

# Haehnle Sanctuary News



*Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary*

*Owned By Michigan Audubon*

*Maintained and Operated by The Jackson Audubon Society*

*Preserving and Protecting our Natural World*

*Fall 2017*



## *Lathe Claflin, Stepping Down But Not Away*



*Lathe Claflin Through the Years  
From a Life Long Love of Nature to Sanctuary Leadership*

“Lathe has done a wonderful job as chair of the Haehnle Sanctuary Committee. He is a good organizer and problem solver. The sanctuary is “in his blood.” He has good people skills which enabled the committee to function effectively. I just like working with the guy!”

This was Ron Hoffman’s description of Lathe and his summary of his tenure. As the following article will suggest, this is an apt description.

The sanctuary really is “in his blood.” Lathe grew up in the small country town of Lake Oswego, Oregon, outside of Portland.

He and his brother spent hours outside in the summer in what is now a huge county park, a hilly area with large beautiful woods and a creek flowing through it. Lathe remembers his mother always said, “Go play, but don’t get wet!” but they always got wet.

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## *Lathe Claflin Continued*



*Lathe (second from Right) and siblings*

Like many rural areas at the time, Lathe attended a country school until 8<sup>th</sup> grade and was in the first class to graduate from Portland High School. In 1964 he graduated from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where he met his wife, Kathy. With a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the University of Montana, he did his post-doctoral studies at the NIH, followed by a fellowship at Washington University, St. Louis. During these years he and Kathy married and had two children, David born in 1969 and Julie born in 1972.

In 1975 Lathe began his 26 year professorship in the Microbiology/Immunology Department at the University of Michigan where he taught medical and doctoral students. His colleague, Dr. Wesley Dunning, adds that Lathe's research "made fundamental discoveries on how antibodies diversify during an immune response, for example after vaccination. He also served on the prestigious NIH Allergy and Immunology Study Section."

While he was growing up Lathe's family went camping every summer, taking along binoculars to do some bird-watching. He grew up knowing the names of many birds and continued his interest in them as an adult.

However, he did not become a "birder" until the late 1980's when he joined Washtenaw Audubon Society. He was their president for several years and led birding trips around the State for them and other groups.

Kathy and Lathe moved to their current home in the country in 1996. Soon thereafter he joined Jackson Audubon Society and became an active member of the Haehnle Sanctuary Committee. Ron Hoffman recalls some of Lathe's major accomplishments since he became chair of the Sanctuary Committee in 2009: the acquisition of the Klee property with solicited individual and corporate donations and grants; the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Grant (WHIP) which reduced woody plants in the interface between Mud Lake Marsh and the grassland; the Pollinator Grant which includes spending countless hours controlling non-native invasive plants, planting native wildflowers and introducing private beehives, all to increase the success of native pollinators; and the Upper Grand River Improvement Program, which provided native woody plants along the Portage River stream-bank.

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## *Lathe Claflin Continued*

While Lathe was an important member and chair of the Haehnle Sanctuary Committee, he was also involved in other related organizations. In 2002 he joined the Jackson Audubon Society Board. He also served on the board of the Whitefish Point Bird Observatory. He was a member of the Michigan Bird Records Committee until 2011.

Ron Hoffman recalls that when Lathe was elected to the board of the Jackson County Conservation District (JCCD), “some people had reservations about how ‘this U of M professor’ knew about farming and conservation practices. They soon learned that Lathe was a quick learner and willing to listen to other points of view. He became a dedicated and well-respected member of the board.” He served for ten years. Lori Fitzgibbons, District Manager of the JCCD, said, “He was the smartest man I ever met. As the only non-farmer on the board, he had a different outlook, but got along wonderfully with everyone on the board and had a great sense of humor. I cried when he left.”

While Lathe is stepping down from his chairmanship position, he will remain active on the Haehnle Sanctuary Committee.

However, he might have a little more “free” time to pursue his other interests. Lathe’s wife points out that he is a very skillful handyman and has made many improvements to their home, including building their screened-in porch, deck, and shed. He even does plumbing and electrical work! Kathy said, “He is always in the middle of some project around here.”

The Phyllis Haehnle Memorial Sanctuary came into being with 497 acres in January of 1955 because of the foresight and dedication of some people at the time, like Harold Wing, Bob Whiting, and Cap Haehnle. It continued to grow because of the leadership of its first chairman, Ron Hoffman, who held the position for 30 years, and others who were important members of the committee like Hugh Zernickow, Blanche and Tony Pav, Lester Harr, and Ken Horton, to name a few. Haehnle Sanctuary has been fortunate to have had the expert and dedicated leadership of Lathe Claflin during these recent years, with the sanctuary now over 1,000 acres. We are confident it will continue to flourish under the leadership of the new chairman, Gary Siegrist, who has been an active and important committee member, along with his Dad, Bill Siegrist, for many years.

*by Helena Robinovitz*

## *Parking Lot Upgraded to Accommodate Tour Busses*

Each fall for the past eight years tour bus companies have booked fall color and crane tours to the area to enjoy the fall season and learn about Haehnle and the cranes.

Haehnle Sanctuary committee members have served as paid, step-on guides for these bus tours with the proceeds going to support the sanctuary. Last year ten tour bus groups were served and over \$1,500 was raised.

Last year the colors were outstanding and tours were most enjoyable. Unfortunately, heavy fall rains softened the overlook parking lot and two of these buses got stuck and had to be towed.

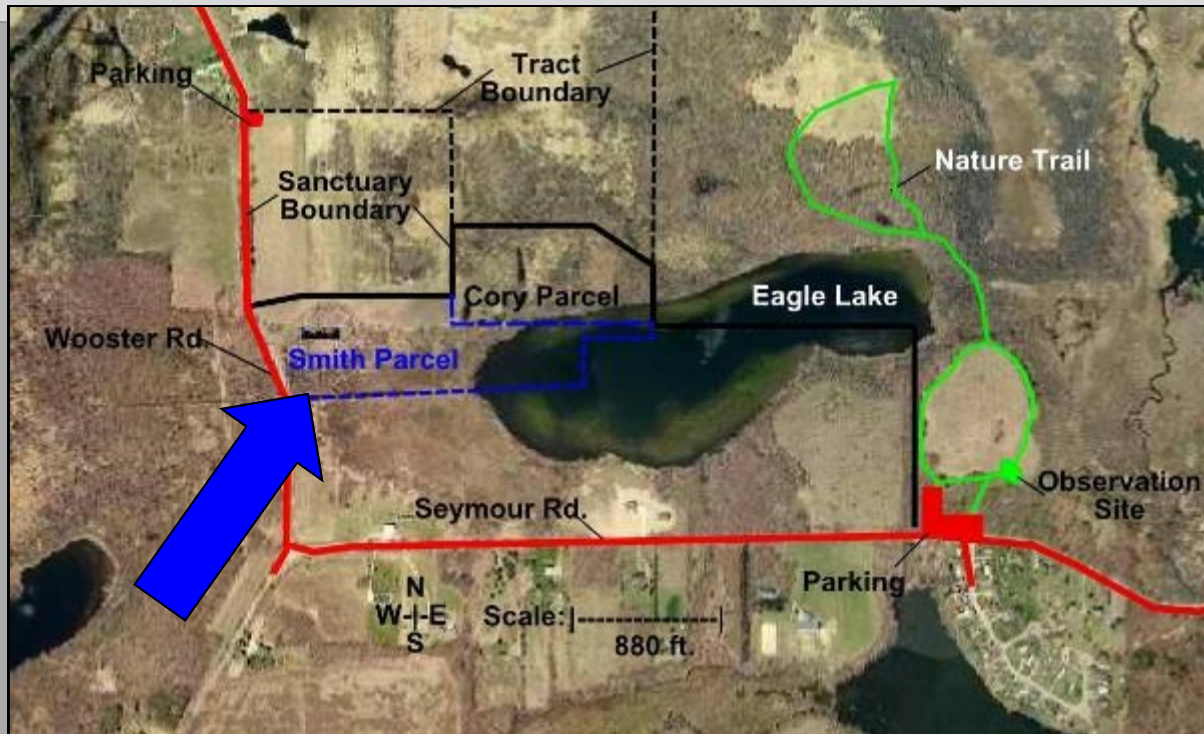
To avoid such problems in the future, improvements have been made to the parking lot.



This summer a gravel path was laid down at a cost of about \$1,000 that allows tour buses to drive up to the viewing area and then back straight out on a good solid surface. The first of seven tour buses scheduled for this fall has already used it successfully.

The cost will be more than offset by the \$1,100 we expect to raise through the tours this year.

## *Key Parcel Becomes Available for Haehnle Sanctuary*



*Michigan Audubon and The Sanctuary Committee are asking for donations to raise \$38,000 by the end of the year for this purchase .*

A twenty five acre parcel owned by George Smith and bordering the southwest corner of the Haehnle Sanctuary is up for sale. It is adjacent to Eagle Lake and would be a prime target for developers. The parcel has long been on our watch list and is part of the Sanctuary's conservation plan to protect Eagle Lake from further development.

Ownership of this parcel would help protect a wetland and maintain the water level in Eagle Lake. A drainage ditch forming the south boundary of the parcel has lowered water levels in the wetland west of Eagle Lake. Having control of this ditch will enable Audubon to protect both the wetland and the lake from further drainage.

It would also make a significant addition to the adjacent 16 acres of the sanctuary's native grassland. Numerous studies have shown that grassland birds prefer larger areas than the current size of the adjacent sanctuary grassland.

Mr. Smith is asking \$90,000 for the parcel. We already have pledges of \$53,000, leaving \$38,000 to reach our goal. In addition to the asking price, there would be expenses such as title insurance, transfer fees, attorney fees, etc. Mr. Smith says the land has been surveyed so that would not be an added expense.

**Make checks payable to Michigan Audubon and mail to:**

Michigan Audubon  
2310 Science Parkway Suite 200  
Okemos, MI 48864

Include a note indicating the donation is for the **Haehnle Sanctuary Smith Property Land Acquisition Fund.**

*Thank You So Much for your Generous Support!*

***Please Help Us Purchase  
This Valuable Property***

## *Project Restores Native Fen and Crane Roosting Habitat*



The mid-morning solitude of the sanctuary was broken recently as a helicopter swooped in over Mud Lake Marsh. Great Egrets startled by the roar took flight, but then landed in another part of the marsh. What was this intruder doing; after all isn't this a sanctuary? Although there was some disturbance, it was only a matter of minutes until the helicopter had completed spraying a herbicide as part of on-going habitat work.

The largest area sprayed is part of efforts to restore a rare natural biotic community, a prairie fen. During the past three years, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been working to reduce glossy buckthorn in the Bogus Lake Fen. This non-native and invasive tree has crowded out many of the native plants. Spraying will kill sprouts and seedlings that have survived previous control measures in 15 acres of the fen.

An area being developed as a crane roosting habitat was the second largest area sprayed. Due to the lack of natural occurring fires, woody plants have taken over where sedges and bulrushes once grew on a low lying four-acre island. High water levels in recent years have made many of the traditional roosting areas in the marsh too deep for the cranes and they have avoided the island because woody plants can conceal predators.



It is hoped that cranes will roost on the island once the woody plants have been reduced.

Another area of the sanctuary that has been affected by the lack of fire is a wetland south of the Portage River and east of Wooster Road. This part of the sanctuary is enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program administered by the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service. Dense stands of willow have begun to crowd out herbaceous aquatic plants in a two-acre area. Reducing willows will keep the wetland attractive for migrant waterfowl in the spring.

*By Ron Hoffman*

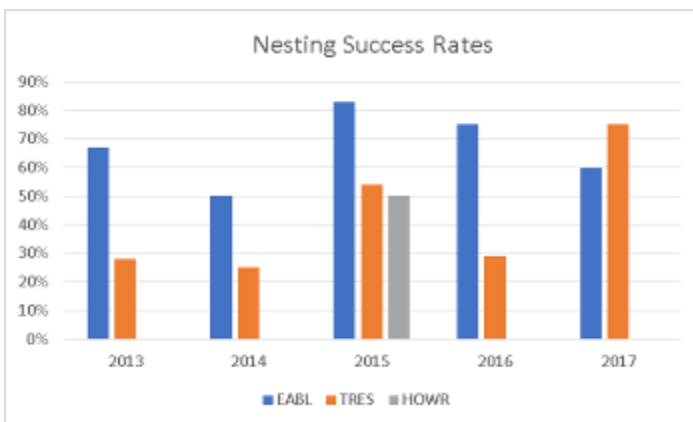
# Annual Bluebird Nestbox Report 2017

By Steve Jerant

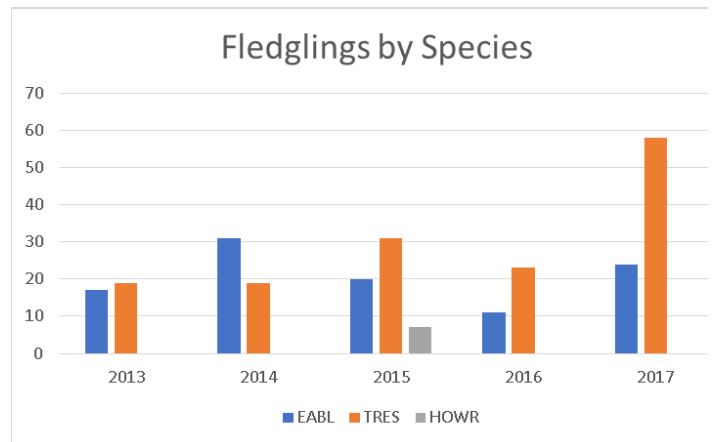
I'm happy to report that we've had a bumper crop of Tree Swallows this year at the Sanctuary. That makes me happy as they are the most aggressive of the species I monitor. It seems like each year they are getting closer to my head when they "dive bomb" me while I'm checking on their kids. The total fledgling count for Tree Swallows this year was 58, which is by far the largest in this data set going back to 2013.

These high numbers are especially good news as we had half of our nest boxes in the prairie below the Harold Wing overlook destroyed by vandals last year. Those boxes, and the others in that unit, were replaced earlier this year with 100% of them being used for a total of 44 youngsters who flew the coop. I was concerned about the late date for which I installed some of these boxes, but when I saw a bluebird on a box and a Tree Swallow in the box a mere 10 minutes after mounting, I knew that I had no worries.

**Continuing the good news,** I can report that we have had zero dead Tree Swallows (TRES) in nest boxes on the property. In previous years, dead adult swallows have been found in unit #2 (back prairie) and in unit #3 south of the parking lot on Wooster Road. In unit #2 they congregated in two tall boxes. I retired and replaced one this year but had no dead adults in either of those locations. We did have some up and down temperatures, so I'm not sure the reason for the dearth of death this year.



**On the Eastern Bluebird (EABL) front,** we had some success and failure, as nature is wont to do. We hosted 24 new fledglings at the Sanctuary which is the second highest count since 2013. This year also had that latest active nest for me. I estimated the fledge date was August 28, much later than in any previous years.



There were two full nesting failures in unit #3 on the south end of the prairie off Wooster Road. Box #82 and #83 each had failed attempts, but not concurrently, so it is possible it was the same adults made one attempt in each box. No other species attempted nesting in that area, so this may also be the result of successful nest predation in that location.

**Finally,** I can report that I had no observations of House Sparrow (HOWS) nesting in any of the monitored boxes at Haehnle this year. Part of that may be due to half of the new boxes staged were a newer design that my nemesis *P. domesticus* does not like to use. We had been having some issues in the south of unit #3 and right under our overlook on Seymour Rd. I'm hoping this is a trend that will continue into the years to come. But as with all invasives, we must be watchful.





# *Haehnle Family Activity Corner*

*By Robyn Henise*

## *Take a Walk at Haehnle*

It is easy to explore nature with your children. Here is a simple activity you can do with your family while walking the nature trail.

Before heading out to Haehnle for a nature walk, you'll need to make a list of these items: apple tree, fence rail, acorn, big rock, leaf, flower, spider, butterfly, toadstool, ant, airplane, bumble bee, squirrel, tall grass, short grass, cloud, bench, bird, log, worm, lake, little rock and bluebird box. Now head out to Haehnle for a non-collecting scavenger hunt. Have your kids check off each item on the list that they see. They could even draw what they see and color in the pictures at home.

*Get out and enjoy the outdoors!*



*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*



*We wish to thank the following people who have generously supported the sanctuary during recent months.*

*Donations to Jackson Audubon for Haehnle*

David Bosio  
Doris Defoe  
Mike French  
Roderick Howlett  
Dorothy Huffer  
Nena Obits  
W. Robert Ochs  
Joan Rogers  
Al and Larry Schultz  
Bill Steusloff  
Sandhill Crane Vineyard LLC

*In Honor of Suzie Weber*

Todd and Kay Mutchler

*In memory of Stew Robinovitz*

Gary Siegrist's program to Jackson Men's  
Garden Club

*Donations to Michigan Audubon for Haehnle*

Vivian Pena

***Date To Remember***

**Saturday, October 21**

***Cranes, Color, and Cabernet Festival***

Please come and join us for a celebration of sandhill cranes, fall colors and wine.

Nature Walks at Noon and 2:00 p.m.

4:00 p.m. Lecture, "Natural History of the Sandhill Crane."

4:30 p.m. by an auto tour to view cranes in local fields

4:30 p.m. to dark Crane viewing at observation hill.

The nearby Sandhill Crane Vineyards on Walz Rd. will be open till 7:00 p.m. for late crane watchers. For more information about their schedule for the day, call the Vineyard at 515-764-0679.