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**When Grass River Natural Area gives thanks this year, you will be at the top of our list. You are as important to us as the work we do to protect the environmental integrity of the Grass River and the Chain of Lakes Watershed. We cannot do our work without you. THANK YOU!**

## **BIRDS OF A FEATHER...**

by

Emily Burke, GRNA naturalist

**Thanksgiving is on the horizon**, and while 2020 may be an exception due to COVID, in most years, this holiday is a time for gathering. But we aren't the only ones grouping up in late November. The focal point of many a Thanksgiving feast –

yes, the turkeys themselves – are also banding together in the fall, forming large flocks that they maintain throughout the winter.



These flocks aren't just the rag-tag everyone's-invited kind of party, however; in fact, turkeys are quite exclusive in terms of who gets an invitation to join their fall/winter flock. The general rule is, of course, that "birds of a feather flock together." The largest groups are made up of hens with their female offspring from this year (called jennies). Often, many hen/jenny groups will join together for the fall and winter, with these mega-flocks occasionally consisting of 200 or more birds. Males, however, form their own groups. Depending on the local population size, these groups are often segregated by age class, with younger males (called jakes) and older gobblers creating their own flocks.

But just like at many a family Thanksgiving dinner, these gatherings often involve squabbles – turkeys in both male and female flocks are constantly vying for dominance throughout the fall and winter in preparation for the spring breeding season. And especially in male flocks in which the dominance hierarchy is not well-established, you may even overhear the occasional loud gobble in a spat over winter's limited food resources, a vocalization that is normally only reserved for the heated breeding battles of spring.



Though turkey flocks are larger in the fall and winter than in the spring – when usually just 2-4 males flock with 10 or so hens – they may be more difficult to catch a glimpse of now. In late spring and summer, turkeys tend to stick to open spaces like fields and roadsides to dine on meadow-inhabiting grasshoppers and other insects, but fall usually sends them deeper into the woods to forage for acorns and beechnuts. If, however, you live near some agricultural fields like me, you may see turkeys out in the open well into the winter foraging for dropped corn and grain.

So, if the gathering around your Thanksgiving table is abnormally small this year, you can at least be thankful that you don't have to "gobble" at Aunt Jenny or Uncle Jake for taking the last piece of pecan pie.

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## **BECAUSE YOU CAN, DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD**

On November 12th, as COVID-19 cases climbed in Michigan, Governor Whitmer told us "because you can, doesn't mean you should". GRNA wants to take a moment to let you know what that means to us.

We know you are enjoying the trails at Grass River Natural Area, and we want to continue to provide that essential outdoor escape for you. The trails will remain available to you from dawn to dusk every day. We ask that you wear masks when you can and keep a courteous and safe distance from others you meet on the trails.

On November 15th, Governor Whitmer took additional action with new closure orders for the next three weeks. The Grass River Center is not among the businesses that need to close, so we will remain open Thursday - Sunday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. through December 20th if nothing changes. The Center will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, however. We will limit the number of people in the Center to one family or group at a time, and we ask that you remain patient if you are asked to wait before coming in. Masks will be required to enter.

There were two programs scheduled for November and those are now cancelled.

We are striving to find the balance of availability of programming and safety in order to keep all our visitors and staff healthy, and we are asking for your help. If you are feeling unwell, please wait to visit Grass River Natural Area. And most of all, keep in mind the words of our governor, "just because you can, doesn't mean you should". Consider your well-being and that of those you may encounter before you interact with others.

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## 2020 GRNA PHOTO CONTEST ACCEPTING ENTRIES NOW



2019 Judges' Choice Award  
by Mark Harder

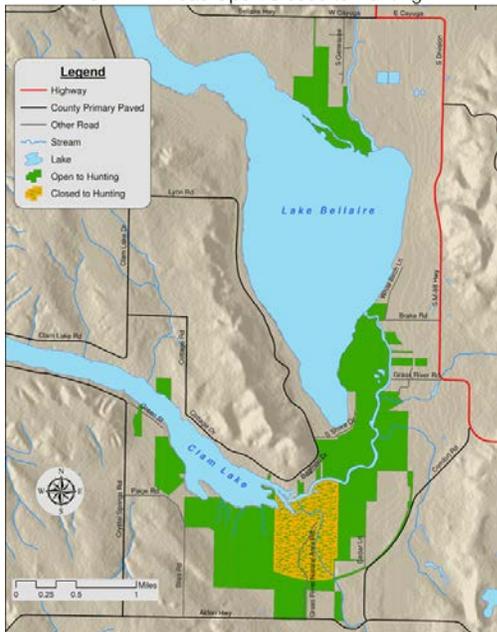


2019 People's Choice Award  
by Christopher DeLange

Enter up to three photographs you took at GRNA by  
Sunday, November 22  
[Click here for complete details](#)

### ONE MORE REMINDER NOW THAT FIREARM DEER SEASON IS HERE TAKE CARE AND PLEASE OBSERVE THE RULES

GRNA - Areas Open/Closed to Hunting



Many people enjoy hunting in the undisturbed areas in the Grass River Natural Area, and we welcome hunters as long as they observe the regulations set out by Antrim County.

**Antrim County Ordinance Section 13, #1 of 1988 allows hunting on Grass River Natural Area property outside of the “Education Zone” during appropriate hunting seasons.**

The Education Zone is shown in yellow on the map. An enlarged version can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

Please be considerate of the boundaries, as hikers are present in the Education Zone year-round. If these guidelines are not followed, hunting poses a risk to the public and our staff.

Also, please take care to stay off neighboring properties and observe a safe distance from permanent structures along GRNA's boundary.

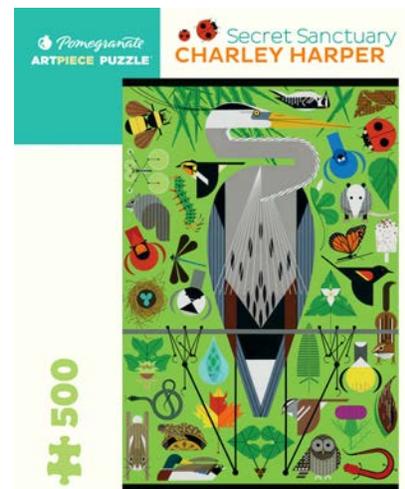
If you are hiking at GRNA this fall, we ask that you consider wearing hunter orange, even when walking in the Education Zone, to make yourself highly visible.



**GRASS RIVER NATURAL AREA  
HAS PERFECT HOLIDAY GIFTS**  
online and in the Grass River Center Gift Shop

**SHOP ONLINE ANY TIME  
OR  
VISIT THE GRASS RIVER DURING OUR EXTENDED HOLIDAY HOURS**

Have you ever thought to look to GRNA for your holiday gifts? Well, you definitely should think of us this year. Out two new self-published books and logo wear are available online and jigsaw puzzles, plush toys, games, more books, coasters, notecards, soaps, and much more are available at the Grass River Center. Sheila has done an amazing job of stocking the gift shop with appealing items for all ages and interests. To better accommodate your shopping needs, the Center is open Thursday through Sunday from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. now through December 20, excluding Thanksgiving Day.



## NEW LOGO WEAR

Purchase a shirt for yourself or as a gift and GRNA benefits



Choose from any of the logos featured 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.

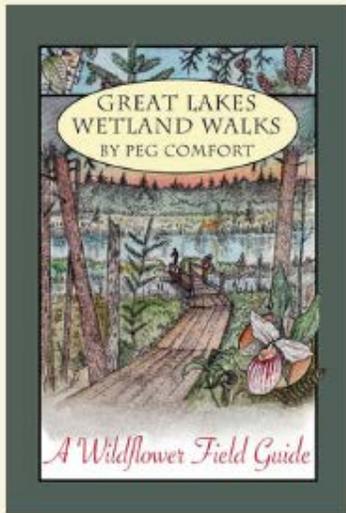
**The 2nd Edition of  
Grass River Natural Area's  
FIELD GUIDE  
to Northwest Michigan  
is now available.**



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



**This beautiful and  
informative book  
is available online and in the  
Grass River Center Gift Shop.**

**It is perfect for hikers, gardeners, and  
nature enthusiasts.  
Artistic illustrations and photographs  
add to the book's appeal.**

**[Click here to order](#)**

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## **CONSIDER A DONATION**

Our financial well being is dependent on programming dollars and donations, and with the former sidelined for the most part at the moment, 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.

### **ANSWER TO THE QUESTION POSED IN THE LEAD STORY**

A snake's body temperature would need to be approximately 98.6 degrees to not feel cold to your touch.

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

**D O N A T E**



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**Natural area address:**

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