

FY2020 Annual Report



The Troy Nature Society (TNS) is a nonprofit organization conducting educational nature programs for individuals of all ages at the Stage Nature Center. The organization promotes knowledge of our natural world and good stewardship of our environment.



Stage Nature Center | 6685 Coolidge Hwy. | Troy, MI 48098 | 248.688.9703

StageNatureCenter.org

A Message from David Lambert, President of the Troy Nature Society

2020 is unlike any year many of us have experienced. This is especially true for the Troy Nature Society and the Stage Nature Center. We have seen not only the challenges facing our Center but also the incredible work of our staff and volunteers to maintain our viability. During the quarantine when our building was unavailable, our staff provided online nature programs using Facebook Live videos on a weekly basis. Our staff and volunteers also played a key role in maintaining our outdoor trails, so that our community had a place to recreate responsibly.



Photo credit Mara Stein

Thanks to these hard-working staff and volunteers, we managed the safe reopening of our building to allow in-person educational programs for the children and adults of our community and region. We are taking appropriate measures to sanitize and meet guidelines from the CDC and other government agencies so that our exhibit hall can remain open to the public. This includes reducing the number of allowable in-person program attendees until further notice. However, we are determined to continue our path to education for local students - our educational program committee is developing new school programs to be presented virtually.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic of 2020, we are excited to announce that we held a groundbreaking in October for the new Owl enclosure at the Stage Nature Center. We wish to thank all of those who helped provide financial support and those providing their extraordinary expertise to get us to that groundbreaking. I want to thank the members of the Nature Society Board of Directors for their strong leadership in recognizing the benefits these owls bring to our educational programming. Additionally, I wish to extend a special thank you to the Troy City Council, city administrators and staff for their financial partnership in this permanent structure that will serve not only these birds of prey but also any future raptors in need. The owl structure is expected to be completed by the end of 2020 with a dedication ceremony scheduled for early 2021.

2021 will also be special because we will be celebrating the 10-year anniversary of the Troy Nature Society taking over operations of the Stage Nature Center which occurred in July 2011.

Thank you to the City and taxpayers of Troy for their support this past year when our financial situation was challenged by the pandemic. Some of the biggest challenges we face going forward are primarily financial. Due to the continuing health directives from the state, county and city, we have been forced to significantly reduce many of our fundraising events including our annual Nature Uncorked gala and the Run/Walk for Nature event. Please consider ways you can financially support the nature center during this challenging time.

Finally, our Board of Directors welcomed a couple of newcomers to the Board this year. The new members come to us with plenty of plans and ideas, so make sure to visit the Stage Nature Center in 2021 to see this great, green asset in our community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Lambert".

David Lambert

In The Beginning

Land for the 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 with a live reptile and amphibian display. 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, cattail marsh and a Monarch Butterfly Way Station constructed in 2017.



Green Team Workday

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) nonprofit organization. Members of the Board of Directors immediately began raising funds to support operations. The Society assumed management oversight of the nature center on July 1, 2011 and immediately began offering educational nature and science programs. This was a critical time in the transition of this valued community resource from city government to nonprofit management and funding. The Troy Nature Society sought members, volunteers and financial supporters to ensure our community would continue to enjoy the benefits of time spent in the out-of-doors. During the first fiscal year of operations, TNS provided services for 8,253 visitors, students and program participants.

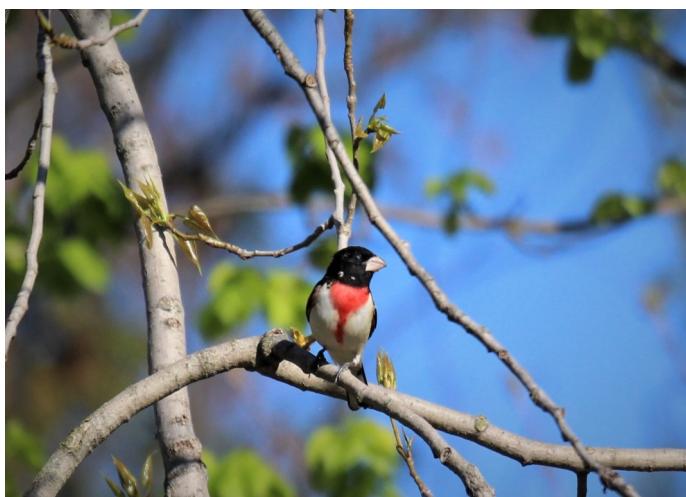


Photo credits Christina Funk

TNS Now



The family of Roger and Susie Kowalski provided an exciting addition to the nature center during the 2019 fiscal year. Roger and Susie's children along with their spouses provided the funds to build and dedicate a new outdoor pavilion in honor of their parents. Susie's passing in April 2019, left a large void in our hearts for this remarkable wife, mother, grandmother and community activist who had a special passion for the nature center. The Society is so appreciative for the construction of the Roger

and Susie Kowalski Pavilion that provides us with many venue options including the Annual Ice Cream Social Open House, space for Day Camp programs, rentals for wedding ceremonies, family reunions and casual group gatherings.

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. Many take the opportunity to capture photos of the wildlife for their own use and to enhance the Society's publicity materials.

The Society has seen tremendous growth across all program areas and performed diligently in financial stewardship since its founding in 2011. Though forced to discontinue programming for nearly four months during the pandemic, the Society still served more than 23,400 individuals attending programs and visitors enjoying the beauty of the preserve. During the fiscal year ended June 30, 2020, the organization:

- Conducted 59 school field trips/school outreach/organized group programs. These programs served a total of 3,415 students and Scouts who were provided with hands-on experience in nature.
- Conducted 189 public programs and events for children, adults and miscellaneous groups at the nature center. These programs served 4,885 individuals (ages two years old through senior adult) with age-appropriate programs and activities designed to enhance learning in a natural environment.
- Maintained a dedicated corps of 225 individuals who volunteered an amazing 3,467 hours in support of TNS programs, activities and initiatives. Comprising 98% of our work force, these devoted volunteers donated time and effort to help with such activities as: educational program assistance; trail maintenance and clean-up projects; the annual Maple Syrup event; fundraising events, blue bird monitoring; front desk reception and administrative support.
- Met its fundraising goal for the cost to construct a permanent residence for the five rehabilitated owls adopted in 2018. In partnership with the City of Troy, the Society along with its friends and supporters reached its financial goal of \$145,000 for the new structure. In October 2020 a groundbreaking ceremony for the owl enclosure was held. A dedication ceremony for the new structure will take place in the spring of 2021.



Leadership

Board Members

The Troy Nature Society is supported by volunteer Board members comprised of educators, administrators, those with backgrounds in wildlife preservation, environmental activism, business management, fundraising, marketing and finance. Financial support is a Board requirement for which 100% of the Society's Board Members comply. Board members serve on at least one of six board committees; Board Development, Financial Oversight, Fundraising, Educational Programming /Parks & Facility Management, Operations and Marketing & Communications. All members are involved in governance, policy oversight, strategic planning, fundraising and program development.



FY2021 Officers	FY2021 Board of Directors		
David Lambert – President Arnie D'Amore Braver – 1st Vice President Scott Hunter – 2nd Vice President Steven Sprague - Treasurer Rebecca Seguin-Skrabucha - Secretary	Dan Glombowski Smitha Haugen Paul Hoef Roger Kowalski	Alex Mattia Bill Ording Anna Romund Fran Stage	<i>Student Board Representatives</i> Noah Miko Chloe Pottenger Khushi Sharma

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-five years nonprofit management experience. The Society has a Lead Naturalist and an Assistant Naturalist employed full time, both with extensive backgrounds in nature education: organizing, executing and evaluating educational nature and science programs. A Program Support Assistant provides administrative support for program staff along with acting as the organization's Volunteer Coordinator. Six program instructors are employed "as needed" along with a full-time Seasonal Intern to help support the many TNS educational programs as they are offered throughout the year. In 2015, the Society hired a part-time Accountant. Then in 2016, a part-time Marketing Specialist was hired to manage the organization's website and promote awareness of the organization's programs and activities through social media and the local press.

FY2021 TNS Staff	TNS Program Instructors
Carla Reeb – Executive Director Debra Williams – Lead Naturalist Christina Funk – Assistant Naturalist Louise McCormick-Glazier - Program Support Asst. Cindy Wymer - Accountant Neha Saigal – Marketing Specialist	Lori Brown Danielle Durham Linda Friedman Michelle Goyette Nancy Klein Miranda Roberts Sylvia Adamczyk - Seasonal Intern

Volunteer Corps

The Society has a dedicated corps of 200+ volunteers. Comprising 98% of our work force, these devoted individuals, ages 14+, donate time and effort to help with such activities as: educational program assistance, trail maintenance, clean-up projects, Maple Syrup programming, fundraising events, blue bird monitoring, front desk reception and administrative support.

Members

The organization currently has 200+ members supporting its mission. All membership revenues help underwrite 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 the 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

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Troy Nature Society affirms a policy of non-discrimination with regards to persons on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, height, weight, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, amnesty status, veteran status or any other basis protected by federal, state and/or local law. This policy shall pertain to staff, applicants, volunteers, members and guests.



Making a Positive Difference In Our Community

Public Programs

An extensive variety of educational nature and science programs is offered to the public on a year-round basis. These programs are geared for individuals of all ages - toddlers to senior adults and are designed to 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. Some of our most popular public programs include our various week-long Day Camps 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 / School Outreach Programming

TNS offers educators a wide selection of science programs that meet public, private and home-schooled students' academic needs. Programs are developed to provide students with hands-on experience in nature and are 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. School field trips held at the nature center engage participants in interactive nature and science experiences which include classroom instruction followed by a guided hike through the preserve. Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, our program staff are offering educators nature programs convened virtually for their students. Based on the program chosen by the educator, some programs include educational kits that are provided to the teachers and distributed to students prior to the presentation. As the 2020-2021 school year proceeds, we expect our Instructors to visit the classrooms of local schools and bring in-person programming to students. We offer various outreach programs that fulfill the instructional and educational needs of the school. Just 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 Girl Scouts.

Live Owl Programming

The Society offers opportunities for the public to meet live owls and learn about these fascinating birds of prey housed at the nature center. Additionally, the Society has developed educational programs featuring these Michigan owls for the public and other organized groups. Fees collected from the programs act as a source of revenue to support the feeding, care and medical expenses that is vital to the livelihood of these amazing rehabilitated raptors.

Family Nature Explorers

This monthly program is offered year-round allows the whole family (parent and child) to participate in hands-on, outdoor experiences that inspire curiosity and create a connection to nature. A different nature topic is featured each month.

Maple Syrup Event

March is a special time for the nature center and the families of our community. TNS holds its annual Maple Syrup Time for three consecutive Saturdays every March. This fun and educational family event is typically attended by nearly 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 learn about the ordinary effort it takes to make sap into maple syrup. This unique seasonal event receives extensive local television and media coverage every year.

Public Awareness

TNS reaches out to our community through mailings, local distribution of brochures, public service announcements (PSAs), media events, TNS website, social media sites and participation in local community events to increase awareness of TNS. We also partner with the Troy Historical Village and other organizations serving similar populations.. Public program announcements are advertised quarterly in the city's premiere magazine "*Troy Today*" which is distributed to approximately 32,000 households and businesses quarterly.



Photo credit Mara Stein

TNS school and school outreach program offerings are distributed annually to nearly 500 schools 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 organization's social media sites and website.

Additionally, the Executive Director and staff speak at local community groups throughout the tri-county area and provide programs to create awareness of sponsorship opportunities and programs offered at the nature center.

In August 2019, TNS held its eighth annual Ice Cream Social Open House Event. Over 600 people attended this community event where they were introduced to TNS, toured the exhibit hall, enjoyed ice cream sundaes and participated in family activities, crafts, a petting farm and guided trail walks.

Program Attendance

ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020	
Group Visitations (Schools/Scouts/Senior Groups/Home School Groups)	1,404
Outreach Programs & Lectures	2,011
Structured Programs & Special Events	3,688
Birthday Parties (Educational)	598
Facility Rentals	599
Walk-In Visitations	15,540
Grand Total	23,840

Program Evaluation

Post-program evaluations from pre-selected students participating in school programs are collected and tabulated. Educators also 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 the organization's programs and activities comes from individuals, foundations, local government, corporations, membership fees, program fees, fundraising events and facility rental fees. Contributors providing financial support at the \$500 level and above during the 2020 fiscal year include:

Automotive Authority, Inc.	Christal Lewandowski	St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
Janusz Bora	Larry and Joan Littman	Frances Stage
Dr. Karol Carter	William and Karen Ordning	City of Troy
Jim and Shelly Green	Organization for Bat Conservation	Troy Community Lions Club
Coldwell Banker-Karen Greenwood	Papet-Westley & Associates, LLC	Troy Garden Club
Consumers Energy Foundation	Larry & Nancy Piotrowski	The Bill Watkins Family
Phillip & Elizabeth Filmer Trust	Plants For Ecology, LLC	Village Club Foundation
ITC Holdings, Inc.	Christopher Roberts	John and Nancy Youngerman
Roger Kowalski	Sedona Tap House	

In addition, we have a well established annual Wine and Beer Tasting fundraiser along with a 5K Run/Walk For Nature event initiated in 2018. Currently there are approximately 232 TNS Members proving financial support 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 city support of services, building maintenance and supplies for the nature center. In June 2017, the City of Troy renewed its operating agreement with the Society through the fiscal year 2027. In addition to the City of Troy services support of the nature center shown below, a \$150,000 financial investment was made to TNS in the 2020 fiscal year. With the support of our friends, in 2018 the Society established an Endowment Fund through the Troy Community Foundation (TCF). As of June 30, 2020 the TNS Endowment Fund is valued at \$18,776.

Revenue & Expenses	FYE 6/30/2019	FYE 6/30/2020
Donations & Grants	\$ 85,298	\$ 48,328
Fundraising Events	31,046	22,640
Membership Dues	9,245	9,333
Program Fees	66,311	37,288
City Investment*	<u>100,000</u>	<u>150,000</u>
Total Revenue	\$ 291,900	\$ 267,589
Wages & Payroll Taxes	193,627	206,343
Contract Services	550	490
Program Expenses	43,019	31,053
Administrative Expenses	<u>32,628</u>	<u>32,665</u>
Total Expenses	\$ 269,824	\$ 270,551

*Figures do not include \$46,000/annually for other city services and supplies provided in support of maintaining the nature center.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Photo credit Mara Stein

How is the Society funded? TNS operates on contributions it receives from membership fees, foundation gifts, program fees, local government funding, corporations, individuals, community organizations, fundraising events and facility rentals.

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 along with programs for Scouts and other organization 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 and Assistant Naturalist oversee all educational programming and six on-call program instructors assist with programs as they are scheduled. A Program Support Assistant provides support service for all programs and manages the recruiting, training and scheduling of volunteers. Additional part-time staff include an Accountant and Marketing Specialist.

What types of volunteer help do you need? Individuals offer support in areas such as educational program assistance, various support committees, trail maintenance, trail 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 with its exhibit hall which includes a mastodon dig, children's play area, research library, live amphibian and reptile display and observation bee hive. Donations are accepted and greatly appreciated.

What are the hours of operation? Trails are open to the public daily year-round from dawn to dusk. The nature center's exhibit hall is open Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm and Saturday 10:00 am to 4:00 pm and is also open when special programs or classes are offered. (Holidays excluded). The nature center's owls will be available for public viewing in their new permanent enclosure by the spring of 2021.



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

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All photos contained in this report were taken at the Stage Nature Center.

Photo credit Jessica Jenkins