



BELLE ISLE  
CONSERVANCY

# NEWSLETTER

*Nature. People. Places.*



*Return to the Pond*  
ON BELLE ISLE

## *Return to the Pond*

You and your guests are cordially invited to attend

*The Garden Party on Belle Isle*

Tuesday, September 15, 2015

5:30 P.M. - 7:30 P.M.

cocktails - hors d'oeuvre - music by Ben Sharkey



*Honorary Chairmen*

Marlene and John Boll

Valet Parking



*Polish the Jewel*

BELLE ISLE LEGACY LUNCHEON  
PRESENTED BY



**DTE Energy**  
Foundation



*A Diamond in the Rough*

HONORING RUTH ROBY GLANCY, DTE ENERGY AND THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2015 ~ 11A.M. TO 1:30P.M. ~ BELLE ISLE CASINO

Shauna Ryder Diggs, Cosmedic Dermatology  
Event Chair

Heather Paquette, KPMG  
Honorary Corporate Co-Chair

- DON'T MISS -

THE GARDEN PARTY ON BELLE ISLE

Tuesday, September 15th

Conservatory 5:30 — 7:30 pm

POLISH THE JEWEL

Thursday, October 8th

Belle Isle Casino 11:00 am — 1:30 pm

# THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michele Hodges



Fulfilling the mission of the Belle Isle Conservancy is not an easy task (but it is a fun one!), and all hands are needed to make it happen.

To that end, we are so very fortunate to have an exceptional volunteer corps that assume highly sophisticated functions, such as managing the Belle Isle Aquarium, supporting the Conservatory, keeping the Boat Club viable, and leading stewardship activities.

Supporters and donors like you also serve to keep the ball moving forward and, fortunately, we are now experiencing much needed and balanced growth in our staff team, with the newest additions highlighted below.

**Summer Ritner** has joined the Conservancy as its operations manager. She comes to us from THAW, and is making great strides in her short tenure.

**Brittany Sanders** is our new community engagement specialist, via the Detroit Revitalization Fellows program, and will start on August 24<sup>th</sup>. Her experience includes time with Challenge Detroit, FocusHOPE, and Detroit SOUP.

**Genevieve Nowak** started on July 22<sup>nd</sup> as volunteer coordinator. She has worked for the DIA, Neighborhood Services Organization, Cass Community Social Services, and MADD.

**Stephanie Bowen** is keeping the ship afloat as our temporary administrative assistant, with a permanent hire expected soon.

Two wonderful interns are presently on the team too, including **Lariel Turner** from the Youth Connection, and a sophomore at Bowling Green State University; and **Steven Hawring**, a College for Creative Studies student majoring in graphic design.

Lots of smiles can be found around here as these highly skilled individuals begin to leave their mark and share our passion for beautiful Belle Isle!



## *Belle Isle Strategic Planning*

The Cultural Campus Planning Process, which focuses on the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, is nearing completion, with the proposed concepts and strategies maturing nicely. Watch for the outcomes to be announced in September.

The second process underway is Strategic Planning, which continues to march forward. The plan will lack value if the voice of the community does not influence it, so please visit [www.belleisleconservancy.org](http://www.belleisleconservancy.org) for opportunities to provide input, or contact Michele Hodges ([hodgesm@Belleisleconservancy.org](mailto:hodgesm@Belleisleconservancy.org)) directly with your vision for Belle Isle.



Strategic Planning Meeting at historic Belle Isle Casino June 24, 2015

## WE'VE MOVED

The Belle Isle Conservancy office has moved to its new location – **300 River Place Drive, Suite 2800, Detroit, MI 48207**. Our address has changed, but our phone number is the same **313-331-7760**.

## DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Katy Wyerman, Director of Resource Development



When it comes to raising money to operate the Belle Isle Aquarium, preserve the island's historic architecture, engage the community, provide programming, and partner with the DNR on island improvements, we take a "multi-task" approach. Throughout the year, we apply for grants, work with donors, run a membership program,

and host fundraisers. Events are a fun, memorable, and productive pathway to achieve our fundraising goals and fulfill the mission of the Belle Isle Conservancy.

This past May, we raised almost \$1.1 million at the PwC Grand Prixmiere, presented by Chevrolet! This is a huge step towards the millions of dollars of needed island improvements and amenities, and programs. In June, almost 200 people attended the Scott Fountain Pewabic Party, raising almost \$10,000 towards replacing the Pewabic tile mosaics that were ripped out of the fountain five years ago. Mark your calendars for the annual Garden Party on Belle Isle - it will take place on Tuesday, September 15. Organized by the Belle Isle Conservancy's Conservatory Committee and Grosse Pointe garden clubs, the funds raised at the Garden Party will go towards repairing, restoring, and re-landscaping the koi lily pond. On Thursday, October 8, we will host the 11th annual Polish the Jewel Legacy Luncheon at the Belle Isle Casino. Dr. Shauna Ryder Diggs is chairing the event, and the revenue raised at the event will be directed towards discovery playground projects on the island. And last but not least, we cap off the year with the third annual Light Up the Aquarium party on December 4, a themed event to support new exhibits and improvements at the Aquarium.

Attending or supporting our fundraising events is a great way to "multi-task". You can network with Belle Isle supporters, enjoy the unique venues on the island, have a great time, make new memories, and help us generate revenue for the park - all at the same time!

**Scott Fountain –  
Photo by Lori Feret**



## BIC OPERATIONS INFO

Summer Ritner, Operations Manager



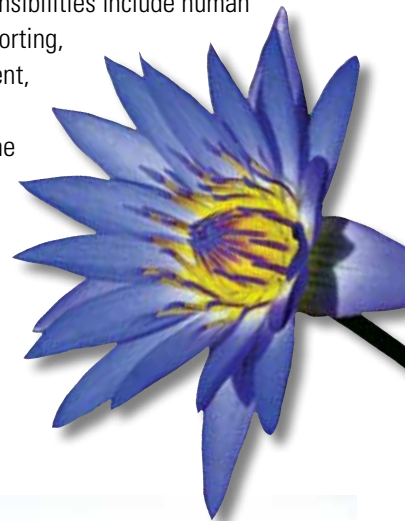
The Belle Isle Conservancy office has experienced significant changes over the past six months. From moving our office location in February to hiring several new full-time staff members, we are continually making strides to mature and professionalize the organization. We are hard at work developing and implementing changes in our administrative, human

resources, financial, and communication systems; the goal of which is to better serve our donors, our partners, the park users, and the community.

We are excited about the growth that we are experiencing and will endeavor to create efficiencies in our organization that allow us to fulfill our mission and our commitment to you.

Summer Ritner joined the Belle Isle Conservancy in April of this year as the Operations Manager. Her responsibilities include human resources, budgeting and financial reporting, grant management, vendor management, office systems updates and special projects implementation. Summer came to the Conservancy from The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) where she worked in operations. She lives near Belle Isle and enjoys swimming and biking on the island.

**Lily Pond the night of the Koi Mixer  
May 1, 2015 – Photo by Lori Feret**



# Past Events



Detroit River  
Water Festival



## ANNUAL BELLE ISLE PARK SPRING CLEAN-UP

Following in our annual tradition, once again about 250 volunteers braved the very cool temperature to participate in our annual Belle Isle Park Spring Clean-Up on **Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>**. After cleaning all around the entire island, they gathered back at the Flynn Pavilion for the hot dog roast. Supplies were provided by: Big Boy Restaurant at E. Grand Boulevard and E. Jefferson Avenue, Towne Club Pop, Absopure Water, Kroger (Troy), Costco (Madison Heights), Better Made Potato Chips, Awrey Bakeries, KIND Bars, McClure's Pickles, Detroit Hardware Co. (gloves), and Brooks Lumber (gloves). Thank you to all the volunteers and to our donors for their continued support.

## DETROIT RIVER WATER FESTIVAL

On a cool, misty morning **Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>** over 650 eighth grade students from 23 Detroit Public School classes descended on Belle Isle for a fun-filled day of environmental education. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Detroit River Water Festival was hosted by the Friends of the Detroit River with support from various partner organizations with over 120 volunteers participating, including presenters, partner organizations and volunteer groups. Presentations covered water and environmental issues focusing on the Detroit River and Great Lakes area, ranging from algal blooms to zebra mussels and their impact on aquatic ecosystems.

## KOI MIXER AT THE AQUARIUM

The Belle Isle Aquarium hosted a special Koi Mixer event to "ring in spring" on **Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>**. Held on the eve of the spring Koi Transfer, guests enjoyed drinks and Japanese cuisine while learning about the progress and initiatives happening at America's oldest aquarium. A Japanese Tea Ceremony took place inside the aquarium alcove; while in front of the building, a drum demonstration was performed to the delight of all. The return of the new weathervane, designed by Bruce Gerlach and sponsored by Butzel Long, was also celebrated.

## SPRING KOI TRANSFER

A beautiful morning embraced the Spring Koi Transfer on **Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>**. This may have been our largest koi transfer yet with an estimated 300 people plus bringing their five-gallon buckets to help move the koi from their winter home inside the aquarium basement to the lily pond between the aquarium and conservatory. This bi-annual event started nine years ago by a handful of volunteers; now, the community is heavily involved. This year the Lovely Lyra Ladies demonstrated their acrobatic skills and Blaze and Ember of Warren's Breakout juggled and performed hula hoop acts entertaining the crowd in front of the aquarium. A hot dog roast was provided to the families that helped. Supplies were provided by: American Coney Island, Towne Club Pop, Absopure Water, Meijer (Detroit), Target (Warren), Uncle Ray's Potato Chips, KIND Bars and McClure's Pickles. Thanks to all who participated and to our donors.

## CINCO DE MAYO

Cinco de Mayo was celebrated at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory on **Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**. In the Show House, visitors gathered for music and food samples from Mexico. The Conservatory Committee labeled plants that are indigenous to Mexico with color-coded signs to make them easy to find. This was to tie our exhibits with the Detroit Institute of Arts "Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo in Detroit" that ran from March 15 through July 12.

## GRAND PRIXMIERE

The PwC Grand Prixmiere, presented by Chevrolet took place on **Friday, May 29<sup>th</sup>** at Belle Isle Park. It was a wonderful evening, chaired by Paula & Steve Kiefer, and a great kick off to Grand Prix weekend. The Belle Isle Conservancy is grateful to the corporate partners and guests who generated more than \$1.1 million for Belle Isle at the 2015 PwC Grand Prixmiere. We are amazed by such generosity at this critical time when we are seeking millions of dollars in investment required to restore and maintain the 982-acre park.



Koi Mixer at  
the Aquarium



Cinco de Mayo



Scott Fountain  
Pewabic Party



Koi Transfer



### SCOTT FOUNTAIN PEWABIC PARTY

Historic Pewabic Pottery hosted over 200 guests on **Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>** for the Belle Isle Conservancy's Scott Fountain Pewabic Tile fundraiser. The event was held during Pewabic's "For the House and Garden Show" and generated nearly \$10,000 towards restoring the Pewabic tiles that were damaged during the repair of the fountain's basin in 2010. Guests enjoyed hors-d'oeuvres, wine, Atwater beer, and music while shopping at Pewabic. Thanks to Linda Barlow for chairing the event!

### MIKE POSNER CONCERT AT BELLE ISLE

Mike Posner brought his coast-to-coast Ninja Show Tour to Detroit and Belle Isle on **Tuesday, July 7<sup>th</sup>**, performing a free non-ticket evening concert at the Bus Stop Shelter across from the Aquarium and Conservatory. The word went out through social media, and the shelter was filled to capacity with about 250 attending. As an encore, Mike sang his new hit, "*Buried in Detroit*", featured in his new EP – The Truth. In 2012, Mike was a special guest at the BIC's Scott Fountain Pewabic Tile fundraiser. He has a special love for Belle Isle as his mother, Roberta Henrion, was President of the Friends of Belle Isle and volunteers with the Belle Isle Conservancy.

### RENAISSANCE EQUESTRIAN'S DREAM TRAIL RIDE

Heavy rain and winds enveloped Belle Isle the morning of **Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup>** causing the cancellation of the 5th annual Renaissance Equestrian's Dream Trail Ride. About eight trailers arrived mostly from Lapeer County, but weather conditions were dangerous with wind blowing debris around. The group was able to schedule a make-up rain date on Saturday, July 11 at Kensington Metro Park. Hope they will return to Belle Isle next year with better weather.

### METRO DETROIT YOUTH DAY

The 33<sup>rd</sup> annual Metro Detroit Youth Day (MDYD) took place on **Wednesday, July 15<sup>th</sup>**. More than 30,000 youths ages 8-15 and 1,600 volunteers converged on Belle Isle's Athletic Field for the day. This year's free event included games, contests, sports clinics, celebrity guest appearances, a petting zoo, lunch and more. 120 Scholarships worth more than \$35,000 were awarded. Children provided the entertainment by singing, dancing, a Youth Day Idol Contest and special performances by the Detroit Opera House Children's Chorus and the Jazz Trio from Michigan State University, Detroit. Ed Deeb, co-founder and chairman of MDYD, stated, "Youth Day is about people and organizations working together to provide kids on summer break a fun-filled day out of the house and participating in supervised, constructive activities with their peers."

### BLISS

This year BLISS events were held on **Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>** and **Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup>**. There is also a BLISS day planned for **Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>** from 10 am – 3 pm. BLISS – Belle Isle Summer Saturdays – is packed with fun for all ages. Activities included: morning yoga in the Conservatory Garden, children's golf and a golf scramble at the Golf Center, MIX 92.3 and WJLB 98 FM with music and concert ticket giveaways, Basketball and Kickball at the Athletic Complex, guided island bicycle tours, instruction by Detroit City Chess Club at the Dossin Museum, outdoor games on the White House lawn, kayak instruction at the beach and an evening outdoor movie by the DIA Detroit Film Theatre on the lighthouse grounds.

### ADOPT-A-BEACH CLEAN UP

An Adopt-A-Beach Belle Isle shoreline clean up took place on **Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup>**. This event is a partnership between Barefoot Wine & Bubbly, the Belle Isle Conservancy and the Alliance for the Great Lakes Adopt-a-Beach™ program to help clean up Great Lakes beaches and shorelines making them barefoot friendly. Registration at Sunset Point assigned the volunteers to clean various locations on the island. This was also a memorial to Mary Waterstone, former president of the Friends of Belle Isle, who lead this event in past years.

### BELLE ISLE EMERGING PATRONS BIKE GIVEAWAY

The Belle Isle Conservancy's Emerging Patrons Council are encouraging biking at the park with a series of bike-friendly activities and improvements. New bike racks will be installed with the proceeds from last Fall's Beer Garden fundraiser and their friend-raiser at the Once Around Belle Isle (OABI) paddle-board event held on **Saturday, August 8<sup>th</sup>**, which included a giveaway of a custom bike from New Belgium Brewing. The Emerging Patrons Council is currently pursuing a partnership for an all-ages bike ride on the island. If you're a young professional interested in getting involved with the Emerging Patrons, contact Council Chair Michelle Srbnovich at [srbnovichm@gmail.com](mailto:srbnovichm@gmail.com).

### AQUARIUM & CONSERVATORY BIRTHDAY PARTY

A celebration was held on **Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup>** to commemorate the 111th birthday of the Aquarium and Conservatory, which originally opened on August 18, 1904. There were arts and crafts and treats for the youngsters who attended.

Scott Fountain  
Pewabic Party



Mike Posner  
Concert



Metro Detroit  
Youth Day



BLISS



# Ongoing Events



Senior  
Power  
Days

## SCIENCE SATURDAYS

The Science Saturday Lecture Series take place in the classroom of the Belle Isle Aquarium at 12 pm, 1 pm and 2 pm. Admission is free. For additional information, check the events calendar on the Belle Isle Conservancy website; the Facebook Page may also have information posted. Upcoming topics are: September 12 – “Ice, Penguins and Leopard Seals, Ecology of Antarctica”, Dr. Orin Gelderoos presenter; October (date TBD) – “Gar Festival”; and November (date TBD) – “Genetics and Evolution of Invasive Species”, Dr. Carol Eunmi Lee presenter.

## YOUTH EDUCATION & KIDS ARTS AND CRAFTS/STORYTELLING

The Youth Education and Arts & Crafts/Storytelling kids Saturday series at the Belle Isle Aquarium is a free, fun experience. For dates, times, subjects and additional information check the events calendar on the Belle Isle Conservancy website; the Facebook Page may also have information posted.

## AQUA-RANGER CLUB

The Aquarium's Aqua-Ranger Club (for children ages 5-13) is a 3-session/week series meeting the last Saturday of each month. Children will be grouped by age – Ages 5-8 meet Sept.-Nov., ages 8-11 meet Jan.-Mar., and ages 11-13 meet Apr.-Jun. Applications are available at the aquarium, and please be aware that space is limited.

## SENIOR POWER DAYS ON BELLE ISLE 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sponsoring a new program called Senior Power Days on Belle Isle – a free 11-event series of recreational and educational programs for senior citizens from Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. The sessions cover topics ranging from senior safety, health concerns, veterans issues, jazz concerts and faith-based activities. Senior Power Days event dates are as follows: July 8, July 22, Aug. 5, Aug. 19, Sept. 9, Sept. 23, Oct. 7, Oct. 21, Nov. 11, Nov. 18 and Dec. 16. For additional information and a schedule of event topics check the website: [http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,4669,7-192-45414\\_45416-356405--Y,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/som/0,4669,7-192-45414_45416-356405--Y,00.html) or Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/SeniorPowerDays>. Information is also posted on the Belle Isle Conservancy website.

## STEWARDSHIP SATURDAYS

Help eradicate Belle Isle's invasive plants on the 3rd Saturday of each month – Sept. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21 and Jan. 16, 2016 – No work day is scheduled for December. Check the BIC's webpage and events calendar for detailed activity information and to sign up for specific projects. We meet directly at the worksites and volunteers sign their waivers ahead of time to streamline the sign-in process. Please no children under age six. All children must be supervised by an adult. If interested in this effort, please contact Laurel Malvitz-Draper at [malvitzl@michigan.gov](mailto:malvitzl@michigan.gov).

## BELLE ISLE PARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee consists of three representatives appointed by the governor, one representative appointed by the Detroit City Council, two representatives appointed by the mayor of the city, and one representative to serve as chair jointly appointed by the governor and the mayor. The Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meetings 9:00 – 11:30 am, are free and open to the public. Dates of upcoming 2015 meetings are, unless otherwise noted on the website: Sept. 17, Oct. 15, Nov. 19 and Dec. 17. Check the DNR – Belle Isle Park website – Advisory Committee - 2015 Meeting Schedule for location, agenda and additional information – [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr) or check the Belle Isle Conservancy website.

## AQUARIUM & CONSERVATORY TOURS

Tours of the Aquarium and of the Conservatory for adults and students, can be arranged by contacting the BIC office at 313-331-7760. We are always in need of new docents for both groups and will train you in this rewarding venture.

## AQUARIUM OUTREACH PROGRAM

Beginning in September, the aquarium's Youth Education Team will be scheduling outreach programs at local schools. Please contact Diane Brischke at 586-441-9382 for further information.



The Belle Isle Conservancy website at <http://www.belleisleconservancy.org> and Facebook Page will have for additional information on these events.

# DON'T MISS THESE Upcoming Events

## THE GARDEN PARTY ON BELLE ISLE

**Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> – Conservatory 5:30 – 7:30 pm** – Tucked between the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory and the Aquarium, the Lily Pond Garden is a favorite for visitors to Belle Isle. The current pond and garden were constructed in 1936 by the Federal Works Progress Administration. After nearly 80 years, the pond and gardens are in need of major restoration. This year's Garden Party will be held on Tuesday, September 15<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 pm in the Conservatory and surrounding gardens. Proceeds from the party will go toward the renovation of this historic area. Tickets can be ordered on the BIC website.



**Construction of the Lily Pond between the Aquarium and the Conservatory 1936 – Photo from Detroit Recreation Dept., Forestry Division**

## BLISS

**Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> – 10:00 am – 3:00 pm** – There is one more BLISS day scheduled on Belle Isle this season – Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. Activities will include: an Adopt-a-Beach cleanup, morning yoga in the Conservatory Gardens, music with MIX 92.3 & FM 98 WJLB at the Remick Music Shell, children's storytelling, Painting with a Twist demonstrations and outdoor games on the White House lawn, chess instruction at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum, kayak instruction at the beach, guided island bicycle tours at the Flynn Pavilion and more. Check the events calendar on the Belle Isle Conservancy website for additional information or the Facebook Page may also have postings.

## POLISH THE JEWEL LEGACY LUNCHEON

**Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> – Conservatory 11:00 am – 1:30 pm** – The Belle Isle Conservancy is thrilled to be hosting "A Diamond in the Rough", the 2015 Polish the Jewel Belle Isle Legacy Luncheon, presented by DTE Energy, on Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> on Belle Isle Park. This annual luncheon – honoring Ruth Roby Glancy, DTE Energy and the Kresge Foundation – historically attracts more than 400 of the region's most prominent women, wearing their favorite shoes and chapeaus, for an afternoon of networking and support of our island gem. Tickets can be ordered on the BIC website.

## FALL KOI TRANSFER

**Date to be Determined (TBD) – Aquarium 10:00 am – 12:00 pm** – The aquarium will be moving the koi from the lily pond back to their winter home in the basement tank of the aquarium. We are currently working to determine a date based on restoration work for the lily pond. Please check postings on the Belle Isle Conservancy website and Facebook Page for the date announcement. Bring your family and your new, clean five-gallon plastic buckets and give us a hand. We will continue until we have all the koi back inside the aquarium. A hot dog lunch will be provided to helpers. Come join in on the fun!



**Waiting for the koi to be wrangled by the volunteers in the lily pond November 9, 2014 – Photo by Lori Feret**

**Families wait in line to get a koi for their bucket to take into the aquarium at the Fall Koi Transfer November 9, 2014 – Photo by Lori Feret**



# WHAT IS HAPPENING *Around*



## REMEMBER DETROIT'S AMUSEMENT PARKS?

By Lori Feret

Around Detroit there was: Bob-Lo Island, Sugar Island, Tashmoo Park, Jefferson Beach, Edgewater Park, and Walled Lake Amusement Park to name a few. All are long gone.

Old-timers still recall the fabulous ELECTRIC PARK – Detroit's first "mammoth amusement enterprise" located at E. Jefferson Avenue and the Belle Isle Bridge. Upon its opening in 1906, the Detroit Free Press claimed, "Detroit's Electric Park will be one of the largest in the world..." Owned by Arthur Gaulker and family, it was also known as – Wolff's Park, Pikes Peak and Lunar Pier.

Originally, it was a trolley park at the end of three streetcar lines. There was a large windmill at the entrance with a sign, "The Boardwalk: Just for Fun", a giant Ferris wheel, aerial swings and various other mechanical rides. Live headline acts entertained: the Great Chick (cyclist and comedian), Mademoiselles Patrice (flying trapeze), and Miss Nellie Trumbell (soprano). People flocked to see an interactive scale model of the deadly 1889 Johnstown, PA, flood. Several roller coasters drew thrill seekers; one coaster featured a sign, "Trip

Thru the Clouds - Detroit's Greatest Ride."

The Palace Gardens dance hall burned in 1911, replaced in 1912, by Palais de Danse, designed by Charles

Rosenweig, and built over the water. It was one of three building in the park to house the 1916 Detroit Auto Show. The John Philip Sousa Band among others came to play there. Ragtime jazz was performed at the Pier Ballroom designed by Albert Kahn. In 1927, fire destroyed the Coliseum, pier, boardwalk and concession stands.

After many legal battles during the 1920s, the city condemned the park in 1927, and the structures were razed in 1928. This made way for a public park officially named "Gabriel Richard Park" in 1936. Gabriel Richard Park is now a prime spot for bird watching; see the Crain's Business News article from July 29, 2015.



**One of the Electric Park Roller Coasters with the sign "Trip Through The Clouds Detroit's Greatest Ride" – Photo from WSU Library**

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE NOTES

Roberta Henrion, Historic Preservation Committee

This summer, plans are underway to reinstall the Belle Isle Michigan Marker near its original location at the northeast corner of the Belle Isle Casino. No one knows why the marker was removed. It was found in the Maintenance Yard in good shape.

In 2014, Kimberly Johnson, Commissioner of the Michigan Historical Commission contacted the Belle Isle Conservancy's Historic Preservation Committee to assist in relocating the "missing" marker. Former City of Detroit, Belle Isle Park Manager, Keith Flourney was instrumental in providing information regarding the markers last known location.

New posts are on order and the marker will be reinstalled by the DNR before the end of the season. Joe Hall, DNR Park Supervisor will coordinate installation.

This Marker is one of three in the park. One is in front of the Police Station commemorating the first Police Radio Dispatch, and the other commemorates Ransom Eli Olds located on Central Avenue between Casino Way and Muse Road.

The inscription on the marker reads: *"This island, a jewel in the hearts of Detroiters, has provided shining memories for visitors of all ages. About 1845, this site received its present name, Belle Isle, in honor of Governor Lewis Cass' daughter Isabella. On September 23, 1879, this island was purchased by the city of Detroit for \$200,000. Early in the 1880's, the Board of Park Commissioners consulted with Fredrick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park in New York City, to plan the development of Belle Isle as a public park. Belle Isle is now a unique island park covering 981 acres and attracting millions of visitors annually. Its most popular features include a beach, the Casino restaurant, beautiful formal gardens, Scott fountain, riding stables, an aquarium, a conservatory, nature interpretive center, and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum."* Information on this marker can be found at [http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMR6X\\_Belle\\_Isle](http://www.waymarking.com/waymarks/WMR6X_Belle_Isle)



**Photo of Belle Isle Michigan Historic Marker in its original location near the Casino – Photo from Waymarking.com**

# Belle Isle

## On With Field Trips

Amy Emmert, School Program Director Belle Isle Aquarium and Conservatory

It was a very busy year at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory. Thanks to the generous grant from the GM Foundation, 26 fourth grade field trips were held at the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory this past year. An amazing 17 schools and a total of 671 students participated in our field trips.

Twenty volunteers from the Aquarium and Conservatory logged an incredible 832 hours conducting the field trips. These amazing volunteers set up tables/chairs, prepared clipboards, cultivated worms, served juices, led tours, demonstrated fossils, fed invasive species, lugged lunch coolers and altogether wowed the students.

Some of the feedback from the teachers included:

- ***"Staff was very kind and inviting."***
- ***"Activities were well paced and structured."***
- ***"Objectives were explained for each activity."***
- ***"Preparatory information sent to the school helped the students maximize the benefits of the field trip."***
- ***"Thank you!!"***

In response to what did your students like the most, one teacher wrote: "Drinking the juice of course! Students liked the tree that looked like sponges, touching the mussels, seeing the electric eel...those were the highlights for them."

I am excited to announce that the GM foundation has again funded the field trips for the Detroit and Hamtramck public schools for this school year. The field trips will run from January through mid-May with volunteer training to be conducted this fall. If you are interested in becoming part of our remarkable crew, please contact me at [amyemmert@belleisleconservancy.org](mailto:amyemmert@belleisleconservancy.org).

Student from Dickerson East Elementary School of Hamtramck gather to learn about the carnivorous plants at the Conservatory.

Students from Neinas Elementary give "thumbs up" for juice tasting in the Tropical Room at the Conservatory with docent Ken Muha.



Jill Duncan explains the fresh-water invasive species tank at the aquarium to the students on the field trip.



Fourth grade students with hands-on invasive mussels at the aquarium.



**DAFFODIL PLANTING** – Planting will take place the last week in September and the first week in October. Volunteers are needed to help plant the 61,000 daffodil bulbs donated by the Michigan Woman's National Farm & Garden Association and the DNR. Firm dates will be available in the fall.

**LIGHT UP THE AQUARIUM** – Friday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Aquarium. Plans are being worked on for the 3rd annual Light Up The Aquarium fundraiser for the Belle Isle Aquarium. There will be another great silent auction. Watch the Belle Isle Conservancy website and Facebook Page for future announcements. A Save-The-Date card will be mailed soon.

**HOLIDAY STROLL** – Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at the Conservatory, Aquarium and Dossin Great Lakes Museum from 5 – 8 pm. Another free, fun holiday season family event is being planned. Lights, decorations, donuts, hot cider, the Deep River Choir, be sure to attend.

**NEW YEAR'S DAY TOAST AT THE BOAT CLUB** – 2016 seems so far away, but it will be here sooner than you think. Be sure to save **New Year's Day (January 1<sup>st</sup>) from 2 – 5 pm** for this wonderful event at the Boat Club.

**SHIVER ON THE RIVER** – Time flies so very fast, and Shiver On The River will be here before you know it. Mark your calendar for **February 6th, 2016, from 10 am – 3 pm**. Don't miss this fun ecological fair.

# THE ISLAND BECOMES MORE ENJOYABLE

Lariel Turner, BIC Summer Intern

With a reminiscence of its past and an optimistic outlook for a brighter future forthcoming, the Belle Isle Conservancy has done exceedingly well at partnering with the DNR and the city to revitalize the island. I, as a proud Detroit citizen, ponder the importance of revitalization without robust community engagement.

Through my experience I've witnessed a detachment between the outside perception of Belle Isle and the views of the island held by Detroit residents. The Conservancy has received feedback concerning access to the island, fees, and excessive security. As youth underestimate the opportunities for leisure and fun, the elderly struggle to find their place on the island.

I am excited to witness the mending of those blurred lines as the island becomes more enjoyable. Often times, organizations utilize the phrase "The Community" when referring to the individuals they seek to serve. My hope for the Conservancy is that a more in-depth understanding of what "The Community" comprises begins to flourish and that the needs of each interdependent community are met as we move forward.

Lariel Turner is interning this summer through the Youth Connection program. She will be a sophomore in the fall at Bowling Green State University and is studying journalism. Lariel has been working on updating the Belle Isle Conservancy website, creating 3-new mailings, entering data and supporting general office activities. Her favorite thing about Belle Isle is the giant slide.

## BIC WELCOMES GENEVIEVE TO THE BELLE ISLE FAMILY

Genevieve Nowak, Volunteer Coordinator



Let me begin by extending my most sincere thank you to everyone for their warm welcome to the Belle Isle family! I am very excited to have joined your team and look forward to great work together.

To tell you a little about myself, I have a Master's Degree in Social Work from Wayne State University with a concentration in Community Development and Non-Profit Leadership, and a B.F.A in Photography. My post graduate work includes managing programs serving women and children experiencing homelessness. It was then that I became fascinated with the impact a community has on its local institutions and vice versa. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with a community's greatest resource- its volunteers!

Before coming to the Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC), I was part of a small team of Volunteer Coordinators at the Detroit Institute of Arts, where I was truly able to dive into the dynamics of volunteer management. In just my first couple of weeks with the BIC, I have witnessed the passion and dedication of our volunteers, and I am eager to become a strong resource to them so that they can continue to be the success that they already are! Again, I am so grateful to have been welcomed into the Belle Isle family, and I look forward to working with everyone that makes up this wonderful organization!



**Deloitte Team volunteers painting the fence by the Lily Pond – June 5, 2015**



## WE OPENED, AND THE PEOPLE KEEP COMING

Lori Feret and Jennifer Boardman

A famous movie quote stated, "If you build it, he will come." Well, in the case of the Belle Isle Aquarium (BIA), we opened, and the people came. Attendance keeps increasing. For the summer (June 5 – Sept. 4), we added Fridays to our open hours. After Labor Day, we will return to our regular schedule – Saturday and Sunday 10 am – 4 pm. The last weekend in July we had over 5,200 visitors at the Aquarium. June 2015, saw 15,551 visitors; while in July, we had 21,712 visitors.

We are excited about the BIA's partnership with the DNR to operate the DNR's 3,000 gallon aquarium tank at the Outdoor Adventure Center (OAC) and to provide tanks in the BIA to quarantine and care for native fish collected by the DNR. When the fish are cleared, they will go on display at the OAC – the first facility of its kind in the U.S.

Other achievements this past spring and summer have been:

- Installation of the weathervane funded by Butzel Long slated for late August.
- Completion of the restoration of the cupola skylight, and the restoration of the final skylight.
- Restoration of the Neptune cartouche has begun.
- Cleaning of the green opaline tiles lining our ceiling began in preparation for ceiling repair. With a grant funding a number of renovations, we are bringing in a restoration artist from Conservation and Museum Services to properly address repair work done on the ceiling over the years. Another item funded by the grant will be a renovation to our bathrooms this fall.
- Five more tanks were restored by ASL American Sealants, Inc., and two new exhibits were added: the Panther Chameleon and the Upside-Down Jellyfish – Come meet the new members of our family!
- Tankscaping and tank restoration work is underway on one of the reef tanks and a brackish water tank exhibit.

- We are working with the DNR on tree removal around the lily pond and a restoration of the lily pond itself.
- Thanks to the Grosse Pointe Farms Questers #147, we have a new digital sign system and were able to refurbish the old display case.
- Field lessons to fourth graders from Detroit Public Schools were provided by the BIA Education Team, Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) staff and volunteers, and BIA volunteers as part of a General Motors Corps. (GM) grant.
- Youth education was extremely popular this summer with interactive and imaginative 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday programs by Gloria and Diane Brishke. They are introducing a new Aqua-Rangers Club this fall funded by grants from GM and the EPA. The Detroit Opera House invited our Outreach Team, Diane and Gloria Brishke, to host an Aquarium Youth Education Outreach there in April.
- The Science Saturdays Lecture series continues with the efforts of the Science and Education Committee led by Dr. Jeffrey Ram.
- A large number of groups have contacted our Office Manager to schedule docent lead tours of the Aquarium, and our Events Coordinator has scheduled a few weddings, photo sessions, cocktail receptions, dinner parties, and birthday parties.
- We held a Koi Gala on the eve of the Spring Koi Transfer and on August 15<sup>th</sup> celebrated the 111<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Aquarium and Conservatory.

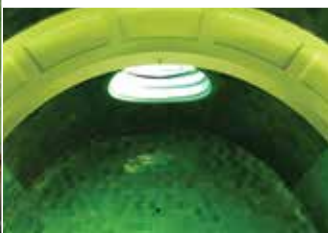
It has been a very busy season at the BIA with a long list of accomplishments that keeps the ball rolling!



**Aquarium with completed cupola skylight August 2015 – Photo by Lori Feret**

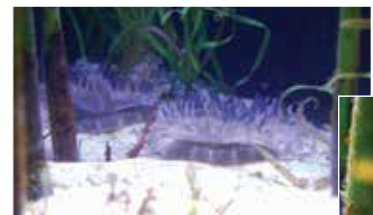


**Aquarium with completed cupola skylight August 2015 – Photo by Lori Feret**



**Cleaning of the ceiling tiles by the front skylight – July 2015**

**New digital sign system and restoration of old display case thanks to the help of Grosse Pointe Questers #147 – From Left to Right: 1) Elizabeth McCormick, President, 2) Rosemary Bay, Project Co-Chairperson, 3) Peggy Maycock, Project Co-Chairperson, 4) Anne Musial, Vice President – June 2015**



**Upside-Down Jellyfish – Photo by Lori Feret**

**Gloria and Diane Brishke at the Detroit Opera House with Aquarium Youth Education Outreach – April 2015**





Fall 2014 workday briefing for Stewardship Saturday – Photo by Ted Hejka

## NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP ON THE ISLAND

By Andrew McDowell, IS ECC Chair, Landscape Architect, SmithGroupJJR

The Belle Isle Conservancy's Island Stewardship Environmental Conservation Committee (IS ECC) is fortunate to have a small, but steady group of volunteers, but we're always looking to grow. Belle Isle is a large park and there are many natural features on the island, most notably the wet-mesic flatwoods. We are looking for Detroit locals and environmentalists to join the IS ECC to guide

environmental stewardship, advocate for nature on the island and support DNR-led ecological restoration initiatives. Expertise in the natural environment is not required, although highly desired. Constructive attitude and enthusiasm for the outdoors are a must. In order to grow our stewardship efforts, we first need people to champion our cause.

The committee meets quarterly to review the past quarter's activities and to plan for the upcoming months' priorities. In addition to participating in quarterly meetings, the committee members contribute in at least one of the initiatives set forth by the committee.



Saw-whet Owl seen in the woods on Belle Isle during a Stewardship Saturday 11-15-2014 – Photo by Ted Hejka

Stewardship Saturdays continue to be a cornerstone of our committee, held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month (except December). This past April, May, and June, 23 volunteers logged 93 hours towards flagging invasive shrub species south of the Nashua trail and pulling two patches of invasive Garlic Mustard along Central Avenue. We look forward to a growing volunteer force on the upcoming dates: August 15, September 19, October 17, and November 21.

The following are a few specialized, key roles that we are looking to fill:

- **Workday co-leaders**
- **Shrub ID expert**
- **Early Detection, Rapid Response Team**
- **Bird Surveys**
- **Frog and Toad Surveys**

Please spread the word and share Laurel's or my email with anyone who might be interested in serving on this committee for filling the key roles listed above:

Laurel Malvitz email address:  
MalvitzL@michigan.gov

Andrew McDowell email address:  
andrew.mcdowell@smithgroupjjr.com

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AT THE CONSERVATORY

By Janice Ellison

When the DNR took over the management of Belle Isle in 2014, the Conservatory was facing several serious challenges: infrastructure, an old and redundant plant collection, lackluster gardens and a breakdown of the volunteer program.



**Conservatory Show House lush south wall plantings – Photo by Jan Ellison**

Primary is the failing infrastructure of the facility itself. Despite the installation of new pipes and fin tubing in 2007 and new in-house boilers in 2011, the heating system remained inadequate in the cold temperatures of Michigan winters. Combined with electrical power outages on the island and an ancient electrical system within the Conservatory, there were several incidents where power was lost and the plant collection was seriously impacted. The DNR immediately picked up on this and began short term and long range planning for the heating system. The DNR is preparing a RFP for a design/build contractor to repair the existing boilers and pipes to stabilize both the Conservatory's and Aquarium's heating systems. Their future plans are to completely overhaul the climate control systems to meet modern standards for aquatic and floral collections and visitor comfort. Additionally, the Conservatory's dome is in need of a complete restoration as are all the "houses" within the building including new venting systems, glass replacement and electrical and plumbing upgrades.

The second challenge is that the Conservatory's collection had not been refurbished in years. While there were hundreds of plants, many were repeats and at the end of their life cycle. Since the hiring of the Head Horticulturist Jeremy Kemp and the four DNR Conservation



**Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory entrance – Photo by Jan Ellison**

Corps workers, they have been afforded the time to work in each house removing spent and surplus plants. The Belle Isle Conservancy (BIC) has been fortunate to have several

garden clubs and individuals donate funds to the Conservatory, which are being utilized to add to the collection. The Lincoln Park and Garfield Park Conservatories in Chicago have also donated plant material to us with BIC funding to transport them back to Detroit. As a result, you will see displays with a greater diversity, plants that better fit the houses' particular environment and creative displays within each area.

Thirdly, the gardens have been in dire need of refurbishing. The Perennial Garden had become overgrown with grass and weeds. The existing specimens are being moved to other areas within the sunken garden and gazebo areas with plans to create an arboretum to

replace the perennial garden. Shrubs have been trimmed and removed from the back fence at the end of the sidewalk opening up vistas to the Dossin and Carillon area. The Lily Pond is in need of a complete renovation of the pond and restoration of the garden areas. There is still a long way to go with the gardens, but there have been great improvements.

The volunteer program had been dwindling in numbers,

but there is a new spirit of cooperation. Many groups and individuals have worked to help in the Conservatory, gardens and with our educational programs. With the help of our new volunteer coordinator, Genevieve Nowak, we hope to grow our volunteer hours and have a greater impact on the Conservatory.

By working in cooperation with the DNR and its employees and by generating interest and funding for various projects and needs, we hope to take the Conservatory well into its second 100 years.



**Conservatory Tropical House walkway into the Palm House – Photo by Jan Ellison**



**Bananas in bloom in the Conservatory Tropical House – Photo by Jan Ellison**

# DNR ANNUAL REPORT ON BELLE ISLE SUMMARY

Submitted by Jacquelyn Baker, Communication Coordinator Michigan DNR-Parks & Recreation Division

The annual report is now available on the park website, [www.belleislepark.org](http://www.belleislepark.org). The report gives a great sense of the many community contributions and partnerships which have helped restore Belle Isle in its first year as a state park. A few highlights from the report:

## Visitation

Between 2013 and 2014, attendance increased for all of the major island attractions: Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory (+45,400), Belle Isle Nature Zoo (+6,850), Belle Isle Aquarium (+37,385) and Dossin Great Lakes Museum (+15,465). MDOT traffic counters recorded more than 2 million visitors since June 1, 2014.

## Investment

Between November 2013 (when the initial lease agreement was signed between the City of Detroit and the DNR) and September 30, 2014 (the end of the state fiscal year), Belle Isle received an investment of \$11.89 million, including \$1.56 million in grant funding. Funding was received from AmeriCorps, U.S. Forest Service, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Coastal Zone Management, Great Lakes Fisheries Trust Fund and other grant sources.

**Conservatory – Crinum blooming  
in the Palm House 3-21-2015 –  
Photo by Jeremy Kemp**



## Vendors

In 2014 the DNR awarded contracts to 11 food vendors and 13 service providers. These contracts not only provide highly-desired services to island visitors, but also support the local economy, with 11 of these contracts being for Detroit businesses. In addition to the continuing services of inflatable rentals, party equipment rentals, disc golf and pedicab rides, Belle Isle visitors can now enjoy beach umbrella and chair rentals, meal, snack and dessert options, porta-potties, both electric and horse-drawn carriage rides, kayak rentals, toy sales and more.

## 2015 efforts

Priorities for 2015 will include heating and ventilation system replacement, recreation structure improvements, tree plantings, trail improvements and athletic complex renovation (plus ongoing efforts such as restroom restorations). A strategic plan was also developed in December 2014 to guide and focus the Belle Isle enhancement efforts. The plan incorporated input from BIPAC, the DNR, Belle Isle Conservancy, partners and the public, and will help to ensure progress in the five major areas of Safe and clean park; customer-oriented thinking; stewardship and community spaces; partnership and alliances; and continuous improvement.

**Queens Bridge and Lake Tacoma 7-2015 –  
Photo by Jeremy Kemp**



# MICHIGAN STATE PARK RECREATION PASSPORT

Submitted by Jolene Priest, Urban Communications Specialist Public Information Office/Executive Division Department of Natural Resources

The Recreation Passport is now required on all passenger vehicles entering Belle Isle Park consistent with all other Michigan state parks. Recreation Passports can be purchased from a park ranger at the visitor contact station on the island, located on Sunset Drive – after crossing the MacArthur Bridge, take the road to the right going toward the Scott Fountain and Sunset Point. The visitor contact station will be open for Recreation Passport purchases from 6 am to 9 pm every day from May through September. If you already have your Recreation Passport, there is a lane to the left side of the booth where you can pass through slowly without stopping.

Recreation Passports can also be purchased at the following locations in downtown Detroit:

- **Outdoor Adventure Center**  
([www.michigan.gov/outdooradventure](http://www.michigan.gov/outdooradventure)), located at 1801 Atwater Street at the corner of Atwater and Orleans Streets (in the former Globe Building). The Outdoor Adventure Center is open 8 am to 5 pm Monday-Friday.
- **Milliken State Park and Harbor**, located at 1900 Atwater Street. The administrative office is open 8 am to 4 am Monday-Friday.

The Recreation Passport is also available for purchase:

- With the Secretary of State during license plate registration renewal (at any branch office, online or kiosk)
- At any Michigan State Park and recreation area
- Online, **for non-Michigan registered vehicle ONLY**, by visiting [www.michigan.gov/estore](http://www.michigan.gov/estore) and by clicking on “State Park Recreation Passport” on the left navigation bar

**Conservatory & Levi Barbour Statue at dawn 7-2015 – Photo by Jeremy Kemp**



The Recreation Passport is \$11 for Michigan-registered vehicles and \$5 for motorcycles. A daily motor vehicle permit is available for \$9 for non-Michigan registered vehicles. An annual motor vehicle permit is available for \$31 for non-Michigan registered vehicles. This includes vehicles belonging to persons traveling from out of state to reunions or other shelter events, as well as non-Michigan rental vehicles. Motor vehicle permits for non-Michigan registered vehicles can be purchased at the park or online at [www.michigan.gov/estore](http://www.michigan.gov/estore) by clicking on “State Park Recreation Passport.”

Pedestrians, bicyclists and those using public transportation can enter the park for free and do not need the passport.

The Recreation Passport helps fund and gains access to all 102 Michigan state parks, recreation areas, state forest campgrounds and non-motorized trail heads and boat launches. It also assists in improving neighborhood parks through the Recreation Passport community grants program.

More information about the Recreation Passport can be found at [www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport](http://www.michigan.gov/recreationpassport)

**Conservatory 4-18-2015 – Photo by Jeremy Kemp**



# BOARD MEMBERS:

## Board of Directors

The Belle Isle Conservancy is governed by a 19-member board of directors, including two appointees from the City of Detroit and one from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

**Sarah Earley, Chair**  
Community Volunteer

**Ethan Vinson, Esq., Vice Chair**  
Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Aho

**Paul Huxley, Treasurer**  
Strategic Staffing Solutions

**Joyce Hayes Giles, Secretary**  
Community Volunteer

**Kate Beebe**  
Katherine Beebe & Associates

**Dawn A. Bilobran**  
The Christman Company

**Ed Deeb**  
Founder & Chairman Michigan Youth  
Appreciation Foundation

**Janice Ellison**  
Community Volunteer

**Cynthia Ford**  
Community Volunteer

**Judy Jonna**  
Healing Solutions

**Alicia B. Masse**  
Alderney Advisors, LLC

**Vance Patrick**  
R. V. Patrick Construction

**Shani J. Penn**  
Education Achievement Authority

**Buzz Thomas**  
The Thomas Group Consulting, Inc.

**Marilyn Tuchow**  
Community Volunteer

## EX-OFFICIO MEMBER

**Michelle Sbrinovich**  
Emerging Patrons Council

## MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES REPRESENTATIVE

**Ron Olson**  
Chief, Parks and Recreation Division

## CITY OF DETROIT REPRESENTATIVES

**Alicia Bradford**  
Director Detroit Recreation Department  
Mayoral Appointee

**Councilman James Tate**  
Detroit City Council

## BELLE ISLE CONSERVANCY STAFF

**Michele Hodges**  
President

**Katy Wyerman**  
Director of Resource Development

**Summer Ritner**  
Operations Manager

**Genevieve Nowak**  
Volunteer Coordinator

**Stephanie Bowen**  
Administrative Assistant

# MISSION:

*Protect, preserve, restore and enhance the  
natural environment, historic structures and  
unique character of Belle Isle as a public park  
for the enjoyment of all—now and forever.*

BELLE ISLE CONSERVANCY  
[www.BelleIsleConservancy.org](http://www.BelleIsleConservancy.org)

300 River Place Drive | Suite 2800 | Detroit, MI 48207  
phone (313) 331-7760 | fax (313) 331-1500



Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter  
and visit us at [www.belleisleconservancy.org](http://www.belleisleconservancy.org)  
for more news, events, updates and more!

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

2	The President's Report
3	Development News
3	BIC Operations Info
4-7	Events
8	Historical Articles
9	Education News
10	Volunteer News
11	Aquarium Updates
12	Stewardship News
13	Conservatory Updates
14 & 15	DNR News

# NEWSLETTER

*Nature. People. Places.*

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BELLE ISLE  
CONSERVANCY



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