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Raven Hill Discovery Center, incorporated in 1991, is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

To: Friends and Family everywhere
From: Cheri and Raven Hill
Date: May 1, 2021
Re: Weekly Update

Happy May Day, Everyone!

Anthropologist and educator, Loren Eiseley, once said, *“if there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water.”* Many visitors miss the **magic** of Raven Hill’s pond. Located across the road from the Center, the half-acre pond was dug in the fall of 1992, with a grant awarded by the Soil Conservation Service, now called the Charlevoix Conservation District. The pond-site was chosen because of the numerous springs there. The summer before, we had a backhoe dig a few test holes to make sure that the spot would hold water. It was a hot summer and we could often be found sitting in those holes to cool off. With a straw hat on, the dragonflies would land on the hat’s brim, if we held still.



It takes both concentration & cooperation to catch a frog!



Over the past 30 years, many animals have flourished at the pond. A loon recuperated here. Deer come to drink. The pond is full of fish, frogs and turtles. Turtle “drop-offs” find a temporary or permanent home at the pond. Painted turtles love to sun themselves on fallen trees. Two big snappers used to hang out at the end of the dock. Tim would often dangle his feet in the water and read his book. He enjoyed feeding the fish and the snappers enjoyed eating the fish. Once a snapper swam up and took hold of Tim’s toe. Tim held perfectly still and the turtle finally released the toe without doing any damage.

This baby snapper was brought to Raven Hill pond and released about four years ago. Wonder how big is it now?!

“froggin’ around” at the pond. The policy is always “catch & release”. Middle school students perform fish population studies as part of the Math Science Career Expos sponsored by Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District (Char-Em ISD).

Just like the wildlife, people gravitate to the pond, once they discover its **magic**. Families look for bird nests in the cattails. Summer campers love

(Right) Students explore a fisheries management career. They net fish, count the marked ones with the clipped fins, release, recapture and re-count the marked fish to determine sample fish populations.



Beware of the gray patches of clay around the edge of the pond. They are known to eat shoes!



For several years, Raven Hill sponsored Cardboard Boat Races at the pond! Tim would teach a boat building class the week before, so kids could make their own cardboard boats. We had cardboard donated--5'x10' flat sheets that were double-corrugated and waxed on both sides. They made great boats. We anchored a balloon buoy out in the middle of the pond and raced two cardboard boats at a time from the dock to the buoy and back. One year, the race was international with several Rotary exchange students participating.

Once, a summer staffer took a group of kids down to the pond to catch frogs. They came running back to tell us about the "blue" frog they had seen. The kids took us down and sure enough, there it was—a blue frog. We got a picture of it. When we got back to the Center, I pulled out the **Michigan Frogs, Toads, and Salamanders: A Field Guide and Pocket Reference** by James H. Harding and J Alan Holman, a Michigan State University publication. The book almost opened itself to page 81 and right there was a picture of a yellow frog and a blue frog. It

A competitor races to the finish line in his cardboard boat. Now that waterlilies cover the pond, the boat races are a distant memory!

turns out that green frogs have both blue and yellow pigments. If one pigment is missing, the frogs are yellow or blue! Talk about **magic**!



*Blue frogs and painted turtles! Nature certainly creates a **magical** world of wonder and discovery right here at Raven Hill pond!*

(Left) "Our" blue frog.

(Right) Picture of a yellow and blue frog from the field guide.



On occasion, green frogs lack yellow pigment in their skins and are blue in color.

Flora also abounds at the pond! The water's surface is carpeted with pink waterlilies in the summer and a huge patch of teasel burs grow 6-foot tall on the bank. You can harvest watercress in the shallows. Young cattail shoots and roots are edible and the mature plants provide a habitat for birds and insects.



The entire pond is covered with these beautiful pink waterlilies during the summer. Be sure to visit the pond next time you come to Raven Hill.



Bees & butterflies love prickly teasel flowers.

Everything depends on the pandemic, so work your "**magic**" to defeat COVID: get vaccinated, wash your hands thoroughly, wear your mask correctly, socially distance & stay away from large gatherings.

We want to see you here soon, enjoying everything that is Raven Hill, most especially the pond and all its special inhabitants.

Don't forget that Raven Hill has re-opened, with COVID policies in place. Current hours are noon to 4pm on Saturdays, 2pm to 4pm on Sundays or other times by appointment. You can call 231.536.3369 or email info@miravenhill.org to make reservations. If there is already a scheduled group indoors and you didn't book in advance—no worries! You will be given a return time for the Museum and Animals. While waiting to explore inside, there's plenty to keep everyone busy outdoors AND after your first visit to Raven Hill's pond, the **magic** of water will pull you to visit there again and again. Take care of yourselves,

Cheri