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## RELAXING AFTER A NATURE WALK

A cropped version of a 2019 GRNA Photo Contest submission by  
Ivy Henry

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# WATCHING WINGS DRY

by Anne Drake, Naturalist

The sun was hot. I was lying on my stomach on the dock with my head hung over the edge, watching minnows darting in the water. I didn't see it at first. . . but there it was! Attached to the nearby post, just above the water line was a dragonfly larva. Just recently, the larva had crawled up out of the water. (Dragonfly nymphs live for up to two years underwater, preying on other insect larvae, small fish, tadpoles, and even other dragonfly nymphs).

What emerged from that small casing was incredible! As I watched, the exoskeleton split open and over the next few minutes, out came a fully developed dragonfly complete with wings. At first I was worried. The wings looked too small in proportion to the dragonfly's body. There was nothing to worry about, though. I watched as liquid from the dragonfly's body surged into the wings, and they began to expand.



In several hours (maybe as long as a day), I knew this dragonfly would be able to fly just like a helicopter. He would fly straight up and down and hover to catch mosquitoes. One dragonfly can potentially eat hundreds of mosquitoes per day, catching them all with their feet! That's great population control.

On summer walks at Grass River I love to try and sneak up on dragonflies as they land on the boardwalk trail. The common whitetail is the dragonfly that I see most often there.

How close can I get to a whitetail before it flies a little farther on down the trail? Not close enough to take a good photo with my cell phone; the head of a dragonfly is covered with eye! They have incredible vision. Dragonflies can see all around themselves from every angle, except from directly behind. They see me coming and fly off everytime.

So . . . I savored the moment,  
when I was lucky to watch wings dry,  
before it could fly.

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## NEW REMOTE PROGRAMS

We are continuing to monitor the Governor's Executive Orders as well as the latest health agency recommendations, and the safety of our visitors is our top priority. Rest assured that as soon as we have updates on the status of our summer programs, we will pass them along to you. Until then, we've put together the following virtual and remote programs for your enjoyment!

### "NMC Driveways" Podcast

GRNA has offered classes through NMC Extended Education's [Northern Naturalist certificate program](#) for 4 years. Now, our partnership is expanding with NMC's new podcast - "NMC Driveways" - for which our Education Director, James Dake, contributes a segment called NorNatNook at the end of Friday episodes. Listen [here](#).



### New Microclasses

Spend less than 20 minutes learning something new or refreshing your memory about the natural world. A new class is posted every weekend on our Facebook and Youtube pages. Our most recent classes are:

[Nature Journaling: Wildflower Watercolors](#)  
[Birds of the Cedar Swamp](#)



### Coming Soon: New Interpretive Panels

Good news - GRNA recently received a \$3,000 grant from the Great Lakes Energy People Fund for new interpretive signage! These signs will help us educate visitors when they're out on the trails. Be on the lookout for them later this summer along the boardwalk from the cabin to the dock!

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## WHERE THE WILDFLOWERS GROW

The end of May kicks off prime wildflower season at GRNA, and even though our weekly Birds and Blooms tours have been canceled thus far due to COVID-19, we still have you covered for all things wildflowers!

## Virtual Birds and Blooms

with your guide, Julie Hurd

### Cut-leaved Toothwort

*Cardamine concatenata*

Cut-leaved toothwort can be found in small patches in deciduous woods before the canopy leaves out. This plant is a member of the mustard family, with 8-10" stems that bear small 4-petaled white flowers. The leaves are 3-lobed and resemble teeth. Like the leaves of many other early spring ephemerals, toothwort leaves disappear by mid-summer.

Cut-leaved toothwort is a host plant for the checkered white butterfly caterpillar. Look for this plant at Grass River along Finch Creek near the old cabin.



### Canada Mayflower

*Maianthemum canadense*



Canada mayflower is also called wild lily-of-the-valley or false lily-of-the-valley, although it is much smaller than the cultivated lily-of-the-valley. It grows widely in conifer and deciduous forests and wetlands. At Grass River, look for nursery stumps along the boardwalks where you will find Canada mayflower in company with goldthread, creeping snowberry, and other small plants.

Look closely at the tiny white star-burst flower to appreciate its beautiful complexity. It rises on a stalk above smooth heart-shaped leaves. Those flowers will become red berries (the seeds) much favored by grouse and small mammals. Only mature plants with 2-3 leaves will blossom, but look around them for the single-leafed young plants that will produce next year's flowers.

## Self-Guided Wildflower Walk Brochures

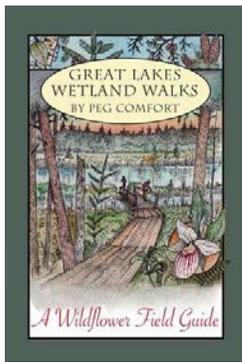
Pick up one of our new wildflower guides before you hit the trails. These color brochures, organized by month, are available at our trailhead kiosks, or you can download and print them yourself.

[May Wildflower Guide](#)  
[June Wildflower Guide](#)



## Great Lakes Wetland Walks

If you're looking for a more in-depth resource to help you identify all of the wetland blooms you may encounter throughout the year, we suggest checking out Great Lakes Wetland Walks, written by local expert Peg Comfort and published by GRNA. This book is an easy to



use guide on wetland plants of the Great Lakes region, featuring a forward by Jerry Dennis, cover and section artwork by Glenn Wolff, plant diagrams by Heather Shaw, and photographs by James Dake. Get yours today!

[Order Great Lakes Wetland Walks](#)

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## STREAM MONITORING UPDATE



Every spring and fall, GRNA staff and volunteers sample for macroinvertebrates, or aquatic insects, at several sites along one of the three main tributaries flowing into Grass River: Finch Creek, Cold Creek, and Shanty Creek. These macroinvertebrates are important indicators of water quality, so GRNA uses the abundance and diversity of collected macroinvertebrates to assess the health of our streams as part of the statewide Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) program.

This year, we sampled four sites along Cold Creek on the morning of May 16th. Analyses revealed that two sites' numerical scores fell in the "fair" category, with the other two receiving a "good" score, according to the MiCorps evaluation protocol. Compared to when Cold Creek was last sampled in Oct 2017, all numerical scores increased. When compared with the last spring sample of Cold Creek in May 2017, two scores decreased and two increased.

While we always hope for scores that fall in the "excellent" range, the logging that took place on GRNA land before it was protected as a natural area continues to affect stream habitats. Operating heavy machinery and felling trees in a forest causes increased sediment loads in run-off, which ultimately buries important stream microhabitats like cobbles. Despite the challenge that the legacy of logging poses, GRNA remains committed to protecting and monitoring these waterways that provide critical habitat for many rare plants and animals and naturally filter much of the region's drinking water before it flows into Grand Traverse Bay.



**Thanks to our dedicated GRNA stream monitoring volunteers!**



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While Michigan's Safer at Home order continues, we will publish *In Otter News* every other week to keep you informed, educated, and entertained. We will include remote programs like the Microclasses and Virtual Birds and Blooms, as well as a lead article from one of our naturalists, in each edition. We hope this helps to fill your days.

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## CONSIDER A DONATION

Our financial wellbeing is dependent on programming dollars and donations, and with the former sidelined for the time being, donations are of paramount importance. Your generous support is always greatly appreciated, but in these difficult days, your willingness to help us continue our mission with a personal donation promotes you to Nature Warrior status at GRNA.

Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty 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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