

Haehnle Sanctuary News



Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary

Owned By the Michigan Audubon Society

Maintained and Operated by The Jackson Audubon Society

Preserving and Protecting our Natural World

Spring 2013



Monitoring Birds and Plant Life at Haehnle Sanctuary – a call for volunteers

More than 383 species of plants and 230 species of birds, including 13 species not seen since 1955, have been recorded at the Sanctuary during the last 60 years. These numbers are not surprising given the diversity of habitats that occur here – wetlands, including lake, stream, sedge meadows, emergent marshes, fens, and forest wetlands; and uplands, including grasslands, transition forests, beech woods, and oak-hickory woods. For the past 13 years, the Haehnle Sanctuary Committee has devoted considerable effort to managing some areas with a view to improving habitat for wetland and grassland species, especially those that are of Special Concern in the State of Michigan. And, of course, we always give high priority to the Sandhill Crane, the signature species of the Sanctuary.

Our current practice for keeping track of plant and animal species in the managed areas is random walk-throughs at different times of the year. A better approach, and one we now plan to implement, is regular monitoring at designated times or seasons of the year. This will allow us to determine for example, which bird species use a specific habitat during spring and fall migration as a food source, or during spring and summer for nesting. We could determine which plants and animals are present in a fen or Mud Lake Marsh and what needs to be done to improve or maintain that habitat. In other instances we may find rare or unusual plants or animals in a specific area that then needs a more concentrated effort to ensure that those species survive.

Ron Hoffman, a long-time member and past chair of the Sanctuary Committee, has developed a Management Plan for Haehnle Sanctuary. The plan is habitat-oriented, so it is ideally suited for monitoring individual plants and animals using guidelines established in the Plan. With help from Bri Krauss, Stewardship Activities Coordinator at Michigan Audubon, we have established two to three 100-meter, monitoring transects in each priority area that is currently under active management. Initially, we will concentrate on birds (because Michigan Audubon Sanctuaries are bird sanctuaries) and plants. We have set five different times a year to assess bird numbers and two times for plants.

We have a number of qualified people in Jackson Audubon Society, which include Sanctuary Committee Members, to monitor bird species but we need more. We definitely need people who can help with plant identification. If you are interested in helping with this monitoring project, please contact Lathe Claflin (phone, 517-522-3949 or email lathe.claflin@gmail.com) for more information. The transects will not change from season to season or year to year. So for each transect bird and, particularly, plant life will be near constant per time assessed. In addition, the same individuals do not need to monitor a transect at every time period of a year. This will be a great opportunity to contribute your time and expertise while enjoying the beauty of Haehnle Sanctuary.

Lathe Claflin, Sanctuary Committee Chairperson

37-7 *Where are You?*

By Ron Hoffman



Crane Art by Mike Olney

No crane has captured the attention and hopes of Michigan cranaics as 37-7. It is hard to miss a bird with essentially white plumage except for black primaries and is 6 inches taller than a sandhill crane. 37-7 is a whooping crane, only one of slightly more than a hundred in eastern North America and the only one that regularly summers in Michigan.

This particular whooper can be identified by a combination of colored leg bands which has allowed researchers to track his movements during the past 6 years. Designated 37-7, he was the 37th whooping crane raised in captivity and then released in Wisconsin during 2007. In 2008 he along with four other cohorts ended up near Saginaw Bay instead of returning to Wisconsin. They were captured and taken back to Wisconsin, but 37-07 returned to Michigan again in 2009. Every year since he has spent the summer and fall in Michigan, often in and around the Haehnle Sanctuary. His evening flights into Mud Lake Marsh during the fall of 2010 made him a "star attraction" at the sanctuary.

His movements have been well documented in 2012. He spent the winter in Tennessee along with a two-year old male and two young female whooping cranes. Since whooping cranes can begin breeding when four years old, hopes were high that he would return to Michigan with at least one of the females.

However such was not the case because he was alone when seen in Barry County in late March. From there he moved to Montcalm County for most of the summer. His next stop was northern Shiawassee County before arriving in Jackson County late in November.

Another white crane was seen at the same time and only a few miles from 37-7 north of Jackson. Had he found another whooper? Unfortunately, no! The white crane turned out to be a partial albino sandhill crane.

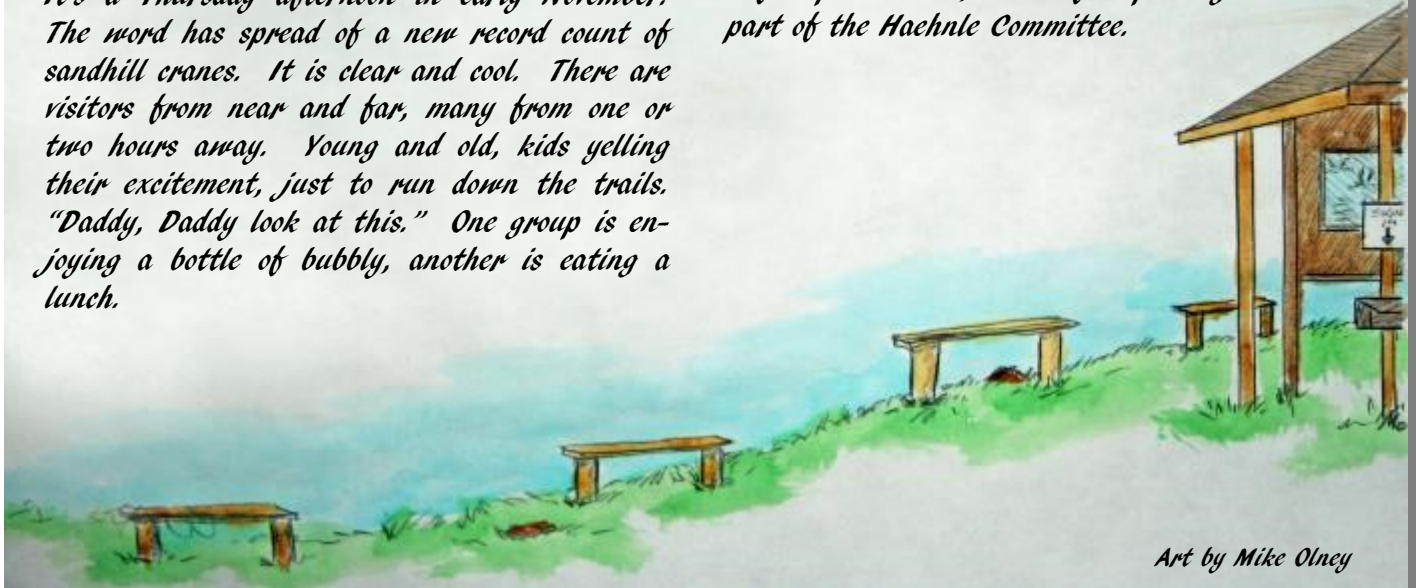
37-7 is believed to be the crane seen flying over Dayton, Ohio November 27 and then he was confirmed on the wintering grounds at Hiwassee Wildlife Refuge, Tennessee during the first week of December. There he was observed with two younger whoopers, one male and one female. It looked like he was trying take the female from the male. In February, the young male (21-10) was found dead; cause unknown. 37-7 and the female (23-10) have since remained together. Perhaps he is not a confirmed bachelor after-all!

March 14 there was no radio signal from 23-10 at the Tennessee site which may indicate they have begun migrating north, hopefully to Michigan.

*A Day At Haehnle Sanctuary
By Don Siegrist*

It's a Thursday afternoon in early November. The word has spread of a new record count of sandhill cranes. It is clear and cool. There are visitors from near and far, many from one or two hours away. Young and old, kids yelling their excitement, just to run down the trails. "Daddy, Daddy look at this." One group is enjoying a bottle of bubbly, another is eating a lunch.

Finally the cranes start to come in. They come in waves. Everyone's eyes go skyward. We all agree that it's an awesome sight. Many comment on what a fine place Haehnle is, and thank the ones who make it possible. It's such a fun place to be, and I feel privileged to be part of the Haehnle Committee.



Art by Mike Olney

A Volunteer's Perspective, by Sandra Harkness

Helena Robinovitz should have the easiest job - all this sweet and charming lady asks for is a few hours of your time, once a year, in, oh, say, mid-November, and would you please go out to the middle of anywhere and stand there - puff-padded until you can't possibly tip over, packing pockets full of fresh Kleenex - freezing odd parts of your anatomy (noses and toes, thumbs and bums) and be kind to strangers? Oh, and count everything that comes by, thank you so much! Well, who could not say yes to that offer!??

The thing is, those who have said yes have some treasured moments to take home and savor. Moments that warm the heart like the hot cocoa warms the body. Moments including acres and acres of openness, double rainbows, amazing clouds and glorious sunsets! Or perhaps it's experiencing Michigan's own whooping crane coming overhead, black-tipped wings beating strongly, its whiteness glowing against the lavender sky. Or maybe it's hearing the young'uns flying in with their sandhill parents and calling out in those squeaky voices - "Are we there yet?"

Then again it might be appreciating the kindness of someone who brought a birding scope, willing to share, so you can see what those blurs out there actually look like! Swans, egrets, herons, teal, mergansers, coots, an osprey, a bald eagle, and there's a shrike! A what? Never saw one of those before - that's one for the life list!!

And there are those V's of geese channeling Model T Fords...honk, honk, honk! We watch with held-breath, as they spill the air under their wings and find their way to the ponds. All this, and the sight of "The Flight," incoming flocks of the sandhills and the clamor of their calling as each drops from the sky, circling, searching for just the right parking place. You watch birds glide in, drop their landing gear and settle into the water, fifty, a hundred and more at a time when the gathering is at its peak. Special moments, shared with those strangers, to enjoy again with that hot cocoa.

(continued on page four)



*A typical fall afternoon at Haehnle.
Waiting for the cranes to arrive.*

Photograph by Gary Siegrist

(Volunteer's Perspective continued)

Helena asks for numbers, too, and that is an important task for hosts. To support the programs that keep the Sanctuary viable, grant money and other political advocacy are totally helpful - but we all know grants and budget decisions depend on counting the beans to prove the money will be well spent; so greeters can help gather those numbers - along with the smiles, handshakes, paw-shakes and puppy kisses (lots of folks bring their pooches, don't they!)

Here's a sample of those beans that were counted just in October 2012, according to the registration sheets - Hosts offered a welcome, information and conversation to people from 23 different states, including Michigan - and there were 126 separate locations in Michigan listed; Ann Arbor seemed to be home for the highest number from any one town, 86 parties - Jackson was home to 50 parties, and Chelsea was represented by 29 parties. There were also visitors from four other countries including the U.K, Germany, Canada and China!

Comments on the registration sheets range from "will be back, with binoculars!" to "next time I'll have gloves" to many who express thanks to Audubon for the beautiful place to be outdoors... People who visit on Saturday or Sunday during the fall when the cranes gather are greeted by some hospitable folks

- this year you could have met Ron Hoffman, Cheryl Greaney, Carol Strahler, Don Siegrist, Libby Warner, Mickey and Connie Kress, Becky Mehall, Tim Cullen, Stew and Helena Robinovitz, Gary Siegrist, Lathe Claflin, Heidi Doman, Craig Robson, Don and Robyn Henise, Marsi Darwin, Joan Wolf, Allen King, Roy Dane, Bryan and Amy Ennis, Barb Anderson, Bob and Sandy Harkness, Ken Dodge, Steve Jerant, Joyce Peterson, Connie Spotts, or Dennis Morton on any given weekend, representing Audubon's sustaining interest in the Phyllis Haehnle Sanctuary.

All these volunteers have greeted the myriad folk who flock to see flocks of birds - 2012 totals were the highest ever reported - 8,177 sandhills on November 19, (at an average weight of 12 pounds apiece, that would be 98,124 pounds of crane, feet, feathers and all!) Everyone on the Overlook Hill and the trails, visitors and volunteers alike, can feel the wonder as these beautiful creatures come winging in late in the last daylight, the scene enriched by fall colors and a setting sun.

Finally, Mother Nature turns out the lights, the last of the visitors have headed out of the parking lot, the cranes are bedded down and tucked in. You use that one last Kleenex, close the gate and remind one another to email Helena with the counts... and tell her you want to take her up on that offer again next year!

Sandhills Return With Little Fanfare

Most of Michigan's sandhill cranes spent the coldest winter months in points further south, from Tennessee to Florida. In late February they began returning to claim their nesting territories once again. There were no great flocks to see in area fields, nor did large numbers fly into the Haehnle Sanctuary.

The spring migration was very low-key, as there were no large concentrations of birds as in the fall. Instead, breeding pairs went straight to their nesting territories. Those that bred successfully in the previous season were accompanied by their latest offspring. Once nesting began in earnest, however, the adult birds would not tolerate these youngsters on their breeding territories. They were driven off to spend the next three years in small groups of sub-adult, bachelor birds before selecting mates and territories of their own.

Though the scattered pairs observed in spring may not be as impressive as the large numbers seen in the fall, they make up for this with their booming territorial unison calls that warn other breeding pairs to stay away. Calls that are so loud they can be heard from a mile or more away.

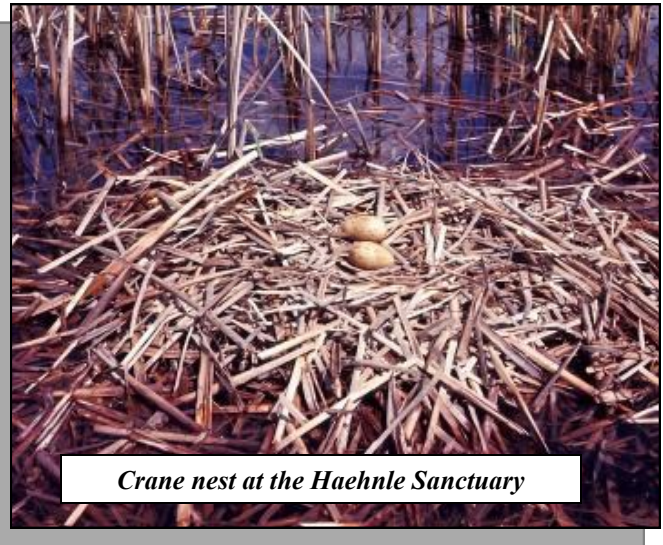
Cranes nest at Haehnle; and in other smaller marshes, some covering just a few acres. Their nests, built from marsh vegetation, resemble soggy hay stacks and are about three feet in diameter. By the time this newsletter is published, the nesting season will be well under way. Most nests will contain two eggs, the first laid and incubated a day or two before the second. Incubation takes about thirty days.

The first colt (young cranes are called colts) has a definite advantage over the second, and is the only one to survive during most years.

Hatching begins in late April and early May. For the first few days of their lives, the colts are kept close to the nests in their marsh habitats. As they grow, their parents take them into nearby fields to feed. The young birds grow rapidly, gaining an inch in height and increasing their body weight by ten percent each day. At ten weeks they are as large as their parents and ready to fly



Crane pair calling in unison to announce territory



Crane nest at the Haehnle Sanctuary



Late summer sandhill crane family (colt on left).



Sale Pending!

Land Acquisition Update

Good news on the Land Acquisition Campaign for the Klee property that was discussed in the last two newsletters. The Klees have agreed to accept our offer to purchase 46 acres of land! We hope to close on the property in the next month.

This will bring closure to a year-long effort to acquire this property, which included a successful capital campaign that raised the money we needed to purchase the property and ready it for public use.

In the next issue I will provide the final numbers on the capital campaign and details about access to the property.

In the meantime the committee wishes to thank all of you who contributed to this effort. It goes without saying that your support was crucial to making this a successful venture.

Lathe Claflin, Sanctuary Committee Chairperson

We Would Like to Thank the Following People for Their Generous Contributions to the Haehnle Land Acquisition Fund

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Katherine Aldrich
Barbara Anderson
Barbara Bovie
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c/o Ron Hoffman
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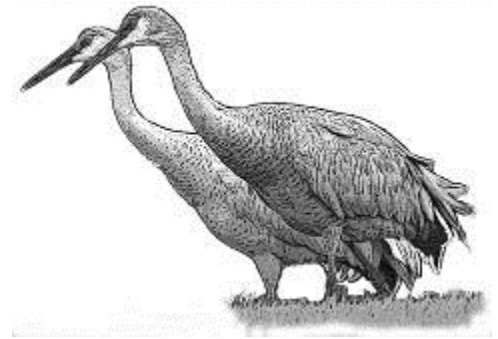
*Thank You,
Your Support is Greatly Appreciated!*



*Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary
c/o Jackson Audubon Society
P.O. Box 6453
Jackson, MI 49204*



*Official News Letter
For The
Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary*



Please Join Us for the Spring Work Bee

The spring work bee will be held on April 6 from 9:00 to around 12. In case of rain, the work bee will be held the following weekend. As always there will be a wide variety of work that needs to be done.

One of our main goals this spring will be to set up transects for monitoring birds and plants (see lead article). We could use some GPS units, 50 to 100 meter/foot tapes, and one should wear boots or waders/knee-high boots.

We will continue "opening up" the area behind and to the east of the lower or main parking lot. This will entail removal of the non-native understory shrubs (mainly autumn olive and honeysuckle), so if you are interested in helping with this project, please bring loppers, pruners, and gloves.

We ordinarily have something that needs painting, trails to maintain, general clean-up at three different parking areas, and other odds and ends to do so that our sanctuary looks attractive. We can always use help so please come and join us. Contact Lathe Claflin (517-522-3949) for more information

Thanks to the following for their unrestricted donations to the Haehnle Sanctuary:

Peter and Jackie Blake

Ron and Julia Keen

Nancy Kay Bogart

Janette Mraz

Tim Cullen

Ben and Vivian Pena

Doris Defoe

Melva Jean Tagart

Don and Betty Depew

Zone 4 LLC

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