



The Royal Oak Nature Society

Protecting Our Parks and Educating the Community

Why Is an Organization Needed to Protect Royal Oak's Two Nature Conservancy Parks (Cunnington Park and Tenhave Woods inside Quickstad Park)? The City of Royal Oak and its citizens are blessed with over 45 acres of nature preserves. Unfortunately, many residents are not aware of their existence. The City, while doing a great job of maintaining the other 48 parks in Royal Oak, does not have the staff or resources to adequately maintain and promote recreational and educational opportunities within these two conservancy parks. People who care about these natural areas in our community need to step up and take responsibility for them. In a landlocked community such as Royal Oak, these two pieces of vacant land are habitat for flora and fauna that are unlike our other parks and should not be considered as opportunities for development. Since these parks have never been developed, the landscape resembles the pre-settlement vegetation of Oakland County. They have been utilized for education and appreciation of nature for many years and need to remain so for many more years to come.

Who Are We? The Royal Oak Nature Society is a non-profit, volunteer citizens group working with the City to protect the management of Royal Oak's two nature preserves. Our mission is to foster the awareness and usage of these natural areas by maintaining and promoting recreational and educational opportunities within them. The Nature Society is also in the process of clearing out invasive exotic plants from behind the Senior/Community Center. After that area is cleared out, a botanical garden with native plants will be created. This will become another area that can be utilized for education and the appreciation of nature.

How Are We Going to Accomplish Our Goals? We have different groups within the Nature Society that concentrate on specific areas:

- The Communications Team publicizes organizational activities to the general membership & public through various mediums and performs any other forms of communications required by the board.
- The Education Team provides outreach and liaison to outside individuals, groups and schools, to promote environmental education.
- The Fundraiser Team leads the fund-raising efforts of the Royal Oak Nature Society, which includes the coordinating and organizing of the Annual Spring Fundraiser and other fund-raiser programs approved by the board.
- The Program Team Is responsible for setting up the speaker programs, workshops and all of the nature programs within Cunningham Park and Tenhave Woods.
- The Stewardship Team maintains a trail system and enhances the overall park experience at Tenhave Woods and Cunningham Park.
- The Ways and Means Team investigates means of grant solicitation and then follows through accordingly.

How Can You Help? We need residents and non-residents to join our volunteer effort! You could join one or more of our teams, become a Nature Society member, or just be a strong supporter who believes in the conservation of these parks. But most of all, we just want the public to spend time in these great nature areas. This could include looking for wildflowers in the spring, observing beautiful fall color or just enjoying a pleasant walk through the woods anytime of the year. By being actively involved, we can make sure that our two conservancy parks stay vibrant and remain as nature preserves for future generations to use and enjoy.

For More Information or to Contact Us: E-mail us at naturesociety@ci.royal-oak.mi.us, call us at **248-246-3380** or mail us at **1600 N. Campbell, Royal Oak, 48067**. Also, we invite you to visit our website at <http://www.ci.royal-oak.mi.us/portal/community-links/nature-society> to find out about our upcoming nature walks, speaker programs and other events, view past newsletters, look at maps showing the location of Royal Oak's two nature parks and their trails, obtain contact info and check out other Nature Society/nature park information. The Royal Oak Nature Society has a Facebook page that is accessible to anyone.

LOOKING BACK AT THE NATURE SOCIETY'S EARLY YEARS

In June of 2000, the Royal Oak Nature Society began to take form. Back then, a group of citizens who wanted to keep Cummington Park and Tenhave Woods as natural areas, came together to form what would eventually become the Royal Oak Nature Society. The actual impetus for its formation occurred during the writing of the 1999 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The consultants assembling the plan noted that both parks were under utilized and needed work. Based on this finding, the Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Advisory Board in February, 2000, made a recommendation to the Royal Oak City Commission that both parks become Conservancy Parks. Later that month, the City Commission approved the recommendation. This park status has "protection and management of the natural/cultural environment as the primary focus with recreational use as a secondary objective". With this new position, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board would assign an ad hoc committee to figure out how to best utilize these natural areas.

The Advisory Board specifically recruited volunteers to represent certain areas within the city. Gretchen Greenwood was the liaison from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and Greg Rassel, Superintendent of Public Works for the City of Royal Oak worked as the city government liaison. Neighborhood representatives were Jack Kerby from the Cummington area and Todd Vince from the Tenhave Woods vicinity. Phil Townsend, principal of Starr Elementary, represented the Royal Oak School Board, and Bob Muller represented the community as a naturalist. This group first met in June, 2000. The group's charter as determined by the Advisory Board was "to work together to develop a program for the proper development of Tenhave Woods and Cummington Park".

The early activity of the committee began with a walk-thru of both parks. That was followed by discussions regarding the history of these parks and brainstorming sessions on ways to increase positive traffic for them. Building trails, speaker and nature walk programs topped the improvement list. From June, 2000 to January, 2001, the group met monthly to hammer out a master plan for both nature areas. Mission and objective statements were made to permit proper focus for future activities.

The two major objectives that were agreed on were to preserve & enhance the natural attributes of these two parks and develop a curriculum for a broad range of audiences, including formal (classroom) & non-formal (signage) training to promote environmental education.

Then work began to develop ways to implement these objectives. High priority was placed on a formal kick-off for the organization and attracting new members. With these activities in mind, the committee decided to create a formal and on-going organization to provide structure to the future work. The committee recommended that its name become the Royal Oak Nature Society and that this organization would carry out the goals for the nature parks. The original ad hoc committee members became the steering committee of the Nature Society. The steering committee would provide leadership for five sub-committees that were needed to meet the Society's objectives. On January 17, 2001, the Royal Oak Nature Society was officially formed with a kick-off meeting at Starr Elementary. The response was

overwhelming as over 70 people showed up! Several meetings took place after that at which committees were setup to handle communications, education, programs, beautification plus ways and means. Volunteers were then selected to chair them.

On March 7, 2001, the Nature Society had its first general membership meeting along with its' first speaker program, a slide show on wildflowers, presented by botanists Don and Joyce Drife.

In January, 2002, the Nature Society presented its Master Plan for the two parks to the Royal Oak Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. After being approved, the Plan was presented at a public hearing in March. It then moved on to the Royal Oak City Commission who subsequently approved those plans in April 2002.

At a general meeting in February, 2002, the Steering Committee was replaced by an elected board of directors.

With the Master Plan being approved by the City, the framework had officially been set in place to guide the Royal Oak Nature Society towards reaching its goals and objectives.

ROYAL OAK NATURE SOCIETY PROGRAMS, PROJECTS & SURVEYS

Nature Walk Programs: Walks in Royal Oak's two nature areas, Cummington Park and Tenhave Woods, are lead by Royal Oak Nature Society naturalists. There is at least one walk per month with more per month added during the spring wildflower and fall color seasons. They are usually held on a Saturday or Sunday. An emphasis is put on understanding the different forest types found in these parks, individual plant and animal species found there, and the geology and human history of the area.

Since 2004, Diane Pruden, an active member of the North American Mycological Association, has led annual mushroom walks in early fall to identify the mushrooms and fungus that can be found Tenhave Woods. There are several nature walks that are held in the evening. They include Full Moon walks which have become quite popular, March Owl Hoots that attempt to lure in or have the screech and great horned owls answer tape recordings of their calls and ones held in July & August. On the first Saturday of May, we host an Open House at Tenhave. Programs on that day have included a bird walk, wildflower walks, pond studies, what can be found underneath leaf litter, trees, and animal habitat for young children. Pond study programs are held in the spring and early summer at Dragonfly Pond (Tenhave). This popular program attracts both adults and children. Water samples are taken from the pond to see what is living in it and viewing trays are available to examine what we find. For those interested, small aquarium nets are available for you to catch your own pond life and have us identify.

Because of water & insect issues (basically mosquitoes), only a few nature walks are taken at Cummington Park during the year. Hopefully, as these issues are dealt with, the number of walks each year will increase. Newly built Crawfish Pond may help to improve the insect problem and improving water runoff with deepening of ditches may alleviate a lot of the flooding that occurs through early summer.

Speaker Programs: Speaker programs are usually held on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. from September to June at Royal Oak Middle School (709 N. Washington, between 11 Mile Rd & Catalpa). They are usually slide shows focusing on various natural history topics. If you watch nature programs on PBS or the Discovery channel, this is better, as you can meet afterwards and ask the

speakers questions. The Nature Society's general meeting is held prior to the talk and usually last about five minutes.

Dates and times for our nature walks & speaker programs can be found on our website (see top of page 2), our newsletter "The Chinquapin" (need to be an Associate Nature Society member or higher to receive it), Royal Oak Insight magazine or by calling 248-246-3380 and listening to a pre-recorded message. Location maps of the two nature parks & Senior/Community Center can also be found on our website. There is no charge or pre-registration for the walks or speaker programs.

Special Nature Park Programs: The Nature Society provides nature walk programs for school classes, scout troops, service clubs, neighborhood associations, etc. This can be a general nature walk or requests for a walk on special subjects can be arranged.

Pre-Settlement Land Project: This project is attempting to gather enough data to determine the pre-settlement condition of Royal Oak. This involves researching the old river and stream courses, glacial beaches, and a survey of every old growth forest tree in the city. This information along with property lines, old river and stream beds, springs, etc, from old 1800's survey maps will be combined in new maps. These new maps will give us a better understanding of the land of Royal Oak.

Tenhave Woods & Cummington Park History Project: We have written a report on the history of area of land that now contains Tenhave Woods. It begins with the Goodwin family who first settled the land in the 1820's & continues into the 1900's. You can find that report by going to our website (see top of page 2) under "Reports" then "History of a Piece of Land". Research on the history of the land that now contains Cummington Park is now being worked on. If you know of anyone who might have historical information about the land that contains Cummington Park or Tenhave Woods, please have them contact us (see top of page 2).

Workshop Class Program: Workshops involve a classroom session and then a trip to the woods to try out newly learned skills. Workshops that have previously been held include winter identification of trees & shrubs, spring flowering plants, pond life & photography.

Nature Night Program: Nature Night is a program held on evenings where children and their families can get involved with nature-based exhibits by observing & asking questions about them. Our exhibits have included arts and crafts, seed planting, composting, fossils, tree rings, animal skins and skulls, birds, live reptiles, insects, owl pellets, amphibians, and native fish displays. Nature Nights are a great "night out" that brings together families for a fun and educational evening. Past programs have been held at the Salter Center, RO Library, Shrine Grade School & RO Public Elementary Schools (Upton, Starr, Wittier, Oakland, Keller, Oakridge & Starr).

WEBELO'S Forester Badge Program: The Nature Society's program has five of the requirements that the WEBELOS need to complete. They include:

- Identify six forest trees common to the area where you live. Tell how both wildlife and humans use them.
- Identify six forest plants (other than trees) that are useful to wildlife. Tell which animals use them and for what purposes.
- Draw a picture to show the plant layers of a forest in your area. Label the different layers.
- Draw a picture showing how sunlight and water and minerals in the soil help a plant grow.
- Make a poster showing a tree's growth rings or examine the growth rings of a tree stump. Explain how the rings tell its life history.

Surveys: There is an ongoing survey of plants and animals found in our nature study areas. Don & Joyce Drife (botanists) have taken our survey from the 1970's and re-found most of the plants, as well as added many that had been missed before. Robert Lawshe & Hugh Campbell did a series of insect surveys during the evenings in the summer of 2004 (go to our website & see 2004 fall issue of our newsletter). The Clinton River Watershed Council did a freshwater Macro-Invertebrate survey in the spring of 2004 & Edi Sontag from the Detroit Zoo did one in spring of 2005. Diane Pruden leads nature walks in early fall to identify any fungus we find and hopefully will be developing a fungus survey from information received from those walks. Bob Muller periodically, does surveys of life found in the vernal ponds of Tenhave & Cummington Park. If you specialize in something & would like to do a survey in one of the nature parks, please contact us (see top of page 2).

TENHAVE WOODS, CUMMINGSTON PARK & THE ARBORETUM AT WORDEN PARK EAST

Royal Oak's two nature preserves, Tenhave Woods & Cummington Park, are the "natural jewels" of Royal Oak and surrounding communities. They are both heavily wooded, have lined trails and contain over 300 species of flora between them. These natural areas are open to the public during the daytime, seven days a week. Dogs are not allowed inside the preserves because they disturb the wildlife. During the winter and spring, boots are recommended to be worn while in the parks. Because of mosquitoes, insect repellent and dressing appropriately is advised from late spring through the end of summer.

Location of Tenhave Woods & Cummington Park and the Arboretum (behind the Senior/Community Center) can be found on our website (see top of page 2). From the menu, go to "Park Locations". While on that site, link to "click on map of park trail locations" for trail maps of both parks.

Tenhave Woods Inside Quickstad Park:

Tenhave Woods, which is just east of Royal Oak High School, is in a fenced-in area located within the boundaries of Quickstad Park. Tenhave Woods was once part of a Royal Oak settler's (the Goodwin family) woodlot and was probably kept that way because of their need for firewood.

Tenhave was dedicated as a city park in 1955. After an incident in the middle 1960's, it was fenced in by the city. The only way that anyone could get into the woods was by going to the city and getting the key to unlock the gate. After two turnstiles were installed in 1986, the park was re-opened.

Tenhave Woods encompasses about 22 acres and was named in 1999 after Hessel Tenhave, a Dondero High School biology teacher. He taught in Royal Oak for 34 years and often utilized the woods to impress the importance and beauty of the environment on his students. Walter Nickel, former naturalist for Cranbrook institutions, said, "This is one of the finest acreages of hard woods that I have ever seen in this area".

The park's entrances and exits are through turnstiles that are never locked. Presently, the main entrance can be found along the south fence, facing Lexington Blvd. A second entrance is at the northeast corner of the park, just off of Normandy. Exit-only turnstiles are located on the west edge of the park next to the soccer fields and northwest corner (facing Normandy). Parking is available in a lot adjacent to the intersection of Lexington and Marais (no parking allowed during school hours), at the Senior/Community Center or along Normandy.

Tenhave Woods has several assets. One is Dragonfly Pond which after being rebuilt in 2005, has helped to reduce the number of mosquitoes in part of the park by small animals that eat mosquitoes. Other features include the park having three different types of forests (swamp, oak/hickory and beech/maple), a good trail system that is continually being improved, and new entrances that provide a dry entryway into the park during the spring when the west end of the park is usually quite wet. The old entrances were very wet during the spring.

The following Tenhave Woods projects were part of our 2002 Master Plan except those marked with “*”.

- October 2002: Built Sassafras Trail (Eagle Scout project of Andrew Mast from Boy Scout Troop #1629)
- November 2003: Swamp & Scout Trails were built (Eagle Scout project from Chris McFadden of Boy Scout Troop #1629))
- Spring 2004: Began the ongoing project of removing Garlic Mustard (Nature Society Project)
- October 2005: Tenhave Woods Vernal Pond completed (Nature Society Project-see article in the spring 2006 edition of our newsletter which can be found on this website)
- October 2007: Added Lexington Blvd turnstile (Nature Society Project)
- February 2008: Trail extension from Sandbar Trail to where new entrance/exit turnstile is going to be installed (Eagle Scout Project of Josh Eggart from Boy Scout Troop #1085)
- April 2008*: Two benches were installed at Dragonfly Pond, Wood Duck houses put up at Dragonfly Pond, moved Park Rules sign to Lexington entrance (Eagle Scout Project of Nikolas Hoye from Troop #1629)
- June 2008: Built Fern Trail (Eagle Scout Project of Matt Lewan from Boy Scout Troop #1627)
- August 2008: Sassafras Trail widened (Eagle Scout Project of Tyler Jelonek from Boy Scout Troop #1601)
- November 2008: -Relined & widened both Swamp & east half of Scout Trail (Eagle Scout Project of Mike Henning from Boy Scout Troop #1085)
- December 2008: Rerouted Pond Trail (Eagle Scout Project Ed Getts from Boy Scout Troop #1085)
- December 2008: Added new turnstile in the northeast corner of the park (Nature Society Project)
- October 2009: Used dirt to raise Pond Trail near the Goodwin Trail & the Fern Trail plus rerouted part of the Sassafras Trail (Eagle Scout Project of Stephen Kaurala from Boy Scout Troop #1610). Extra dirt was also added to the intersection of Sandbar & Pond Trail.
- November 2009: Installed trail identification signs at all trail intersections at Tenhave & installed Tenhave trail maps at both entrances (Eagle Scout project of Eric Manidok from Boy Scout Troop #1610)
- November, 2009: Brian & Chris Cooley from Community Arborist cut down about 12 trees from the area north of Dragonfly Pond. Then Perry Gentner from Machine Works came in with machinery & removed those trees & their tree stumps. Then he removed over a foot of dirt from that area.

Cummingston Park:

Cummingston is located on Royal Oak’s northern border, just east of Meijers. The 25-acre park is mostly wooded, except for an open field and play structure at the east end. The west and middle sections of the park are fenced, but unlike Tenhave Woods, the main entrance does not have a gate or turnstile. That entrance is located at the intersection of Torquay & Leafdale, where on-street parking is available. .

In 1925, five acres what is presently Cummingston Park, was dedicated as a Royal Oak park. The balance of it was purchased by the city in the early 60's and dedicated in 1963. It was used extensively from the mid 50's through the 60's for nature study classes. The Michigan State Botany Department said, "Cummingston Park contains the richest wild area in this part of Michigan". As recently as the late 1960's, run-off water from the park drained into the north branch of the Red Run, which flowed along what is presently known as Parmenter Road. When an apartment complex south of the park and Meijer Drive, north of the park, were built in the early to mid 70's, excess water from the park had no where to go. This caused a good portion of the park to flood from March to July, every year. This in turn reduced tree growth, killed off tree saplings, and initiated a decline of wildflowers in the park. In 1975 there were over 3,500 red trilliums; in 1999 there were only 50!

In 2002, at least 1/3 of Cummingston Park was underwater during the spring. In late spring, the city put in an experimental drain to see how much water could be drained from the park. The results were inconclusive in 2003, because the park was relatively dry. In the spring of 2004, the northern part of the park was underwater again. At that point, further planning was necessary in order to get the park to properly drain in the spring.

Cummingston Park's assets include newly built Crawfish Pond and a fairly good trail system on the eastern side of the park. A lot of work is still required to improve the quality of this nature area. Hopefully, Crawfish Pond will do the same thing that Tenhave's Dragonfly Pond has done as far as reducing the heavy mosquito population. Due to recent drainage improvements made in late 2006, the east side of the park no longer has excessive water buildup in the spring. Our next goals are to increase the drainage in the western half of the park and improve the trails in the eastern half. Cummingston is going to need a lot of work, to get it back to the way it was 50 years ago. The process to restore it will probably take several generations.

For a detailed history about the area that is now Cummingston Park, go to our website (p.1), go to "Reports" & then "Cummingston Water Report" by Bob Muller.

The following Cummingston Park projects were part of our 2002 Master Plan except those marked with "*".

- Summer 2002: Removed honeysuckle from the front part of the park (Nature Society Project)
- Early Fall 2002: Removed grapevines from the front part of the park (Nature Society Project)
- November 2002: Built Meadow & Eagle Scout Trails along with rebuilding the Gentian Trail (Eagle Scout project of Jim Hutton from Boy Scout Troop #1610)
- October 2004: Built the Shagbark & Arkona Trails (Eagle Scout project of Keegan Springfield from Boy Scout Troop #1707)
- November 2004: Bird feeder has been moved to the meadow area that is just east & inside of the main entrance at Torquay & Leafdale (Nature Society Project).
- November 2006: Deepened drainage ditch running alongside Leafdale Trail (Nature Society Project)
- December 2008*: Completed building Crawfish Pond (Eagle Scout Project of Jacob Verten from Boy Scout Troop #1610)

Arboretum at Worden Park East

Worden Park East is located at the southeast corner of Lexington Blvd and Marais. It was dedicated in 1955. The park surrounds The Royal Oak Senior Center on three sides. The park is 4.25 acres in size, which includes play structures, tended gardens, a large patio, grassy areas, open areas with mature over-story trees and ornamental trees and shrubs and a two acre wooded area. It is believed to have been part

of the Goodwin Farm and was probably farmed at one time. A topographical survey from 1969 shows the wooded area as being a young woodlot. The dominant species were mostly maple and ash, with some cherry, elm, oak, hickory, poplar and hawthorn present as well. Since then some ornamental trees were added such as willow, dogwood, apple, and vernal witch hazel. When the Nature Society first toured the woodlot in 2001, it was already being taken over by invasive plants, primarily common buckthorn, Asian bush honeysuckle and English ivy. Since then the problem has worsened considerably, with the majority of the flora consisting of invasive exotics.

The long range plan for the arboretum is to make it into a garden to create a collection of native plants that are not found within Tenhave Woods or Cummington Park. It will add to our ability to teach about our area's ecosystems.

Arboretum Projects

- Fall 2006: The City installed a 5-foot wide concrete path through the woods with funding from a Community Development Block Grant.
- In May, 2008, the Nature Society planted native Michigan wildflowers and woody plants along the path with a \$300 grant from the Wildflower Association of Michigan.
- Buckthorn Removal
 - April 2008: Eagle Scout Project (Nolan Tillis from Troop #1627)
 - September 2008: Arboretum Service Project with some members of Troop 1627
 - August 2009: Community Workday
 - November, 2009: Workday early in the month included John & Theresa DeLisle along with Richard Stoll. Two weeks later, another workday was held. Besides John, Theresa & Richard, others who helped included Dena Serrato and some people from SOCWA Ecological Gardening Volunteers & Detroit Metro Wild Ones.