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## GOOD EARTH...EVERY DAY

by

**Anne Drake**

**GRNA Naturalist**

Back in the late '80s I wrote and co-starred in an Earth Day program that I and one of my fellow naturalists performed in almost every elementary school in Sterling Heights, Michigan. I was a character named Regal T. (The) Eagle. I wore a giant Bald Eagle costume complete with large yellow talons covering my feet. My co-star, Clod E. Camper (wearing a plaid flannel shirt) overfished the lake, threw trash in the river, and thought that all wetlands were disgusting, smelly, wastelands that should be filled in to create subdivisions for people's homes.

Pointing out all of Clod Camper's mistakes, I tossed an Earth-illustrated ball around the stage as I spouted out information about the hole in the ozone layer, the bioaccumulation of poisons in the environment, pollution in the Great Lakes, and car exhaust smogging up the air. But wait. . . to top it all off, I gave kids friendly tips on how to pack more eco-friendly lunches to take to school. "You kids have to get rid of those juice boxes," I squawked. "You can save the Earth. It's your World! It's up to you to take care of it!" I spoke a beak-full as I strutted the stage tripping on my talons and flapping my wings.



This little two-person play gave my co-star and me our 15 minutes of fame. The play even aired on a local cable channel during Earth week. People recognized us in the grocery store. However, as I think back on this experience, I am embarrassed. That eagle, well-meaning as she was, turned out to be...one giant...puffed up... audacious...preachy raptor. What was I thinking?

No one likes to be preached at.

No one likes to have their mistakes pointed out.

No one likes to be told what to do.

No one likes to feel shame and guilt when you don't do something that you know you should do.

The voice of Regal The Eagle screeches in my ears all over again on Earth Day when I hear slogans like:

“What On Earth Are You Doing?”

“Give a hoot! Don't pollute!”

“Clean up the Earth, it's the only home we have.”

“Skip the straw. Save a turtle.”

Catchy and well-meaning as these slogans are, they are also a bit obnoxious. I'm not saying that we let ourselves off the hook when it comes to taking care of our planet just because we don't want to hear it or don't want to feel bad, inconvenienced, or preached at. I am saying that preachy slogans aren't going to help us improve our behavior.

There are ways that touch our hearts.

There are ways that inspire our thoughts and motivate our actions.

There are more effective ways of changing human behavior.

People greater than I have said great things about the Earth. I call upon John Muir. His thoughts have inspired generations. My favorite is this one: “Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.”

This brings me to what I think is one of those better, more effective ways of helping humans make positive behavioral changes towards our Earth. It is . . . spending time out in nature.

I have been lucky and privileged. My parents dragged me away from the television early in my childhood and took me on a camping trip across the U.S., through mountains, deserts, forests, and lakes. The experiences out in these places instilled in me a love of the Earth. The trip was grand, but it wasn't just the trip. Daily, my mom had a practice of letting me outside and not letting me back in the house again until lunchtime. I can't tell you how many hours I spent outside just watching ants crawl in and out of the cracks in the sidewalk on our neighborhood street. It was fascinating.



Time spent in nature is never wasted.

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread. Places to play in..... where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.” - John Muir



When our Sun rises this Earth Day, April 22, 2022, it will be doing the same thing it has been doing for about 4 and a half billion years: shining. We say that the Sun “comes up” because, from our vantage point, we see the Sun move higher above the horizon. In actuality, it is the Earth’s spinning motion that causes the dawn of each new day. There is a legend that says that there is a new sun every day. That the sun lives for one day only, dawn to dusk. There will be a different Sun tomorrow. The belief is that we must

welcome the Sun and make a good day for it. It only has one day. We must make a good world for this Sun’s one-day life. A good world. A good Earth. . . every day. *Editor’s Note: GRNA Executive Director, Jenn Wright, took the photo at left. She was on our dock watching the Sun rise over Grass River during The Big Nature Sit on Earth Day in 2021.*

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## INTRODUCING EARTHFEST 2022



### Owls & Amphibians Dusk Walk

**Thursday, April 21**

**7:30 pm - 9:00 pm**

**\$10 per person, limited space, please pre-register**

As part of our Earthfest Celebration, join us for a walk at dusk to listen and look for signs of spring: owls calling, frogs singing, or salamanders migrating. Dusk is one of the best times to look for wildlife at GRNA! Pre-registration required. Limited space.

Please register [here](#).



### The Big Nature Sit on Earth Day

**Friday, April 22**

**6:00 am – 9:00 am**

**\$10 per person, limited space, please pre-register**

Join the GRNA staff as we head out before dawn and experience the Earth waking up! We’ll meet in the main parking lot and hike out to the Grass

River dock. Each of us will find a space on the boardwalk to sit quietly & observe the sights and sounds of nature coming to life. Bring a portable, quiet camp chair, a flashlight/headlamp, binoculars (or borrow ours), quiet snacks, and warm clothes. The registration fee of \$10/person supports our Earth Day of Giving Campaign. Please register early to ensure your seat. Photo is a 2021 Photo Contest entry by photographer Christopher Delange. Please register [here](#).



### **Nature Film Night**

**Saturday, April 23**

**7:00 pm - 9:00 pm**

**Grass River Center**

**Donations welcome**

Come cap off EarthFest by enjoying just shy of a dozen short films focused on the world of environmental conservation and outdoor recreation. From Norway to Northern Michigan, these short films explore our relationship to the great outdoors and are in turn heartwarming, funny, illuminating, and inspirational. Many of the films have been featured at prestigious festivals like the Wild & Scenic Film Festival and the Fresh Coast Film Festival. Popcorn will be provided. \$5 suggested donation. Limited space; please pre-register by emailing Emily at [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org). The photo is from the film *The Last Green Thread*.

## HOW WE BEGAN EARTHFEST

GRNA's 2022 Earthfest kicked off with a nature-themed trivia night at Short's Pull Barn in Elk Rapids. It was a full house, and it is safe to say that fun was had by all (as demonstrated by the photos below), even if there were some challenging questions. Many thanks to staff member Emily Burke who put together the five challenging rounds. Thank you also to everyone who came out to play. And finally a huge thank you to Short's for hosting and making the evening a fundraiser by donating part of the night's proceeds to GRNA!



**Anne Drake put together this fun activity for families to do to**

# Celebrate



## Family Project

Spend some family time together and celebrate Earth Day. It's a great way to say "thank you" to our wonderful planet.



## Project Bug Habitat

Add a little extra place for some beneficial bugs. It will benefit your garden! Bug habitats attract beneficial critters such as pollinating bees, spiders, ladybugs, and more. And... the good bugs can help keep away the types of bugs that would destroy your plants. Make one or more with your kids this Earth Day.



**Step #1** Gather up some containers from around the house and give them another purpose.

Examples at left.



**Step #2** Go on a walk outside together and collect things you think bugs would like. Hint: Take a grocery bag and bring back lots of stuff!

Examples at left.



**Step #3** Pick a style.

### The Pop Bottle

You can use any size.

Cut the top off.

Poke 2 holes and add a hanging string.

Stuff it with sticks, pinecones, and bark.

Result below.



### The Can

You can use any size or type (tin cans, coffee cans, etc.). Attach a string to hang and stuff as before.

Result at left.

### The Pot

Use an old flowerpot. This bug home sits on the ground and attracts bugs that crawl. Stuff it with the things you found.



Result at left.



### The Bee Place

Use any plastic drink cup. Cut straws to a length that will fit inside.

Result at left.



If you run out of straws you can roll your own. Use any scrap paper you have. Roll the paper around a pencil and

tape it so it won't unroll.

Mason Bees really like this one. Look up Mason Bees to find out why.

# Happy Earth Day!!!

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## PROGRAMS ON THE HORIZON



### **The Secrets of Spring Ephemerals, Zoom Class**

**Friday, April 29**

**from 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm via Zoom**

In the narrow window between when the ground thaws and the tree canopy leafs out, some of our most beloved wildflowers - like trilliums, bloodroot, and hepatica - bloom in our deciduous forests. In this Zoom class, learn how to identify these delicate yet hardy species called spring ephemerals, and discover the details of their fascinating ecological relationships with other forest species, from seed dispersal and pollination to herbivory. Register in advance for this meeting by [clicking here](#).



### **Blooms & Birds: Wildflower Walk**

**Every Tuesday beginning May 3**

**10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

**Donations appreciated. No pre-registration is necessary.**

Go for a relaxing stroll on the trails with GRNA docents Julie Hurd and Phil Jarvi each week to find and identify the beautiful and unique wildflowers at Grass River. Along the way, we will listen and look for the birds that call Grass River home.



### **Spring Fling at Docksider**

**Tuesday, May 3**

**5:00 pm - 10:00 pm**

There is no easier way to support Grass River Natural Area than enjoying food and drinks on the beautiful shores of Torch Lake. Join us for our annual fundraiser at the Docksider south of Bellaire. 50% of all food and drink proceeds benefit GRNA that night. Enjoy great food with wonderful people in a relaxing environment all while supporting a great organization. The Docksider is located at 6340 Old Torch Lake Dr, Bellaire, MI 49615.

### **Stream Monitoring Training**

**Saturday, May 7**

**9:00 am - 11:30 am**

Twice each year, GRNA monitors several sites along the 3 major streams running through the natural area to assess the health of our waterways. Every year, we train new volunteers to help us collect this data and contribute to keeping GRNA's creeks healthy. If you're interested in learning how to collect this data, join us! Pre-registration is required. Please email [Emily@grassriver.org](mailto:Emily@grassriver.org) to sign up.



**Spring Mushroom Hunt**

**Sunday, May 15**

**1:00 pm - 2:30 pm**

**\$10 per person**

Morels, fiddleheads, and tasty spring edibles are cropping up all over. With the guidance of a GRNA naturalist, you will search for morels and other spring fungi. We're hoping for a good year, so come join us! [Click here to register.](#)



**Birding by Ear**

**Saturday, May 21**

**8:00 am - 10:00 am**

**\$5 per person**

The birds are singing but may be difficult to see this time of year as the trees start to leaf out. Learn to ID birds by their songs on a guided birding walk. Grass River is a birding hotspot and a great place to learn and appreciate your birds. [Click here to register.](#)

**Classes at GRNA through NMC are also available:**

**Wednesday, May 11, Mushrooms of Spring**

**Thursday, June 2, Wetland Wildflowers**

**Friday, June 24, Sedges of Northern Michigan**

[For more information and registration - click here.](#)

**GRASS RIVER CENTER HOURS**

**Winter hours: 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Saturdays and Sundays through April 30**

**10:00 am - 4:00 pm, 7 days per week beginning Sunday, May 1**

## IT'S TIME FOR GRNA'S ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Pre-order garden kits now  
by clicking here

or purchase single species  
quarts at the event at GRNA  
on Saturday, June 4th from  
10:00 am - 1:00 pm



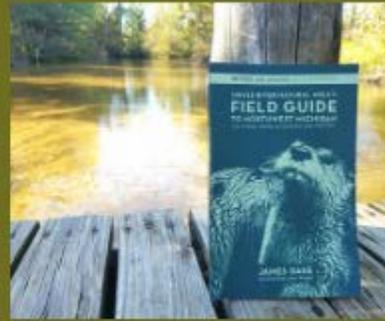
## DOES YOUR T-SHIRT DRAWER NEED A REFRESH?

Purchase a shirt to brighten your look and GRNA benefits



Choose from any of the logos above,  
printed on a variety of styles, colors, & sizes from youth to adult.  
Order online by clicking on this box.  
A portion of the sale comes back to GRNA as a donation.

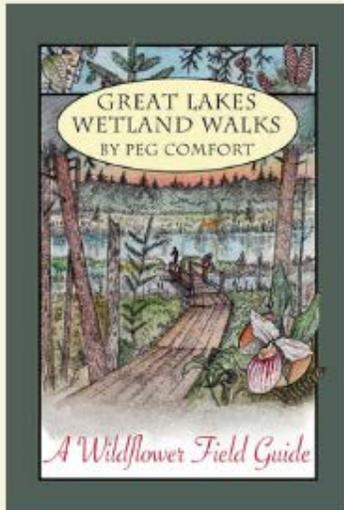
**The 2nd Edition of  
Grass River Natural Area's  
FIELD GUIDE  
to Northwest Michigan  
is now available.**



This guide is written and compiled by GRNA Education Director James Dake. It features several new and expanded sections and a new Foreword by Executive Director Jenn Wright.

Cost is \$18.87 plus tax

Order online by clicking on this box or available at the Grass River Center Gift Shop



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Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty-two years because of the generous support of people who value our mission "to manage the Grass River Natural Area, conserve and protect its watershed, and provide opportunities that increase knowledge, appreciation, and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment".

If you believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it for many years to come, please click on the Donate button below. Your support is greatly appreciated.

**DONATE**



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