

2 0 2 3 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.

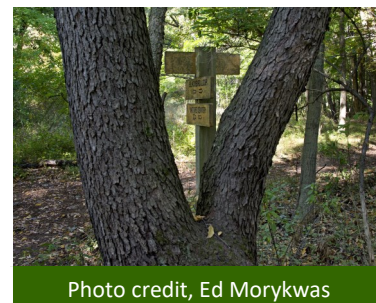
6685 Coolidge Hwy, Troy, MI 48098

Ph: 248.688.9703

www.stagenaturecenter.org

A Message from Scott Hunter, President of the Troy Nature Society

On behalf of TNS Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, we wish to extend a thank you to the Troy City Council and city administrators for their continued partnership with the Troy Nature Society in managing the Stage Nature Center.



The Society offers a variety of programs and events for people of all ages to participate in and learn about the natural world. By supporting our organization, the community helps ensure that these programs and events are available to help foster a love and appreciation of the natural world.

We are most thankful to our hard-working staff and volunteers who've managed educational programs for the children and adults of our community and region. They continue to work hard to expand educational programs for students of all ages. Additionally, we wish to thank those generous individuals who continue to provide financial support for TNS programs and activities. Additionally, we very much appreciate contributions designated in support of our adopted owls. Visiting these magnificent owls in their wonderful enclosure is a must-see when you visit the nature center.

Some of the significant highlights from the past year include:

1. We value our Board members, this past year we have recruited new Board members that filled out our Board of Directors' experience in finance, business, fundraising & environmental stewardship. These new board members come to us with fresh ideas for future growth of the nature center. Qualified individuals interested in serving on the TNS Board of Directors may inquire by reaching out to our Executive Director.
2. TNS Board of Directors have remained steadfast in our mission to provide resources and education to inspire the appreciation and preservation of nature. Continuing our solid partnership with the City of Troy, the nature center programs and activities continue to grow, with over 31,000 individuals attending programs, participating in healthy outdoor activities and visiting the preserve in FY2023.
3. What a year it has been for the TNS staff. During 2023 fiscal year, we hired Michelle Goyette as our Special Events Coordinator from among the TNS educational program staff. Michelle stepped in just before the 2022 Nature Uncorked event and has been doing a fine job managing fundraising events and writing proposals for funding for the nature center. Also, Debbie Williams, a 26-year employee of the nature center under the city's management and another 12 years as the Lead Naturalist with the Troy Nature Society retired in May of this year. Debbie devoted a total of 38 years to nature education at our nature center. Upon Debbie's retirement, we were pleased to promote Christina Funk to Lead Naturalist. The Society was also fortunate to have one of our long-term goals come to fruition, with the addition of a second Assistant Naturalist position. We are extremely pleased to have Danielle Durham and Keaton Mette serving in these vital educational positions. Their experience and support are contributing to growth and expansion in the variety of our program offerings.
4. Our popular Kowalski Pavilion is constantly booked for rent from May through October for graduation parties, showers and group activities.
5. Our 2022 fundraisers were very successful. The "Nature Uncorked Wine & Beer Tasting" event raised nearly \$35,000 and the "2023 Run for Nature" event raised its highest amount to date, over \$13,000 in revenue for our programs and activities.

Going forward, we are looking for new ways to raise funds to help maintain and improve our top-notch programming. Your membership and participation can help us expand our outreach to the local community. Make sure to visit the Stage Nature Center and enjoy this major, green asset in our community.

Scott Hunter
President, TNS Board of Directors

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



Photo credit, Ed Morykwas

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.

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 had one full time employee and provided services for 8,253 visitors, students and program participants.

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



Photo credit, Tina Catron

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 has been especially appreciative for the construction of the Roger and Susie Kowalski Pavilion since the start of the pandemic. The shelter provides us with many venue options including outdoor space for public and scouting programs, Day Camp programs, rentals for wedding ceremonies, family reunions along with 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. The Society served more than 31,000 individuals attending programs and visitors enjoying the beauty of the preserve during the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, an increase of 16% over the previous year. The organization:

- Conducted 112 school field trips/school outreach/organized group programs. These programs served a total of 6,387 students and Scouts who were provided with hands-on experience in nature.
- Conducted 319 public programs and events for children, adults and miscellaneous groups at the nature center. These programs served 7,591 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 4,833 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.
- In partnership with the City of Troy, the Society along with its friends and supporters reached its financial goal of \$145,000 to complete construction of a Raptor House. In June 2021, a dedication of the new enclosure for the rehabilitated owls adopted in 2018 by the Society was held. The structure is home to these magnificent birds of prey and for any future raptors not able to survive for themselves in the wild. The public can view the owls daily in their permanent home from dawn to dusk.

In November 2021, the organization was awarded \$112,360 in funds from Oakland County to support the TNS Mindfulness at Stage initiative. TNS staff, in conjunction with mental health care representatives from Core-



Photo credit, Christina Funk

well Health, DMC Children's Hospital and Henry Ford Health have developed and are conducting nature-based mindfulness programming at the Stage Nature Center for individuals and family groups. During the project timeline, that ended April 2023, more than 1,440 individuals participated in complimentary mindfulness programs designed towards reducing the effects of stress, anxiety, depression and isolation on individuals of our community attributed to the pandemic. Additional funding is being sought to continue this important complimentary program designed to increase the participant's awareness of nature-based mindfulness practices and its benefits to the participants' well-being.

Leadership

The Troy Nature Society is supported by volunteer Board members comprised of educators, administrators, those with backgrounds in municipal governance, wildlife preservation, environmental activism, business management, fundraising, marketing, IT 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.

FY2024 Officers	FY2024 Board of Directors
Scott Hunter – President Dan Glombowski – Vice President David Lambert – President Emeritus Catherine McNamara - Treasurer Rebecca Seguin-Skrabucha - Secretary	Nicole Betzler Theresa Brooks Matthew Burrell Donovan Miller Fran Stage Shreyas Mirle—Student Board Representative

The administration of the Society includes an Executive Director responsible for oversight and fundraising activities with over twenty-five years nonprofit management experience. The Society has a Lead Naturalist and two Assistant Naturalists employed full time, all 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. Four program instructors are employed “as needed” to help support the many TNS educational programs as they are offered throughout the year. Part-time staff include a Special Events Coordinator, Accountant and a Marketing Specialist who manages the organization’s website and promotes awareness of the organization’s programs and activities through social media and the local press.

FY2024 TNS Staff	FY2024 TNS Educational Program Staff
Carla Reeb – Executive Director Louise McCormick-Glazier - Program Support Asst. Michelle Goyette—Special Events Coordinator Cindy Wymer - Accountant Neha Saigal – Marketing Specialist	Christina Funk – Lead Naturalist Danielle Durham – Assistant Naturalist Keaton Mette—Assistant Naturalist Lori Brown Genia Connell Linda Friedman Nancy Klein

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 and 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

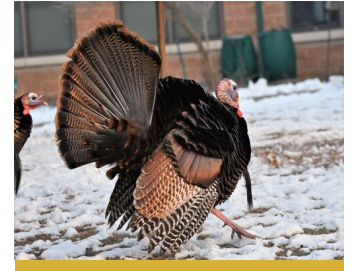


Photo credit, Dragon Nikolic

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

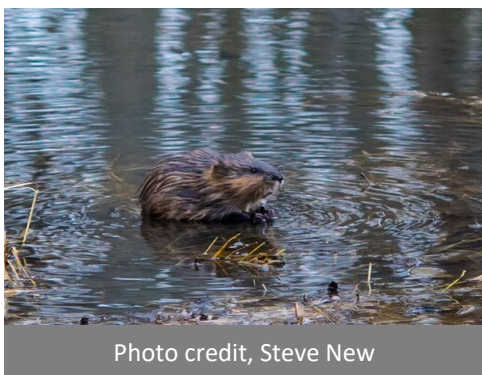


Photo credit, Steve New

Non-Discrimination Policy

The Troy Nature Society affirms a policy of non-discrimination with regards to persons on the basis of race (including but not limited to hair texture and protective hairstyles), color, religion, sex, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, height, weight, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, military status or other protected status in accordance with applicable federal, state and local laws. This policy shall pertain to staff, applicants, volunteers, teens, 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.



Photo credit, Bobby Lewis

School / School Outreach Programming

As the 2023-2024 school year proceeds, educators are eagerly scheduling school field trips to the nature center for their students that were curtailed during the height of the pandemic. 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. Programs engage participants in interactive nature and science experiences which include classroom instruction followed by a guided hike through the preserve. We also 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 that act as the organization's Educational Ambassadors. Housed at the nature center's Raptor House, these special owls are the nature center's most popular live exhibit. 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 extraordinary 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 in the “Troy Rec”, the city’s premiere magazine which is distributed to approximately 32,000 households and businesses quarterly.



Photo credit, Dawn Vezina

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 program 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.

Program Attendance

ATTENDANCE TOTALS FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2023	
Group Visitations (Schools/Scouts/Senior Groups/Home School Groups)	2,781
Outreach Programs & Lectures	3,606
Birthday Parties (Educational) and Facility Rentals	7,591
Walk-In Visitations	17,515
Grand Total	31,493

Volunteers from Shinola Detroit



Photo credit, TNS Staff

Program Evaluation

Post-program quizzes from pre-selected students participating in school programs are collected and evaluated. Educators also provide important feedback on TNS programs 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 \$1,000 level and above during the 2023 fiscal year include:

Terence and Jennifer Adderley Fund	Coldwell Banker-Karen Greenwood	Christal Lewandowski
Anonymous (2)	William Davy	Oakland County-Oakland Together
Automotive Authority, Inc.	East Michigan Native Plant Sales	Starbuck’s Foundation
Michael and Pam Brady	Filmer Memorial Trust	Sweetgreen
Dr. Karol Carter	Independent Bank	Troy Auto and Truck Center
City of Troy	William Hamilton	Troy Community Foundation

In addition, we have a well established annual fundraisers including a Wine and Beer Tasting and a Run for Nature event. Currently there are approximately 225 TNS Members proving financial support our programs and activities.

Financials

In 2011, the Society entered into an operating agreement with the City of Troy. The agreement calls for approximately \$46,000 annually in city support of services, building maintenance and supplies for the nature center. The current agreement with the City of Troy runs through the fiscal year 2027. In 2018, the Troy Nature Society established an endowment fund through the Troy Community Foundation. The fund is valued at \$24,766 as of June 30, 2023.

Revenue & Expenses	FYE 6/30/2022	FYE 6/30/2023
Donations & Grants	\$ 171,894	\$ 78,348
Fundraising Events	35,890	36,065
Membership Dues	11,247	10,090
Program Fees	70,492	93,164
In-Kind	11,890	9,812
Other	35,434	486
City Investment*	100,000	100,000
Total Revenue	\$ 436,847	\$ 327,965
Wages & Payroll Taxes	226,721	245,284
Contract Services	25,985	34,405
Program Expenses	52,772	65,959
Administrative Expenses	37,861	37,986
Total Expenses	\$ 343,339	\$ 383,634

*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, Xinqiao Wang

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 two Assistant Naturalists oversee all educational programming and four 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 a Special Events Coordinator, 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 owls are available for public viewing in their permanent enclosure daily. 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).



Photo credit, Steve New

The Stage Nature Center is managed by the Troy Nature Society (TNS), a non-profit organization
Troy Nature Society
P.O. Box 99302
Troy MI, 48099
PH: (248) 688-9703 | Fax: (248) 879-9241
www.stagenaturecenter.org

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