region (or even on-site!), and are thus better adapted to our area. Cleaned seed will be either directly seeded into restoration areas cleared of invasive species, or propagated for future plantings. This grassroots program, headed by Brigitte Wierzbicki, is in need of your support! Please consider joining our Seed Collection Tuesdays and donating!

We Can Preserve Collected Seeds With Your Help!

- Glass containers, preferably with rubber gaskets, are ideal
- These containers prevent mold and keep pests out!



106 oz. Storage Container
Walmart, \$7.67

Thank you for helping us preserve our local diversity!

SEED COLLECTION TUESDAYS

Join the Conservation Team to help collect and clean local native seed! Learn about our local species and how to responsibly collect and propagate seed, as well as supporting conservation of locally native species and restoration of degraded natural areas.

WHEN: Tuesdays 9-11:30 am, starting Sept. 13

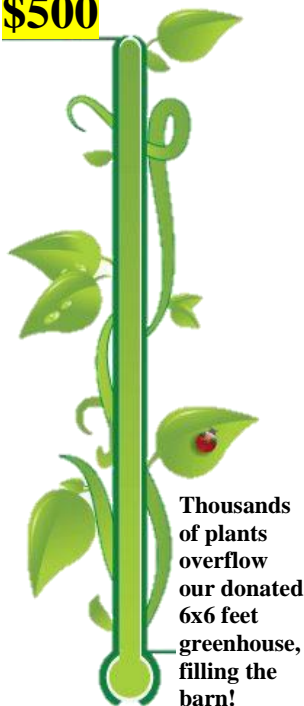
WHERE: Meet at EFO, Seed Collection Locations TBD

CONTACT: Brigitte Wierzbicki at Brigitte.Wierzbicki@parks.ny.gov

BUILD A HOOP HOUSE PRESERVE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY

The Conservation Team is expanding our restoration efforts and we need your help! By supporting our **Roots of Restoration Hoop House Fundraiser**, we will:

\$500



- Increase native plant diversity for restoration plantings
- Preserve our locally collected native plant species
- Enable seed overwintering and stratification
- Provide ideal growing conditions for seedlings



Seed Collection Program This hoop house will be in high demand, as we will be collecting over 50 different species in varying amounts (depending on need and availability).

Plant Donation Program This season, we have already received an estimated \$19,800 worth of local native plants. They have been temporarily stored on pavement under a decrepit barn prior to planting.

Local Ecotype These plants are more valuable than those we could purchase, as our local plants have evolved in our area. Therefore, they are better adapted within our ecosystem, and support our local fauna - birds, butterflies, bees, and more!

Restoration Value These plants will be used in restoration plantings: adding back our native plant diversity in areas cleared of invasive plant species. This includes grassland, wetland, and woodland restoration areas across Ganondagan's 570 acres!

We Need Your Help To Make It Happen!

We are in need of financial donations or building material donations to establish the Roots of Restoration Hoop House. Please contact us for information about supporting these efforts!

Brigitte Wierzbicki, Lead Conservation Steward: Brigitte.Wierzbicki@parks.ny.gov

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING US!

Thank you to our plant material donors and volunteers for your invaluable support!

Join our Expanding Plant (& Seed) Donor List!

Victor Garden Club, Genesee Land Trust, Andy Joss, Helen Ellis, Eileen Wierzbicki, Lorie Thomas, Michael Hannen, SUNY ESF FORCES, Amy Kahn, Rosemarie Parker, Krissy Faust, Finger Lakes Native Plant Society, Patty Wakefield-Brown, the Woodruffs, Lucas Greenhouses, Frank Russell, and Sandra Bierbrauer

So Far, We Have Reached:

2440 volunteer hours & 19,800 dollars' worth of donated plants

Check out us on the website: www.ganondagan.org/environmental-team

You can find our desired plant donation list through the link above!

Ethnobotany Workshop

Thanks to all who joined our morning ethnobotany workshop! Participants enjoyed a unique blend of scientific and Native perspectives on ethnobotany. The workshop included a braiding sweet grass segment led by Tonia Galban and plant walks led by Whitney Carleton-DeGeorge and botanist Amy Kahn. The plants featured plants used for teas as well as root tubers- highlighting helpful tips for plant identification. Hope to see you at next year's workshop!



Native plants with Native uses!



Tonia Galban demonstrates traditional braiding sweet grass methodology

GROWING SEASON SUMMARY

Thank you to all who attended our 2016 Growing Season Summary! This well-attended event proved to be a valuable opportunity for the Conservation Team to share our progress, as well as an enjoyable and productive networking experience!

Presentations included updates of the Conservation Team's jam-packed year – grassland restoration, bird surveys, plant donation and seed collection programs, native landscaping, invasive species mapping and removals, and interpretive projects, just to name a few!

Highlights included:

- **Accelerated Bird Conservation Area planning**
- **250 acres mapped for invasive species**
- **\$19,800 of donated plants**
- **14,000 native plants added to the landscaping**
- **Possible fisher spotted on camera traps**
- **Multiple interpretive projects created for future use**



The Conservation Team especially wants to commend our Conservation Stewards for their impressive, professional presentations and all their hard work and perseverance. We couldn't have done it without you!

We hope to see you at next year's Growing Season Summary! In the meantime, the Conservation Team will be holding its first winter presentations with a focus on our local conservation community: Environmental Perspectives & Community Collaborations. Stay tuned for more information on this event!

A detailed transcript of the 2016 Growing Season Summary is available through Alexis VanWinkle at Alexis.Vanwinkle@parks.ny.gov.



The Return of the Raptors: All Birders Needed!



Mid-September marks the start of winter raptor surveys! With winter approaching, resources for overwintering raptor populations become increasingly scarce. Determining raptor presence can be indicative of ecosystem condition, which is critical to evaluate with grassland restoration in progress on site. Alexis VanWinkle, Ganondagan's ornithology specialist, is in need of help for monthly surveys.

Alexis established protocols for these surveys last winter after assisting Christina Hoh, DEC Raptor Survey Specialist, with a survey at Ganondagan. The data will complement grassland bird surveys, with the greater goal of supporting a Bird Conservation Area designation at Ganondagan State Historic Site.

Raptor surveys have never been performed consistently at Ganondagan before. It is expected that surveyors will see common raptors such as Red-tailed Hawks and Turkey Vultures. Potentially, these surveys may reveal higher raptor diversity than previously known on site. If interested, please contact Alexis- previous ornithology experience preferred.

Raptor surveys will occur in the evenings, close to dusk.

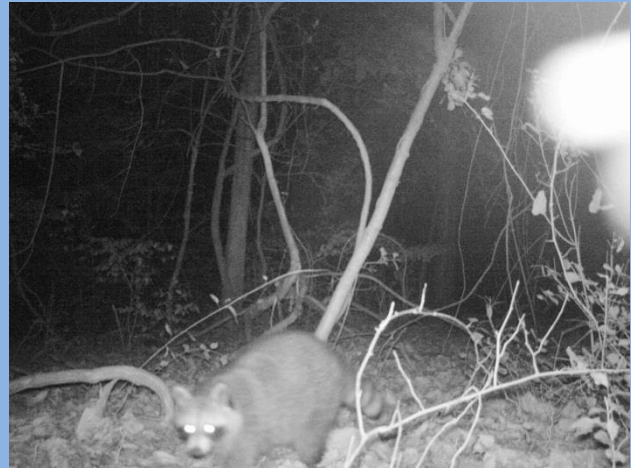


Contact Alexis VanWinkle at
Alexis.Vanwinkle@parks.ny.gov

for more information!

FEATURED FAUNA

North American Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)



This spring, Dr. Chris Collins, a wildlife researcher and professor at St. John Fisher College initiated a long-term wildlife research project at Ganondagan. Collins set up 20 camera traps as part of this research. These motion-activated cameras are hidden throughout various habitat types. The results from a well-positioned camera trap provided an interesting glimpse into the daily life of one bright-eyed and bushy-tailed native mammal.

Just like humans, raccoons defecate at a shared site. This communal "raccoon latrine" can be found on raised horizontal spaces, including logs, large rocks, tree bases, or human structures. Without using camera traps, these latrines are usually identified based on the presence of raccoon scat. Raccoon scat is "crumbly, flat-ended...and usually 3-5 inches long, broken into segments" (*Living with Wildlife*, Russel Link). While reviewing footage, Collins was able to determine that a raccoon latrine was located right in front of a camera trap!

Use the same rules you would at any communal toilet. Avoid contact with these raccoon latrines and scat- they may contain a harmful parasitic roundworm. The more we know, the better we can share our natural spaces with our native species. Stay tuned for more results from Collins's research!

Featured Project: Grassland Management Area

Written by: Kyle Webster, Supervising Conservation Steward

As we watched our lawns and gardens dry up during the summer's drought, the Grassland Management Area at Ganondagan stayed green and colorful. Warm-season grasses are adapted to these conditions and drew upon their deep root systems, growing to their characteristic towering heights of 7 feet while wildflowers bloomed, dotting the rolling hills with white, yellow, pink, and purple.

Ganondagan's Grassland Management Area totals approximately 61 acres of restored grassland located on both sides of Boughton Hill Road between the intersections with Murray and School Road. It was seeded in 2009 with native warm-season grasses and wildflowers with the goal of restoring these old farm fields to a historic plant composition similar to what the Seneca would have experienced while living here at Ganondagan in the 1600's.

But the work hasn't ended with the seeding. Over the past week I've been surveying our grasslands to see what species have established and what plants have moved in on their own. I found big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) and Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), native warm-season grasses, to be abundant throughout, while wildflowers such as fox-glove beard-tongue (*Penstemon digitalis*), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), and New England aster (*Symphiotrichum novae-angliae*) established in the open spaces between the clumps of grasses. Perhaps most interesting were the species that showed up without being seeded, mostly in a wet swale, such as purple-stemmed aster (*Symphiotrichum puniceum*), purple Joe-Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*), boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*), and common flat-topped goldenrod (*Euthamia graminifolia*).

Unfortunately, there were also scattered, dense patches of invasive species, such as crown vetch (*Coronilla varia*) and autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). This coming spring (2017) we will be conducting a prescribed burn that will help to control these invasive species, providing a competitive edge to the native flora and reintroducing a natural disturbance grasslands rely on. Alexis VanWinkle, Supervising Conservation Steward, has also been conducting bird surveys throughout the summer and has seen 26 different species, including Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, Indigo Buntings, Field Sparrows, Yellow Warblers, and most exciting, Bobolinks. This winter she will be doing raptor surveys and hopes to see Northern Harriers, Short-eared Owls, and Bald Eagles.

This winter, the Environmental Field Team will be designing interpretive signage, funded by the Environmental Protection Fund, for the grassland areas and the Finger Lakes Institute will be providing boot brushes complete with signage for our trailheads. So be sure to come enjoy the views as the asters and goldenrods color the landscape and migratory birds sing their last songs before heading south for winter. ❖



Purple-stemmed aster (*Symphiotrichum puniceum*) and big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*) in bloom!