

The White Pine Gazette

Volume 70

Spring 2023

Dear Friends,

Finding Joy in Work is both wonderful and possible.

On a recent sunny April day, I hiked Toft Point to the end of the south trail. A couple of trees had fallen across the trail, so I needed to reach out to the Trail Maintenance crew. We are fortunate to have a few dedicated volunteers who have cleared trails for years, even decades.

Some large plastic debris had washed up onto the cobblestone beach, so I picked that up to haul out. Our Trail Docents and other dedicated friends sometimes find a “trace” and haul it out so that we preserve the Toft Point wild. And they talk with visitors to help them understand how and why we care about this place called Toft Point. Some docents are indeed experts, others like me aspire to expertise. All can share.

Along the trail I looked up toward an eagle nest in a tall tree. I had never seen an eagle in that nest. Yet each time I hike this trail on Toft Point, I search out the nest high in the trees with hope of seeing an eagle. After gazing from several different vantage points for a few minutes, suddenly I heard a screech and two bald eagles flew into the nest from the south. After they landed, I could not see the eagles except for one white head (I think) on the far-right side of the nest. I waited a while, just watching, and then one eagle flew off. One white head still bobbed just above the right side of the nest. Had these eagles just returned this year after being absent many years? Or had I just not seen them for many years? So easy to miss some of the wonders of Toft Point. Going on a hike with one of the experts shows me each time how little I know. And yet none of us needs to be an expert to help preserve Toft Point.

The “work” of trail maintenance or service as a docent brings great joy, often in the surprises of each day as we immerse ourselves in the wild of Toft Point. Many of our Friends have enjoyed this work for many years, even decades. The Friends do need some new people to step forward to help.

We need more docents and someone to help manage the docent schedule, with help from Charlotte and others in learning the ropes. Perhaps you would be interested in some other service at Toft Point, such as trail maintenance or service on the Stewardship Board. **If you would like to take on a more active role as a Friend of Toft Point, please email me at james.cauley@gmail.com.**

The “work” of being a Friend of Toft Point brings great satisfaction and sometimes the joyful Surprise of seeing two eagles land in a nest. We can all enjoy Toft Point gently.

Thanks once again for your support,

Jim Cauley, Chair of the Friends of Toft Point

Stewardship Board and Officers

Jim Cauley	President	2023
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Marsha Wilson		2023

Erin Giese	Interim UWGB Advisor
Bobbie Webster	Natural Areas Ecologist
Charlotte Lukes	Newsletter Editor

Membership Report

Annual Members.....	197
Life Members.....	172
Total Membership	369

New Annual Members

Tom & Andrea Esau	Fish Creek
Tom & Maureen Flatley	Ellison Bay
Dave & Juliana Hubbard	Wauwatosa, WI
Joanne Mast	Baileys Harbor
Linda & David Thompson	Baileys Harbor

New Life Members

Jon & Sally Jonas	Belleville, IL
Mary Theisen	Sister Bay



An adult bald eagle was photographed by Candace Evens of Sturgeon Bay and she allowed us to publish it in this issue of our newsletter.

UWGB Report – Bobbie Webster

Eagle Nest Monitoring – Partners from The Ridges Sanctuary will be participating in the Bald Eagle Nest Watch program in conjunction with Madison Audubon. Observers will spend one hour per week unobtrusively observing a bald eagle nest at Toft Point and submitting observational data on eagle presence and nesting behaviors. Hatch and fledgling information, along with nest dormancy is recorded and submitted. Observers will follow protocols for maintaining a proper distance from the nest.

Toft Point is included in a new grant funding for invasive species management. The Cofrin Center for Biodiversity (CCB) will receive a small amount of funding as a partner on a US Forest Service Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) grant. This grant is part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and the Door County Soil and Water Conservation Department is the lead applicant. The project aims to gain an understanding of woody invasive plant prevalence in the county, create a database to build off of for future control efforts and help inform the 2023-2028 iteration of the DCIST Strategic Plan.

This project focuses efforts in State Natural Areas (SNAs), which are determined by the state of Wisconsin as having outstanding examples of the state's natural communities. The project includes outreach to private landowners to help adjacent property owners understand how invasive species are spread and identified. Starting in June 2023, CCB staff will work with a small crew employed by the DCSWCD to inventory and map woody invasive plants such as honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), buckthorn (*Rhamnus* spp.), olive (*Elaeagnus* spp.) and Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergia*).

23rd Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendars and join us in the Baileys Harbor Town Hall on **Saturday, August 19th** for our 23rd annual meeting.

We will start with a scrumptious potluck lunch at noon followed by the meeting. We hope to have a short educational program after the meeting, speaker and subject to be determined.

The set up for the potluck begins at 11 AM and if you wish to volunteer to help with that, or help with clean-up, please let our board President know.

It has been several years since we had the potluck, due to the pandemic, so I hope many of you can be there to celebrate all the good things happening at Toft Point.

UWGB Report, continued

UW-Green Bay student researchers presented their projects at the Cofrin Student Research Symposium on April 7th at the Brown County STEM building on the UW-Green Bay campus. One of the presenters was Hunter Paplham, who received some funding for his research from the Friends of Toft Point. Hunter presented his research, "Survey of small mammals at Toft Point State Natural Area," with advisors Dr. Amy Wolf and Dr. Robert Howe. You can read Hunter's thesis, **Mammals of the Toft Point Natural Area, a boreal relict in Door County, Wisconsin**, at <https://diglib.uwgb.edu/digital/collection/p17003coll1/>.

Thank you to the Friends of Toft Point for supporting this research and students' success. Hunter graduated and is working as a conservationist for the Door County Soil and Water Conservation Department. The CCB is currently reviewing applications for student research grants for the 2023-24 class year. We will announce awards very soon.



Hunter Paplham presents his research project at the April 7th symposium in the STEM Center at UW-Green Bay.

Three-day Bryophyte Workshop

Dr. Keir Wefferling, botanist and curator of the Gary Fewless Herbarium at UW-Green Bay, will be conducting an intensive workshop to study and identify the vast population of mosses in The Ridges Sanctuary and at Toft Point during a three-day workshop to be held in the Cook-Fuller Center at The Ridges Sanctuary in May. We hope to present some of his discoveries in a future newsletter.

Warblers of Toft Point

The month of May is when most of the migrating warblers return from their wintering grounds in the South. They often travel northward along the Lake Michigan shore, especially with strong southerly winds.

A few may show up in late April, depending on how warm the weather is and how many days bring south winds. This spring has been rather chilly with northeast winds; not good for migrating birds.

About 45 years ago Gary Fewless and Joel Trick did a summer's research project at Toft Point and recorded as much of the native flora and fauna as possible. Their lists are in the appendices of the book, *Toft Point A Legacy of People and Pines* by Roy Lukes. Twelve warbler species were named.

Other birders have reported as many as 15 species. It is possible that the Blackburnian, Canada, Magnolia and Northern Waterthrush might be included in the group. This article will deal with just the original 12 species.

One of the earliest to return to Door County is the yellow-rumped warbler. It can withstand cooler winters than most and is very abundant and widespread. Two subspecies that used to be classified as actual species are the Myrtle and the Audubon's warblers.

The Myrtle is the eastern and the Audubon's is the western subspecies. We've had a yellow-rumped warbler present on numerous Christmas bird counts over the last 50 years. The Myrtle has a white throat and Audubon's has a yellow throat. Myrtle warblers nest further north than most, well up into Alaska and all across Canada.



A male yellow-rumped warbler, of the Myrtle race, shows its white throat.

Roy Lukes photo

The yellow-rumped warbler is in the group known as wood warblers. This genus, *Dendroica*, also includes the black-throated green, chestnut-sided, pine and yellow warblers.

A black-throated green warbler is often heard right after you get out of your car at the main gate. It is about 4.75 inches long and is very common in the eastern U.S. They nest in a variety of habitats, but seem to be more abundant in the conifer forests along the shorelines.

Chestnut-sided warblers do well in cleared sites of second growth eastern hardwood forests. This species has a song that is easy to remember. When I first moved up to Door County in 1972, Roy taught me the various bird songs. The chestnut-sided, he said, seems to say, "Pleased, pleased, pleased to meet you!"

Pine warblers are heard further into the preserve as we walk closer to the Mud Bay shore. They forage and nest fairly high in pine trees. A song from this warbler can be similar to that of the chipping sparrow, but is thinner and not as strident.

The last species in this group is the yellow warbler. It has the most widespread breeding range of all and is most abundant of the *Dendroica* genus. This species is one of the most often parasitized by the brown-headed cowbird. A female cowbird will lay its egg in the warbler nest and it hatches earlier than the other eggs. Then the cowbird chick pushes the warbler chicks out of the nest and becomes the only surviving chick to be fed by the parents.

Studies have shown that there are 43 subspecies of the yellow warbler throughout the North American continent. The *Dendroica* genus has birds that are arboreal having wing bars and tail spots. It is the only yellow-breasted warbler with yellow tail spots. It seems to prefer moist shrubby areas, especially where willows grow.



A male chestnut-sided is ready to take a drink.

Roy Lukes

Black and white warblers are sometimes very easy to spot as they forage for insects along branches and trunks of trees like nuthatches do. So many warblers flit about and never stay in one place long enough for you to get binoculars on them; not so this species. It can be identified from the blackpoll warbler by the white central stripe in its crown.



Nashville warblers have red crown feathers that are often hidden.

Roy Lukes

I see Nashville warblers in my yard frequently during spring migration. They are so distinctive with their white eye ring, yellow undersides and gray head. They are slow-moving and easy to find. One wonders how it was named because it does not nest in Nashville, only migrates through that area.

Nashville warbler is in the same genus, *Vermivora*, as the blue-winged, golden-winged, orange-crowned and Tennessee warblers. Word derivations fascinate me. *Vermivora* probably refers to the birds as being worm eaters. *Dendroica* indicates having to do with trees, thus the term wood warblers.

One of the rarer species at Toft Point is the northern parula. It used to be a bit more abundant 50 years ago when I first learned its song. A plant that is vital to their nesting is *Usnea* lichen, often called old man's beard. The parula is the smallest of all Toft Point warblers, being only 4.25 inches long.

The Cana Island area had some nesting and perhaps other undisturbed conifer forests claimed them, too. Its song is a buzzy ascending trill which is easy to remember after hearing it a few times.

If you have travelled to the southeastern part of our country, you probably have seen Spanish moss that hangs abundantly from hardwood trees, like live oaks. The parula uses that plant in its nest down there, similar to our lichen up here.

The largest of Toft Point warblers is the ovenbird at 5.75 inches. This species is widespread through the eastern U.S. up into the prairies and well into Canada. It is quite thrush-like as it walks along the forest floor more than flying.



An ovenbird has a heavily streaked breast and a pale orange stripe on its crown bordered with black. Roy Lukes

It got its name from the domed nest that it builds from the grasses on the forest floor. The song carries quite a distance and sounds like it is saying, "Teacher, teacher, teacher, teacher!" This species can be found in many parts of Door County in deciduous and mixed forests.

The ovenbird is in the *Seiurus* genus with the northern waterthrush and the Louisiana waterthrush. All of these prefer to live close to the ground in the deep shade of the forest.

Common yellowthroats also like to live close to the ground in shrubby habitats near water. They, too, are very widespread in North America but not into Alaska like the yellow warbler. Don't get this confused with the yellow-throated warbler which is a wood warbler of the southeastern U.S.

Once you hear the "Witchity, Witchity, Witchity," call you can easily pinpoint its location. This 5-inch warbler has a black mask that makes it stand out from other yellow-throated species.

We often hear it along the marshy Mud Bay shorelines. It is the only warbler in the *Geothlypis* genus. It is not a species that you would find in the deep upland woods.

One warbler that is often quite active and not afraid to come out on a branch to show itself is the American redstart. The male has orange, black and white plumage that is not easily confused with any other warbler.

However, in my early days of birding at The Ridges Sanctuary I had a comical experience. I knew the Baltimore orioles as they ate at our feeders. One day I used my binoculars while hiking the back trails and saw a bird with the glasses.

I thought, what a strange looking oriole! It was then that I learned what an American redstart was. It sat out on a branch so still and easy to see. However, the redstart is only 5 inches long. An oriole is 8 inches and much more intense orange.

The tail has broad orange patches on each side with black in the center and end. Females look similar but the orange is much paler and there is gray instead of black in most of the body feathers.

This species can be seen in mixed woodlands. I remember when Roy and I would lead bird hikes during the Memorial Day weekend at Whitefish Dunes State Park many years ago. The American redstarts always showed up for the birders.

It breeds mainly in eastern U.S. but also clear across Canada up into the Yukon and fairly close to Alaska. Its call is not as easy to remember as some of the other warbler species.



A male American redstart has black plumage and the female is gray with paler orange sections. Roy Lukes

The last of Toft Point's twelve warbler species is usually the latest to arrive. The mourning warbler, up until 2011, was in the genus *Oporornis*. But recent DNA and other biochemical studies find it is more closely related to yellowthroats. Now the only species in the *Oporornis* genus is the

Connecticut warbler. Mourning warblers like cutover growth which is very dense in which to hide.

They spend the winter in northwest South America and Central America, and are one of the latest to migrate getting here from mid-May to early June. Their spring migration is on land around the Gulf of Mexico instead of flying over that large body of water as so many other species do.

Get to know the spring mating and territorial songs of warblers and what habitats they occupy. We must all work to preserve the wetlands and forests in which these marvelous small songbirds nest.

More Trail Docents Needed

The valued service of the Toft Point Trail Docents is vital to helping to protect and preserve this State Natural Area. Many docents have been volunteering for many years and this year we are losing two members who have given so much of their time and efforts to help Toft Point.

Joe and Liz Wallner have supported Toft Point in many capacities. They both volunteered to serve on the board of Directors (Liz was secretary for many years), helped host the annual spring docent organizational meeting, did invasive plant removal, helped clear fallen trees and were at the Baileys Harbor Town Hall to help set up for the annual meetings and potlucks.

We thank you Joe and Liz and hope to see you on the trails and at our next annual meeting.

Spring Docent Organizational Meeting

All docents, and anyone who would like to volunteer, are invited to the Cook-Fuller Nature Center of The Ridges Sanctuary in Baileys Harbor for this spring's meeting.

It will be on **Monday, May 15** beginning at **10 AM** and will be held in the Discovery Meeting Room in the rear of the building. We will have the calendar there for volunteers to sign up with plans for the coming season and any concerns from last year will be discussed.

New docents will get an informational handbook, denim shirt and name badge. Training sessions with a seasoned docent will be set up for any new volunteers.

Please consider volunteering a half day a week or every other week to help keep Toft Point wild and protected and to greet visitors who come to hike in this wonderful preserve.

Spring Mushrooms at Toft Point

Wild mushrooms are not very abundant in spring anywhere in our county, but occasionally a few interesting species are found. The greatest variety of mushrooms come in later summer and fall up until the ground is frozen.



A true morel was seen in late May one year.

Roy Lukes

Morel mushrooms are one of the few good ones that appear in spring. Black morels are sometimes seen a few weeks before the brown or yellow ones. All edible mushrooms should be cooked before eating them.

False morels can also be found in spring as well as in autumn. The false ones are poisonous and may cause death or at least severe illness. True morels are totally hollow inside. False morels are part hollow and part solid and have a top which is wrinkled and rather distorted and brain-like.

In some areas of the world the false morel is eaten, but many people in Europe have died from ingesting them. This mushroom has a toxin called gyromitrin. In fact, the false morel genus name is *Gyromitra*.

They may contain an ingredient known as MMH, monomethylhydrazine, which is a component of rocket fuel and can cause cancer. It is not worth the risks of eating these fungi.

The best thing to do is get a recently published mushroom field guide for your location and study all the book has to inform you about how to examine and identify mushrooms. There are seven major toxins and some don't reveal their effects for hours after eating the mushroom.

Remember, if in doubt, throw it out!

Friends of Toft Point – Membership Form

New____ Renewal____

Single Annual____ \$10.00 Single Life Membership____\$250 (payable in 2 annual installments)

Family Annual____\$20.00 Couple Life Membership____\$400 (payable in 2 annual installments)

Contribution \$____ (Please check category) General Expenses____ Student Research Fund____

Operating Endowment Fund____ Invasives Endowment Fund____

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Volunteer Opportunities

Trail Docent (training provided) _____

Trail Maintenance (supervised crews) _____

Invasive Plant Removal _____

Serve on Stewardship Board (6 meetings per year) _____

Help with Annual Meeting & Potluck in August _____

Name_____

Address_____

Phone_____

Email_____

Call Jim Cauley if interested in
helping 414-332-6201

Friends of Toft Point
% C. Lukes
3962 Hillside Rd
Egg Harbor, WI 54209



Arctic primrose blossoms stand tall on straight stems along the rocky shoreline in spring.

Roy Lukes

