

The White Pine Gazette

Volume 66

Spring 2022

Dear Friends,

On an April day the sun was bright and the air crisp. So my wife Brenda and I went hiking at Toft Point in the morning and at The Ridges Sanctuary in the afternoon. What bliss after so many gray days. The trails at Toft Point are ever constant and ever changing. Our conversation included many “What is this called?” or “Look here!”

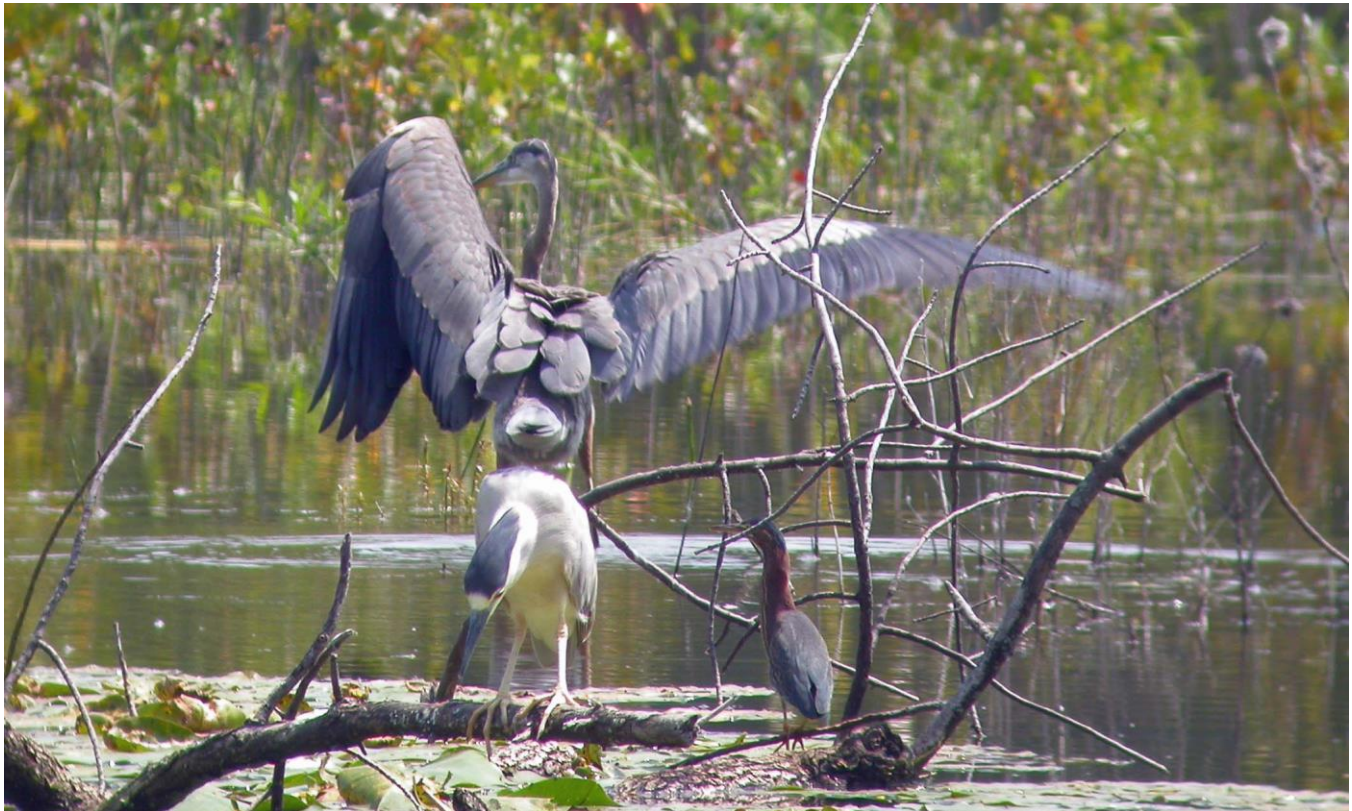
The mosses and lichens seem to be flourishing this year with all the rain of the past two months. Spring ephemerals still wait to make an appearance. We hiked through the light and shadows, a place filled with quiet but for the sounds of the waves and birds.

We saw a bald eagle, possibly two, a pair of herons flying along the shore of Mud Bay and birds singing as they migrated to their summer homes. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology “Birdcast-Migration Alert” says that the migration is topping over 300 million birds each night right now, especially in the central and southeastern US. Surely some of these birds will return to Toft Point.

The winter storms have pruned the forest in spots. A few trees are down over the hiking paths and the Friends of Toft Point need help to clear the trails. Let us know if you are interested in serving as a docent or helping to maintain the trails. Please contact Jim Cauley at james.cauley@gmail.com or Nick Anderson at gailnick.anderson@gmail.com if you can become a trail docent or help with trail maintenance.

Most importantly, we hope that you can enjoy a quiet walk in the Toft Point woods soon.

Thanks once again for your support,
Jim



A great blue heron stretches its wings as a black-crowned night heron searches the waters for food and a green heron is perched on a branch in quiet observance.

Roy Lukes photo

Stewardship Board, Officers and Terms

Jim Cauley, President	2023
Mitch Leavitt, Vice-president	2022
Nancy Dickson, Secretary	2022
Lauren Ward, Treasurer	2023
Nick Anderson	2022
Dave Link	2024
Charlotte Lukes	2024
John Maring	2024
Marsha Wilson	2023
Dr. Robert Howe, UWGB Advisor	
Bobbie Webster, Natural Areas Ecologist	
Charlotte Lukes, Newsletter Editor	

Membership Report

Annual members.....	205
Life members.....	164
Total	369

This past spring we lost two longtime life members who were great environmentalists and supporters of our organization. They are Karl Klug of Baileys Harbor and Carl Scholz of Sturgeon Bay.

NEW MEMBERS

Annual

Susan Jensen – Hales Corners, WI

Life

Krista Clarke-Brownstein – Egg Harbor, WI

Mark & Julie Fialkowski – Chicago, IL



Arctic primrose blooms along the rocky shores.

Roy Lukes photo

Stewardship Board News

We had our first monthly board meeting on April 27th at the Baileys Harbor Town Hall. Jim Cauley presented a new set of By-Laws for our group now that we are no longer a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization.

The Board drafted a work plan and budget that Jim wrote to be submitted to the Director of the Cofrin Center for Biodiversity at UW-Green Bay.

The treasurer's report showed that all funds have been legally transferred to the UWGB Foundation. Charlotte gave the membership and trail docent reports and Bobbie Webster told us what student research work is planned at Toft Point this summer.

The soon to be written spring newsletter contents were discussed and approved. We adjourned at 4:55 PM.

Members in attendance were Jim Cauley, Nick Anderson, Nancy Dickson, Dave Link, Charlotte Lukes and Marsha Wilson. John Maring and Lauren Ward were excused due to other commitments.

Annual Meeting – Date Set

The Friends of Toft Point Annual Meeting and potluck will be held on **Saturday, August 13th** at the Baileys Harbor Town Hall on State Highway 57 and County F/EE.

Set-up will begin at 11 AM with a noon potluck; some say it's the best in Door County; and our annual meeting follows at 1 PM.

If you are interested in helping there will be a sign-up set by early August for you to offer help.

More details will be found in the summer newsletter that is mailed shortly after the July 4th holiday.

Charlotte Lukes will present a Power Point slide program that Roy Lukes developed in 1970 with the help of Emma Toft. It is a tour of Toft Point when the family still used the area during the warm season and shows the buildings and gardens and how the shoreline looked more than 50 years ago.

Trail Docent Report

We are happy to say that three new people will join the ranks of Toft Point trail docents this spring. Joe and Liz Wallner, longtime docents, will again host the spring organizing and sign-up meeting at their lovely home along Lake Michigan.

The meeting begins at 10 AM on Monday, May 16th. If anyone else is interested in volunteering for this important job, please let our president know or call the Wallners at 920-743-6314 or email them at jmicro@charter.net.

Each docent receives an informational handbook, a long-sleeved denim shirt with the Toft Point name embroidered on it and a name badge identifying them as a trail docent.

We do not have any policing authority. Our job is to help visitors understand what the Toft Point State Natural Area is all about and to help them enjoy their visit. There are certain established conduct rules which are posted at the main entrance. We try to make sure they are followed.

Last summer Dr. Keir Wefferling, a botany professor at UW-Green Bay, led us on several botany hikes to help us learn the plant life there. This made it easier for us to answer some questions of visitors regarding the flora at Toft Point. I just learned that he will conduct a few more hikes for the trail docents this summer.

As of May 1st we have 21 trail docents and 15 are able to attend the May 16th meeting. We are always looking for more, so please consider this great opportunity to help preserve Toft Point.



Starflower blossoms are fairly common at Toft Point as well as many other preserves in Door County.

Roy Lukes photo

UWGB Report – Bobbie Webster

The Cofrin Center for Biodiversity is looking forward to another exciting field season. We have several potential studies in the works for Toft Point but it's too early to announce these as we are waiting for funding to be awarded and finalized.

While our summer field crew will be large, their funding is dominated by a project in Brown County at the Wequiock Creek Natural Area. We intend to have them conduct one or two workdays at Toft Point, but most of the work here this field season will be conducted by a smaller crew led by one of our most experienced students, Olivia Salm.

CCB staff and students will work to ensure that last year's invasives species treatments remain successful and that the non-native *Phragmites* and reed canary grass do not take hold as Lake Michigan water levels have dropped.

Hunter Paplham's Report

Bobbie sent this report from Hunter who has been monitoring the animals and birds at Toft Point over the past 2 years.

The camera monitoring portion of the study has wrapped up. The most notable find from the winter was a gray fox. Regionally uncommon winter bird species such as pine grosbeaks and common redpolls were also caught on video.

I have been extensively identifying bat sound files. Acoustic detectors were deployed at Toft Point from late August to mid-October last year. Files are being identified by Kaleidoscope Pro and me. Little brown, big brown, silver-haired, eastern red and hoary bats have all been documented so far. Little brown bats appear to be the most common species by far and the number of files recorded has been impressive, indicating a strong bat presence at Toft Point.

The study will continue in the summer with more live-trapping and deployment of acoustic detectors. Live trapping of flying squirrels and other small mammals will occur.

The acoustic detectors may also be deployed to record the high frequency sounds of flying squirrels in an effort to determine if the northern and/or southern species are present.

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"Come forth into the light of things,
Let nature be your teacher."

William Wordsworth – 1770-1850

Toft Point Conifers and Their Cones

Many people think of the Toft Point environment as a boreal forest, but Dr. Keir Wefferling, UW-Green Bay Assistant Professor of Botany, explained that there are a few differences.

A true boreal forest is found at much higher latitudes where freezing temperatures occur for 6 to 8 months of the year. Toft Point also has more deciduous trees than are found in a typical boreal forest. However, the cool lakeshore habitat is where the real boreal forest grows. It is made up of white spruce and balsam fir which are common at Toft Point.

Perhaps the most common conifer in this woodland natural area is the white cedar, or arborvitae. It can grow in most areas of Door County but thrives along the shorelines where water flows through the soil around the roots.

Cedar cones are quite small and form in clusters on the outer branches. When newly formed they are pale tan in color with some pink hues on the edges. As they mature the color becomes a more rich tan to light brown.

This is one of the red squirrel's favorite autumn foods. While walking down a lakeshore path you may see dozens of clusters of cedar cones on the ground. That is from the action of these creatures biting off the main stem so that they fall and then the squirrel can harvest them for future use.



White cedar cones grow in clusters. Roy Lukes photo

Pine trees are a favorite of many hikers. The two most common are the eastern white pine and the red pine. It is easy to tell the two apart. Red pines have two needles per sheath and are longer

than white pine needles. Red pine bark, on older trees has a rosy brown color on the plate-like outer surface.

White pines have five needles in each bundle and are shorter. Roy taught me an easy way to remember this tree. White has five letters and that pine has five needles.



White pines form their cones near the top of the tree so they are not seen as easily as other species. Charlotte Lukes photo

Many years ago Roy used an increment borer to measure the tree rings and estimate the age of some of the conifers. He found a white pine at Toft Point that was about 350 years old. The eastern white pine can grow to a height of 120 feet, the tallest of any native pine in Wisconsin.

The white pine is the only native five-needle conifer in the eastern U.S. but few virgin trees are left because they were heavily harvested during the 19th century. Some of the original white pines stood 220 feet tall.

Red pines are planted often and, given good soil, can grow 50 to 80 feet tall. This species also forms its cones high up near the crown of the tree.

Pines may be the most well-known of the conifers. In fact some people refer to every conifer cone as a "pine cone." That may be okay, since the pine family, *Pinaceae*, includes all the genera of pines, true cedars, larches, tamaracks, spruces, hemlocks and firs.

Spruce trees are native to Toft Point with the white spruce being more common than the black

spruce. When you closely examine the branches you can see that the needles have a slight blue-green color. Notice that the twigs are hairless. You may need a ten-power magnifier to aid in this. Black spruce, which can grow nearby has hairy twigs. A quick guide to spruce needles is that they are spiny, sharply pointed: SP for spiny, SP for spruce!



Here is a cone of a white spruce tree. *Roy Lukes photo*

White spruce cones are 1 to 2 inches long and cylindrical, dropping to the ground soon after they mature. Black spruce cones are only a quarter inch to a little more than an inch long and stay on the tree for several years.

A balsam fir tree is the one we would buy to use as our Christmas tree. The flat needles are comfortable to work with and their fragrance, when crushed, is delightful. These trees can grow 40 to 60 feet tall and have a steeple-like pointed crown.

Their range in our part of the world is from northeast Pennsylvania through most of New England and all of Canada to the edge of the tree line, where they form stunted shrubs. Balsam cones stand upright on the branches rather than hang down and the needles are up to one and a half inches long.

Eastern hemlock needles are only a half inch long, and being a fir, they are also flat. When examining the hemlock twig with a magnifier you can see that each needle is attached by a tiny stem.

Here's another trick to remember the name: stem rhymes with hemlock!



Hemlock cones and short flat needles *Roy Lukes photo*

Hemlock trees can grow 60 to 70 feet tall and have a more rounded crown than the balsam firs. Its slender top sometimes droops a bit. They are found throughout the Appalachian Mountains into New England, southeast Canada and much of Michigan and northern Wisconsin.

A destructive invasive tiny insect from Japan has been killing many hemlocks in the Appalachians and southern Catskill mountains. It is called the hemlock wooly adelgid, and sucks moisture and nutrients from the trees.

Most of our conifers are what we call evergreen trees. However, one beautiful and gentle to touch conifer is the tamarack. It has soft flexible needles that grow new each spring and turn golden in fall and then drop from the branches.

The European larch is quite similar but has longer needles and larger cones. Tamaracks can be found in all of eastern and central Canada and New England, across much of northern New York, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. They extend across the continent to the Northwest Territory up to Alaska. Tamaracks can grow from sea level up to 4,000 feet.

The larch and tamarack drop their yellow needles in fall and have bare twigs all winter. By early to mid-spring small clusters of soft, green needles emerge from shoots along the branches. Young cones are only about an inch long and appear like reddish wooden roses.

Emma Toft used her wood stove and I remember her warning Roy not to burn tamarack. She said it gets too hot and out of control. The tamaracks do best growing in full sun. If you hike the trails at The Ridges Sanctuary and walk out on one of the bridges in the far northern part of the

preserve in October you will see how many golden trees line the north sides of the wide open swales. It is a real treat to see these on a blue-sky, mild, late autumn day.



Balsam fir cones are the only ones that stand straight up on the branches. Squirrels like to peel away the scales of the cones to eat the seeds thus leaving the bare stalk on the branch. R. Lukes

Toft Point also has two shrubs with needles and fruit. Both are in the *Juniper* genus. The larger one is called common juniper and is abundant all over Door County. It can become quite aggressive in its growth and has very sharply pointed needles.

The Latin name is *Juniperus communis*. It produces gray-blue berries in clusters near the ends of the branches. These shrubs can grow very large and up to three to five feet high. You can see many of them taking over fields in central parts of the county.

Bohemian waxwings and purple finches enjoy the berries and deer browse on the twigs and leaves. Wintering birds like tree sparrows and juncos find shelter in the dense branches that are low to the ground.

The other evergreen shrub is creeping or horizontal juniper, *Juniperus horizontalis*. It is very low growing, as its name says.



Mike Madden and Charlotte Lukes stand together next to a black cherry tree that was donated and planted at Sevastopol School in her honor on Arbor Day, April 29th.

Sarah Woerfel photo

Mike was the much-loved 4th grade teacher at Sevastopol for many years, now retired, and has helped with this annual tradition going on there since 1969. It is meant to honor someone who has made a difference in doing good things for the community.

Previous honorees were Mike, Emma Toft, Roy Lukes and Carl Scholz who had been the longtime superintendent of the school. He recently passed away but his wife Ruth was able to come to this event.

All the students from grade one to five were present for the ceremony and everyone who attended received a free river birch tree to plant at their home.

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Friends of Toft Point – Membership Form

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MAIL TO: UW-Green Bay Foundation
2420 Nicolet Drive
Green Bay, WI 54311-7001

Volunteer Opportunities

Trail Docent (training provided) _____

Trail Maintenance (supervised crews) _____

Invasive Plant Removal _____

Serve on Board of Directors (6 meetings per year) _____

Help with Annual Meeting & Potluck in August _____

Name _____

Address _____

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Fill in form and mail to **Nick Anderson, PO Box 586, Fish Creek, WI 54212** or call 920-868-3499



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GREEN BAY

Friends of Toft Point
% C. Lukes
3962 Hillside Rd
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Most people call this marsh marigold, but its Latin name, *Caltha palustris*, means swamp cups. *Roy Lukes photo*
It is not in the marigold family, but in the buttercup family.

