

# G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team

Website: [www.great-mi.org](http://www.great-mi.org)

517.416.4234



Volume 22 Number 3 September 2012

## Why Clean the Grand River?



**Volunteers help remove debris at the annual clean up**

Millions of tons of trash end up in our nation's rivers and streams every year from litter on the ground and illegal dump sites. Trash is more than just an eyesore; it can contaminate your drinking water and threaten the lives of all who depend on it.

Clean, healthy rivers are the lifeblood of our communities and are vital to our health, safety, and quality of life. Many of us in Jackson County live within a mile of a river or stream. By protecting and restoring rivers, we are protecting clean drinking water, creating jobs and recreation opportunities that benefit our economy, and revitalizing our natural heritage for future generations.

### Healthy Rivers Give Us Clean Drinking Water

More than 60 percent of Americans' drinking water comes from rivers and streams. A healthy river and surrounding forests can act as a natural water filter, reducing the need to treat the water with chemicals or expensive filtration systems.

### Healthy Rivers Are Home To Fish And Wildlife

America's rivers support a wide variety of wildlife and fish, and are especially important during times of breeding and migration.

Volunteers needed for this year's clean up effort!

Saturday, September 8, 2012

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Consumers Energy Building

Dress for those on river duty: old jeans and shoes (that can be worn in the river, hat, sun block and mosquito Repellent.

In case of bad weather, check for Cancellation at [www.great-mi.org](http://www.great-mi.org) or call (517) 416-4234.

Lunch will be provided by GREAT, much of which are in kind donations from area restaurants.

Lunch location will be announced the morning of the clean-up.

Needed: Drivers willing to transport volunteers to clean-up spots along the river, also sturdy old canoes for transporting tires and junk on the river.

Advance questions about clean up; call Clean-up Coordinator Don Nelson at 517-748-9375 or email: [DONALD.L.NELSON@gmail.com](mailto:DONALD.L.NELSON@gmail.com)





*Every year thousands of pounds of refuse are removed from the Grand River with the help of volunteers like you*

In dry areas, particularly in the western U.S., rivers and streams are crucial to the well-being of wildlife. From kingfishers to crawdads, muskrats to deer, falcons to trout, whatever creature you're looking for, chances are you'll find it along the river.

### **Healthy Rivers Are Fun!**

Beyond all the other services and benefits healthy rivers can provide, they are just plain fun. Rivers and streams offer endless recreation opportunities, including swimming, fishing, boating, hiking, and wildlife-watching. Whether you need exhilaration, solitude, a much-needed break from the daily grind, or just a pleasant place for a family float or picnic, there's a river out there, beckoning you to come out and play.

Think of Mark Twain on the Mississippi, or Lewis and Clark following the Missouri and Columbia rivers as they traveled west. Our rivers connect us to the past, and the future.



*Bill Dunphy takes a load of trash to shore*

**So why participate on September 8<sup>th</sup> to clean the Grand River?**

1. We can have a cleaner river for wildlife and the wild side of our life. The volume and assortment of trash found amazes me every year.
2. We can help others change their behavior if they see us cleaning the river, they may think twice next time before they use it to litter or as their dumping ground.
3. It is a volunteerism opportunity to serve the community of Jackson. You will find a sense of fulfillment in volunteering.
4. It is stewardship to our waterways. It will help keep our environment clean.
5. It reduces the degradation of the Great Lakes. Each piece of trash that we remove is one less piece that will eventually find its way to Lake Michigan.
6. Last, but not least, walking the Grand River gives you a different view of our community. From the river looking up at the Toy House, Consumer Energy, High St Bridge is an exciting feeling. With the water levels as low as they have been, walking the river will be easier than previous years.

### **What might I be asked to do?**

Work details may include walking the banks to collect garbage, wade in the river to help pull debris (we have waders available), paddle one of the canoes used to collect debris, drive volunteers to and from the river locations or assist with the lunch set up and serving.

Hope to see you Saturday September 8th!

*Helen Burnett*



*One of our Junior ROTC volunteers moves the flatbed boat full of trash along*

# Consumers' Volunteerism

Are you a VIP?



***Ken Burnett (CMS Retiree) and his wife Helen assist with putting boats in on a recent paddle.***

You may not even know it, but if you work for or are retired from Consumers Energy or CMS Energy, you are a VIP! In this case, VIP stands for the Volunteer Investment Program. To recognize volunteerism, CMS, through the Consumers Energy Foundation, will donate money to non-profit organizations that its employees volunteer with. As a local non-profit, GREAT is eligible to apply for donations.

As a group, a minimum of 45 hours of volunteer time is required to receive a grant; however, more hours means more money! Unfortunately, paddling down the river does not meet the criteria of volunteer hours, but any time spent helping out—whether it is helping to set up a paddle, tow or load/unload GREAT boats, clear trees from the river, submit an article to the GREAT Newsletter, or, best of all, help clean up the Grand River—is a “great” opportunity to help out the local watershed and earn a little donation on the side.

Kurt LaFrance will be coordinating the application for the VIP Grant, but he needs your help! He can be reached at [kklafra@comcast.net](mailto:kklafra@comcast.net).

If you haven't done so already, let Kurt LaFrance know if you are a CMS employee/retiree. He will keep track of the number of hours you've volunteered for the year. And if you know any eligible VIPs, recruit them to come down to the Grand River Cleanup on September 8th!

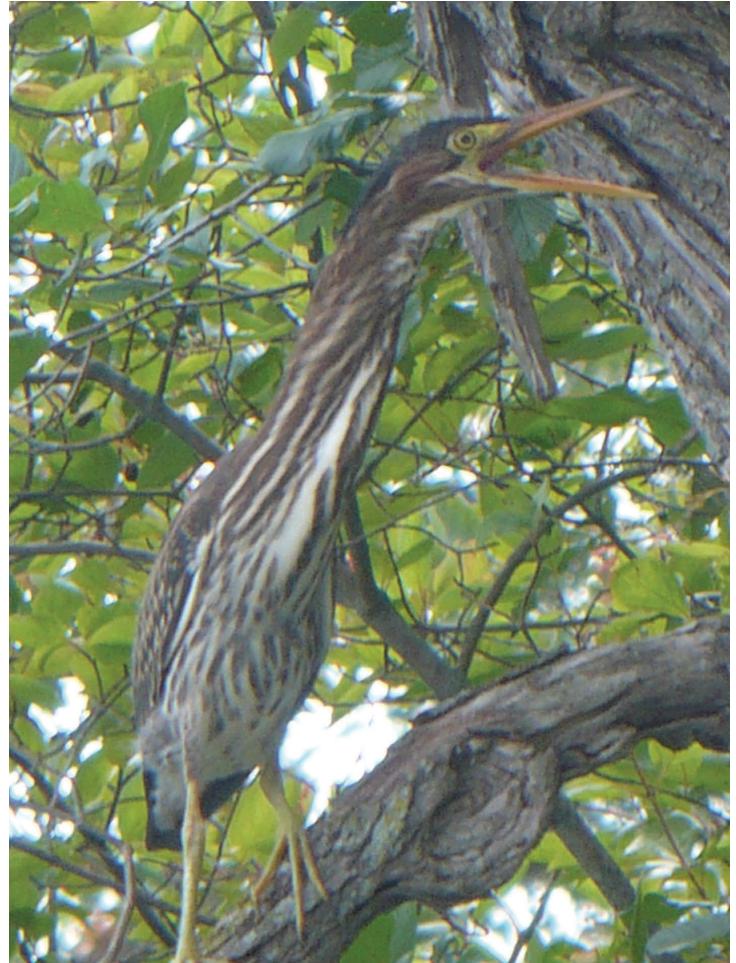
For more details look for the article in this newsletter. It is a worthy cause and a free lunch afterwards.

*Kurt LaFrance*



**Just for Fun**

**What am I?**



Find the answer at:

[http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/abstracts/zoology/Botaurus\\_lentiginosus.pdf](http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/abstracts/zoology/Botaurus_lentiginosus.pdf)

# A Bit of Wolf Lake History



*Swans bigger than life on Wolf Lake*

I have access to a copy of a book written by Colonel Charles v. Deland. The book was written in 1903, a few years before I was born. The book "Deland's History of Jackson County, Michigan." The book is wonderful if you are into history. The following is copied from the book and talks about Wolf Lake.

"First in importance to the people of Jackson is the beautiful and picturesque resort known as Wolf Lake. This lies about eight miles to the east of Jackson, and is about two miles long by one mile wide in its extreme limits. It is surrounded almost entirely by high banks and beautiful wood lands. That the lake has long been known as a pleasure resort is proven by the following which we find in the Citizen of July 22, 1855: Wolf lake is becoming somewhat noted among the lovers and admirers of nature and a place of resort for excursionists from the region round about. Having had an invitation to join an agreeable party who had made arrangements to pay the lake a visit, on a sailing and fishing tour, I could not refrain from going. Captain Tooker's landing was the place of our destination. It is about three miles north of Napoleon, and reached by a circuitous route, the last half mile being a new road, cut out through the openings for the express purpose of making the landing. When we got there we found ourselves in a beautiful oaken grove, beside a young house about two months old, on the west side of which is a spacious arbor, an eminence that commands the lake through the openings which have been freed from underbrush. The lake is beautiful sheet of water bordered with nature's finest shades of green, unmarred by the hand of man.

The monarch of the realm has a fine sail boat that will bear twenty persons "every whether" on the Lake as the master listeth. The company passed the day in sailing, fishing, swinging, feasting and walking to and fro in the grove. In fishing the ladies seemed to excel in coqueting the finny tribe from the native home. During this time our steeds enjoyed a social interview in the grove, casting glances at each other, as though they drank into the spirit of the occasion. We were held by the enchanting power of the rich and varied scenery until the descending sun silently intimated the nearness of approaching night, that would soon draw its sable mantle over these visible glories. And we left for our homes in fine spirits, with a full determination to visit Wolf Lake again."



*Lily pads and water grasses a plenty on Wolf Lake*

For years the distance from Jackson, eight miles, was the principal drawback to the enjoyment of the beauties of Wolf Lake, yet many citizens had built cottages and some even kept horses and carriages there during the season. Aiken's Landing and Millen's Hotel had gained a wide reputation and secured large patronage. But the advent of the electric railroad and trolley line, in 1901 gave it a new life.

As soon as the electric road was opened in the spring of 1902, the possibilities of Wolf Lake came to view and the railroad company has been quick to realize them. They erected last year a large and beautiful building, sixty by two hundred feet, four stories high, projecting out into the lake so as to give a fine view of almost its entire extent from its windows and its roof garden. The lower story has slips for boats, the second has fine dressing rooms, a dining hall and lunch room. The third story is an immense dancing floor and concert hall, while the roof is a beautiful promenade and flower garden. No intoxicating or malt liquors are allowed on the grounds and every precaution is taken to preserve good order and morality, respectability and safety. The trolley runs every hour to the city."

The next time you paddle Wolf Lake, look around you might find something Historic. *Kenny Price*

# Monitoring Water Quality



Carnell, Kathy, and Vandorn aboard the DJ Angus

Out of a brainstorming session for seminar topics came an idea to coordinate a Grand River Watershed Monitoring Day. The Lab Practices committee, in an effort to provide an incubator for new topics to present at the 2012 annual seminar, hosted an event which included participants from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT), West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), and the Grand Rapids, Jackson and Lansing Wastewater Treatment plants as well as a student/intern from Grand Valley State University (GVSU).

The DJ Angus, a GVSU's research vessel, routinely takes students and other groups from their dock in Grand Haven along the Grand River out to Lake Michigan. While aboard the Angus students will collect samples from Spring Lake and Lake Michigan and conduct water quality tests.



GREAT Members assist with specimen collections

The staff aboard the DJ Angus facilitates the collection and analysis all while educating the group about watershed issues. On July 22<sup>nd</sup> while conducting our sampling and analyses questions arose about other sampling events that might be occurring along the Grand River.



Assisting with sediment collection

Just two days prior to this excursion the Grand Rapids and East Lansing Wastewater Treatment Plants were conducting routine sampling of the Grand River and some of its tributaries, including the Red Cedar River. Could a coordinated effort to collect samples on a single day along the Grand River and its tributaries paint a bigger picture of the water quality of Michigan's longest river?

A sampling event is scheduled for October 12<sup>th</sup> to help answer that question. In a coordinated effort samples will be collected and analyzed by local wastewater treatment plants from the headwaters of the Grand River in Jackson to the mouth at Lake Michigan. Many of the tributaries



along the way will also be included. Some local school groups may participate as well. The results will be compiled for a snapshot of the water quality along the Grand River.

*Mary Lenardson*

*Kathy Kulchinski  
(GREAT Rivermaster)  
assisting with water analysis*

# June and July Trip Reports

## Two Very Different Paddling Trips



**Rod and Dustin Monasmith paddling under the 1907 railroad bridge**

### Cement City's Goose Lakes, a First for GREAT:

Goose Lakes in Lenawee County at Cement City were created by dredging operations beginning in 1899 by the Peninsula Portland Cement Company. Legend has it, because of its high quality, the cement used in the famous Empire State Building (once the world's tallest) came from here. The industry continued removing the marl (a lime clay) until 1969, leaving behind two lakes and some large buildings. The buildings were taken down in 2000, but the lakes remain. There is only one house on these lakes which have a completely "natural" shoreline. Over the channel separating the two lakes (Little Goose and Goose Lake), is a huge three span concrete railroad bridge, built in 1907 for the Detroit, Toledo, and Milwaukee Railroad which ceased use in the early 1970's.

Goose Creek, which begins in Hillsdale County, passing through the McCourtie Park on US 12 and crossing US 127, is the inlet and outlet for these lakes. After Goose Lakes it supplies Lake Columbia in Jackson County before joining the Clark Lake outflow to form the beginning of the River Raisin just west of Brooklyn. GREAT member and naturalist, Bill Sonnett, pointed out that these lakes have almost no aquatic plant life as the pH of marl is too alkaline for most species. This also results in less food for fish. However, the bay where the inlet comes onto the lake has a good variety of aquatic plants as it is being supplied by water with a more normal pH.

Participants of the July trip on Goose Lakes enjoyed more than paddling. Village President, Jim Ellis welcomed the 53 participants and Gary Querfeld, who owns a small section of land on the lake gave a brief historical presentation. Some sought out flora and fauna, others took an intentional dip as the temperature soared into the high nineties, and a few paddled up the pristine inlet. Many cooled off for food and drink afterwards at the In Good Company Restaurant.

### River and Weather Unpredictable:

Prior to the June trip, GREAT's chain saw crew twice cut on the Michigan Center to Lions Park route as the Grand River continued to drop and new debris came into play. Also a few trash items were pulled out, including an old TV near Falahee Bridge. With the hot weather, reservations were so strong for GREAT's boats, there was a long waiting list. The turnout was expected to be exceptionally large, especially as this was also a joint-Dahlem-GREAT trip. Then came the weather change. Sunday early morning it started raining which continued until after the put-in. Worries about the low river changed to worries the river would now rise too high. Most who reserved GREAT boats cancelled so only a few were used. For the 32 who participated, the weather dramatically improved. Many commented how much fun it was to paddle through downtown Jackson. Most stayed afterwards to enjoy a very nice cookout picnic, prepared by the Dahlem staff at Lions Park. While the Jackson area has experienced an exceptionally dry summer, it is an irony that GREAT has had two trips impacted by rain, the other being the April trip which was postponed.

*Jim Seitz*



**Sandhill Cranes along the shore**

# Paddling Safety 101

Where do I begin? The ramifications of safety errors in kayaking can be huge. Just this last March, a Chicago man was killed by a swan while kayaking! <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/04/killer-swan-blamed-for-mans-drowning/>. Who would have guessed?

Injuries in paddling are generally associated with whitewater and big conditions. Those guys break their teeth and bones routinely. But even here in the lovely and serene headwaters region, slip and falls happen, logs and obstructions are run into, and insects, plants and animals can cause problems.

Drowning can occur in any water-based activity. The majority of cases associated with paddle sports involve folks who are not wearing a lifejacket and/or develop hypothermia.

We live in a natural wonderland with hundreds of miles of rivers and lakes that are free to us to paddle. In order to enjoy our time on the water safely, it behooves us to use some common sense and follow some basic safety rules.

First and foremost I must insist; wear your life jacket at all times while on the water. When you need it, you need it! You may not have the time or ability to put it on once you are in the water. We do not plan accidents. Waiting to put it on before a "tricky" section will just set you up for disaster.

Purchase and use a life jacket designed for paddling. Make sure it fits comfortably with your boat (high seat backs may interfere with a low back lifejacket). It must fit you snugly, and be zipped and clipped closed so that it does not come off in the water. Attach a safety whistle to your lifejacket so that you may use it to summon help if you need to. I also recommend keeping your cell phone in a drybox in your life jacket. If you need to call for help and you have been separated from your phone, you'll be out of luck.

When river paddling here in the headwaters region, a lot of safety gear may be redundant. If you tip over in the Grand River in Jackson County, you are within feet of the shore so a paddlefloat for reentry is unnecessary. Just slog over to shore, empty your boat and climb back in. A throw bag/tow rope may be a good idea in case one of your party needs some help. They can be used to help direct across an area as well as for actual towing if one gets too tired or is injured or sick. It is a good idea to practice towing and throwing a rescue bag before one actually needs to use them.



When paddling on open lakes in the area it is an excellent idea to paddle close to shore, no further out than you can swim. If you plan on paddling further out, then you should be trained and practiced in one of the reentry methods available to get yourself back into your boat should you fall out. Be prepared to address large wakes kicked up by jetskis and powerboats. If you have time, face your boat directly into the oncoming wave. Whether you can do that or not, paddle strongly as long as the waves are coming at you. Every time your paddle blade is in the water, it is bracing you. Remember, keeping closer to shore keeps you out of the way of power boats.

Enjoy the wildlife you see on your paddle outing, but try to give it a wide berth. In the very unlikely event an animal in our area were to attack you, stay calm, tuck your head and wait until it leaves. If it should knock you over, try to keep the boat between you and the animal. In extreme cases, your upside down boat will form an air pocket. Hide inside until the animal goes away.

This has been a very limited and very cursory intro to paddling safety. There are many more issues that could be covered, and should be, based upon each paddling scenario. Most importantly, never try to venture beyond your abilities without training and practice, always stay calm, and always let someone know of your float plans.

*Kathy Kulchinski*



Your continued support is greatly appreciated. It allows us to offer paddling events spring, summer and fall and provide education on various events and concerns related to Michigan waterways. It also allows us to support the preservation of the Grand River.

If you have not updated your membership, please consider updating your membership for next year.

If you have not yet taken the opportunity to join, check out our website or see us at our next event to complete a membership form.

If you have enjoyed paddling with us, please consider supporting us.



## GREAT Newsletter

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GREAT is a tax deductible 501c3 non-profit organization.

## Upcoming Paddling Events

**September 8th (Sat.) 9 AM**

**Annual Grand River Clean Up**

At CMS Energy Band Shell off Cooper St. in downtown Jackson. Feel free to bring your own canoe but no kayaks please. No need to reserve a boat as GREAT canoes will be available. Lunch will be provided for volunteers afterwards.

**October 14th (Sun.) 12 noon**

**Final Paddle of the Year**

Grand River - Maple Grove Rd. (DNR access site at bridge) to State Rd. (adjacent to US 127).



## GREAT Board

Kenny Price, President  
Don Nelson, Vice President  
Jim Seitz, Secretary  
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer  
Kathy Kulchinski, Rivermaster  
Helen Burnett, Director  
Kurt LaFrance, Director  
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Jeff Grund, Tax Statements  
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