

LANSING COMMUNITY NEWS

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"Not quite paradise, but a nice place to live."

March 27, 1997 ♦♦♦ Vol. II No. 13



95% of Project May Be In The Village of Lansing:

CU Considers Major Ornithology Lab Expansion

By Matthew Shulman

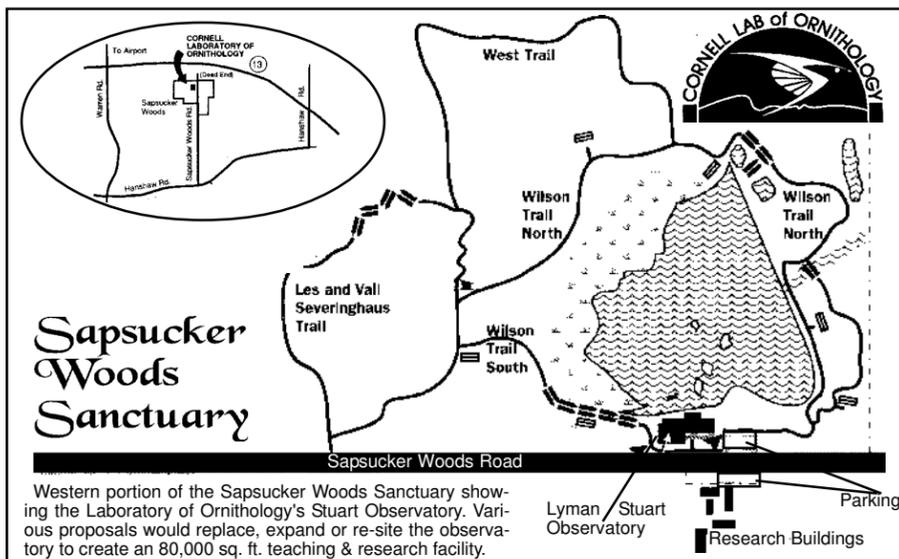
Cornell University has recently held a series of meetings with officials from the Towns of Ithaca and Dryden and the Village of Lansing about a feasibility study to create a 80,000 square foot teaching and research facility to expand, replace or re-site the existing Lyman Stuart Observatory at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The university's 200 acre Sapsucker Woods site straddles the three municipalities just south of Route 13 near the Tompkins County Airport.

Village of Lansing officials briefed by Cornell included Acting Planning Board Chair Steven Halevy, Code Enforcement Officer Ben Curtis and Conservation Advisory Council Chair Jon Reis.

"We're simply letting local officials know that it might be coming," said Cornell's Community Relations spokesperson John Gutenberger. "If the program is ultimately recommended, the environmental and permit review process would involve all three."

The Laboratory's current facilities consist of thirteen structures with a total of 50,000 square feet. Though three additions have been added to the Lyman Stuart Observatory since it was built in 1957, university administrators consider it inadequate for the Laboratory's programs.

In the last five years, the Laboratory's sponsored research has grown by 380 percent and staffing has increased 43 percent. Membership has more than doubled to 18,000 in the last decade. Following an internal review of the laboratory's current and



future needs, the university decided to maintain the program at its present location, in large part due to the acreage required for the bird sanctuary.

The feasibility study contract was awarded in December, 1996 to the Hillier Group of Princeton, New Jersey. It will review options to expand, replace and re-site the observatory.

The study will initially consider adding to the existing observatory building next to the pond within the boundaries of the Village of Lansing. While the building/site interaction does require a natural landscape design, the university is not committed to

this location if the Hillier Group defines a "more prudent" setting.

Subject to the results of the study, the project may construct up to 60,000 square feet of additional permanent office, research, visitor and library space. This space would house the Systemics, Bioacoustics, Conservation Science, Natural Sounds and Bird Population Studies programs. In addition, current plans call for an undefined number of temporary buildings under a separate and coordinated project.

Though projected cost figures have not been disclosed, university officials confirm from past experience that teaching and re-

search facilities often come in at \$200-\$250 per square foot. Should this be the case at Sapsucker Woods, construction costs alone could exceed the \$15 million mark, not including the temporary buildings. Architectural fees, wetlands mitigation and a maintenance endowment would add to these costs.

One factor affecting cost is the presence of wetlands and building appropriate sub-structures in such conditions. "We know that there are wetlands on the present site," said Gutenberger. In its internal publications, the university has stressed the need for project sensitivity and wetland mitigation.

"We're years away from breaking ground," emphasized John W. Fitzpatrick, Louis Agassiz Fuertes Director of the Laboratory of Ornithology, as he pointed out that no funding commitments for the expansion are yet in place. However, he noted that the laboratory will soon have a total of five, full-time endowed faculty positions and that, "the university is committed to building the world's best place to study birds."

"We're on a major trajectory of accomplishment," said Fitzpatrick. In the past 20 years, citizen science has become a national pastime, he explained. Birding is no longer just a medium for enjoyment but appreciation with a purpose. People record their observations and send them to our central clearinghouse where the data can be processed to understand bird population dynamics. This information can be used to project population trends, habitat changes and to develop strategies to protect nature.

Technical Training & On-The-Job Internships = Vo-Pro Careers

Lansing High student Wayne Leonard, 18, has known that he wants to work with engines since he was ten. Michael Joseph left Lansing High in 1975 and decided three years ago to upgrade his job skills. Both of them have found challenging training and are optimistic about their future careers thanks to BOCES' vocational education program and the support of heavy equipment teacher Bob DeMonstoy.

Wayne's Path

Wayne's is the classic BOCES' story. The Lansing senior comes to BOCES' Warren Road campus for 2 1/2 hours a day, five days a week for specialized training in diesel mechanics and pursues his high school diploma with academic courses (English, US History, Economics, etc.) at Bobcat High in the afternoons.

"Since I was a kid, I'd help people with broken cars," recalled Wayne. "I could fix 'em and the people would go away happy."

Wayne started his BOCES' course work last year in automotive mechanics, but switched to heavy equipment. The BOCES approach mixes text, handout and overhead-based classroom instruction and puts the acquisition of that knowledge to the test with hands-on exercises on real engines.

Wayne and his classmates started out working on and understanding the guts of engine elements and moved on to the interaction of the elements in engine systems. Right now, Wayne's to rebuild a diesel engine. "The toughest part is patience," he said. "I'm becoming more patient."

Once a student has begun to master the basics of his or her trade, BOCES encourages on-the-job internships where acquired knowledge can come into contact with the



IN CLASS - Teacher Bob DeMonstoy (ctr) shows Lansing students Michael Joseph (l) and Wayne Leonard (r) the placement of a rocker arm assembly on a 350 Cummin's Big Cam.

real world of work.

Put yourself in Wayne's shoes and you can understand why an internship is a little frightening. Sure, you've worked hard in the classroom, but who are you going to meet? What will they think of you? Will you be able to live up to their expectations?

When Wayne expressed uncertainty about a job placement working with heavy equipment at the Lansing Town Barn, teacher Bob DeMonstoy transformed Wayne's hesitancy into an opportunity for growth and sent him to BOCES career services coordinator, Martha Clymer.

Ms. Clymer helped Wayne treat the internship application process as a "dry run" for the job search process he'll use at the end of his BOCES training: contacting the potential intern supervisor, filling out application forms and role-playing job interviews.

Despite his initial reluctance, Wayne



ON THE JOB - Gerry Sharpsteen gives Wayne Leonard a few pointers about brakes on Wayne's first day at his on-the-job internship at the Town of Lansing town barn.

followed through and recently began his 45 hour internship with the Lansing Highway Department under the tutelage of Pete Larsen and his crew.

Mike Joseph's Path

Walk into the heavy equipment shop and watch Mike Joseph tinker on a rocker arm assembly. With his steady concentration (and full beard) you'd be forgiven if you thought he was the teacher. Mike's an adult BOCES student learning the same skills as his high school colleagues, but with a broader set of life experiences.

When Mike Joseph left school in '75, it was possible to get a decent job without a diploma, he says. But even with jobs available, life was "a difficult climb." He worked for 16 years as a maintenance janitor in Tompkins County. "I worked real hard, but had a hard time with books and written instructions."

In 1993, Mike went to the Adult Learning Center on the Elmira Road to upgrade his education. Before he went to the Learning Center, Mike could read but just couldn't put together what he'd just read. "The letters would sort of switch on me," he said.

The Learning Center tested Mike and found out he was dyslexic in three ways: two involving sight and one involving hearing. With the help he received there, he not only can read and remember, but enjoys reading. "I worked really hard to get my academics up to come to BOCES," Mike said proudly. Mike's not only learning a trade at BOCES that will earn him a living, but credits BOCES with giving him a whole new outlook on life.

"I love it here," said Mike. "I love working with a team to figure out what needs to be done and doing it. I've accomplished more than I set out to do."

The path's not yet done for Mike. He, too, is in the process of locating his on-the-job internship. And as he approaches graduation, he's still got to find that permanent job. But he's learned to deal with and overcome dyslexia, acquired a skilled trade and developed the confidence in his special ability to persevere.

Teacher Bob DeMonstoy takes a great deal of pride in students like Wayne and Mike. "Each student comes with different skills, experiences and abilities," explained DeMonstoy. "We work to build a team and try to give them a sense of ownership in the program, in the tools and in the learning process."

P.S. - "When you write the article, don't forget to thank Mr. "D" for his patience working with us." - Mike Joseph



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