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Late October 2012
www.mynorthwoodscall.com

Vol. 59 No. 3
Digital Delivery
\$2.50



Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

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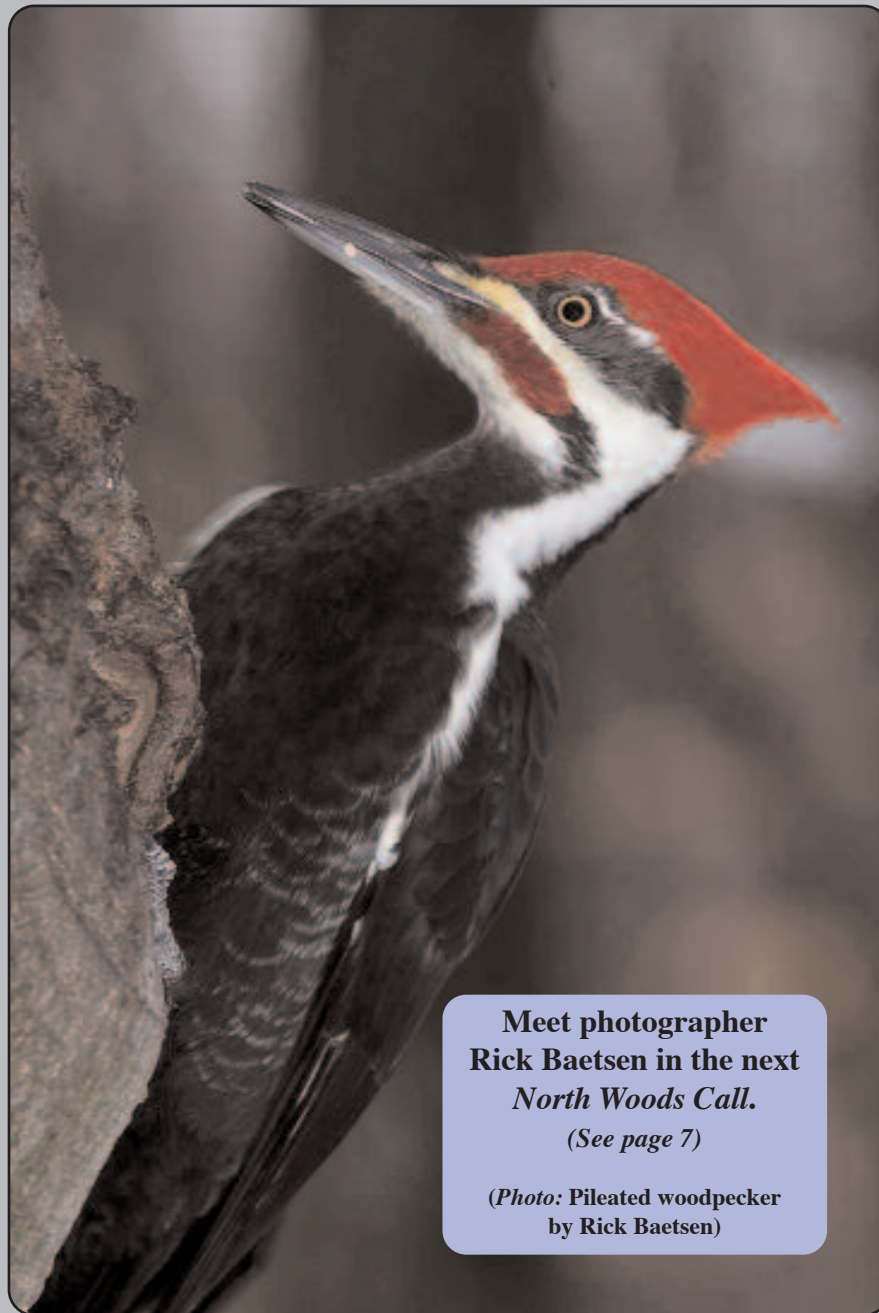
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Meet photographer
Rick Baetsen in the next
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(Photo: Pileated woodpecker
by Rick Baetsen)

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Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

North Woods Notes



“EHD” TOLL GROWS: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources now says more than 10,400 deer have died as the result of the outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in the state. These deaths have occurred in at least 39 counties, they said—the hardest hit being Ionia County with 2,184 deaths and Kent County with 1,604 deaths reported. The disease is caused by a type of biting fly and DNR officials said the die-off will likely end after the first deep frost of the season. There is no evidence that humans can contract the EHD virus, they said, either from the midge, or from handling and eating venison.

CONSERVATION GRANT: Ducks Unlimited has been awarded a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant to conserve key wetland habitat in western Michigan. The organization and its partners will use this grant to protect a minimum of 1,687 acres of wetlands and associated grasslands in 12 counties. They will also restore approximately 300 acres of wetlands and 100 acres of grasslands.

RESOURCE STEWARDS: The next scheduled meeting of the Resource Stewards is Wednesday, December 5, at Jay's Sporting Goods in Clare. Starting times have changed. The general membership meeting will begin at 11:50 a.m., instead of 11:30 a.m., and run until 3 p.m. The board of directors will meet that same day, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

FUR-BEARING ANIMALS: Anyone who traps or hunts fur-bearing animals—even on your own farmland or private property—must have a valid fur-harvester license. Trapping season for fox and coyote, as well as hunting season for gray and red fox, began October 15 and runs until March 1. Raccoon and coyote may be taken on private property by a property owner or designee all year without a license or written permit if done to protect private property from damage.

U.P. ADVISORY COUNCILS: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is taking applications for open positions on the eastern and western Upper Peninsula Citizens' Advisory Councils. The councils are designed to advise the DNR on regional programs and policies, identify areas in which the department can be more effective, and offer insight and guidance. The deadline to apply is November 1. For more information, contact Upper Peninsula Regional Coordinator Stacy Welling Haughey at (906) 228-6561.

SPEARFISHING: After nearly 75 years, the spearfishing prohibition on Roscommon County's Houghton Lake has been removed by executive order of the DNR. The order also allows crossbows as acceptable spearing gear for anglers throughout Michigan.

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION: Bay de Noc Great Lakes Sport Fishermen Inc. of Delta County has received a Partners in Conservation Award from the Michigan Natural Resources Commission. Among other things, the organization has been instrumental in improving the fishery in Lake Michigan and Upper Peninsula waters, and providing opportunities to introduce youth to the sport of fishing. Members also coordinate a Special Olympics fishing event each year.

WHOOPIING CRANE: One of the world's rarest birds—the whooping crane—has been spotted on private farmland in Shiawassee County. The lone bird was reportedly seen for several days. The world's tallest bird, whooping cranes almost became extinct in the early 1940s due to over-hunting and habitat loss. With only 23 living in 1941, conservation efforts began to bring them back. Today, there are an estimated 437 of the birds in the wild.

PORCUPINE MOUNTAIN ARTISTS: Applications are being sought for the Porcupine Mountains Artist-in-Residence Program for spring, summer and fall of 2013, and winter 2014. The program is open to artists and artisans whose work can be influenced by the unique northern wilderness setting. It offers writers, composers, and all visual and performing artists an opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the area and express it through their art forms. Each residency lasts for two weeks. Apply by April 1, 2013, with materials found at www.porkies.org/artist-in-residence.

RECREATION PASSPORT: Michigan's Recreation Passport is an easy, affordable way for residents to enjoy and support outdoor recreation opportunities. By checking “Yes” for the \$10 passport (\$5 for motorcycles) when renewing a license plate through the Secretary of State, you gain access to state parks, recreation areas, state forest campgrounds, trailhead parking areas and state boat launches. Non-residents can also purchase the passport (\$29 annual; \$8 daily). Get yours today!

Group says public trust doctrine may help solve Great Lakes water level problems

The FLOW Public Trust Policy Center (FLOW) in Traverse City has told the International Joint Commission (IJC) that principles of public trust can help find solutions to problems with Great Lakes water levels.

In comments submitted to the IJC, FLOW said such principles can be applied to compliment and help the IJC in both current and future decisions affecting the flows, levels, environment, public uses, private uses and benefits of the Great Lakes.

“We’re trying to demonstrate to decision makers how we might

begin to think about the issues we face in the 21st Century and how we might find more effective solutions,” said Jim Olson, chairman of FLOW and an environmental law attorney. “We’re taking each threat issue and looking at it through the Public Trust Doctrine to see whether those principles can actually help solve those problems and move us toward a solution.”

The prolonged period of low water levels seen in the lower and upper Great Lakes poses serious threats to wetlands, fish and aquatic habitat, shipping and nav-

igation, boating, recreation, power generation and agriculture, according to a document submitted to the IJC.

“These factors have increased competition and conflict between various uses of the Great Lakes, most of which are dependent on both water quality and quantity, as the two are inextricably connected,” the document says.

Activities affecting Great Lakes water levels—such as the Chicago diversion and dredging in Lake St. Clair that has significantly lowered levels in Lake Michigan and

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Conservationists condemn state “biodiversity bill”

Biodiversity restoration would no longer be a responsibility of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) under a bill proposed in the state Senate.

Introduced by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), Senate Bill 1276 prohibits the DNR from designating land for biological diversity, deletes the conservation of biological diversity from the agency's duties regarding forest management, changes the definition of “conservation” to exclude biological diversity, and requires the DNR to balance its management activities with economic values.

Furthermore, it eliminates a requirement that the DNR manage forests in a manner that promotes restoration, takes out a reference to “unusual flora and fauna” in the definition of “natural area” and deletes a legislative finding that most losses of biological diversity are the result of human activity.

When contacted by *The North Woods Call*, Casperson said the legislation is aimed in part at protecting access to public land for all users.

The bill is designed to eliminate a program called Living Legacies, which was scheduled for implementation in 2013, according to a position paper by Drew Youngedyke on the Michigan League of Conservation Voters (MLCV) website.

The program had faced criticism for designating specific Biodiversity Stewardship Areas, but the DNR said that it would only be implemented in a manner that ensured no net loss of timber harvest, or hunting access on state land, the document says.

The Michigan League of Conservation Voters and members of the Audubon Society are among numerous individuals and groups condemning the bill. “Michigan's proud legacy of conservation should not be diminished by removing a central tenant of

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Lease Wars

This old gas pump at Glen Haven reminds us of our years of dependence on fossil fuels—an addiction that continues yet today. Having an abundant and affordable supply of gasoline requires a fair amount of exploration and drilling, but sometimes this activity generates a lot of controversy. See Page 3 for more on the “fracking” debate, and a lawsuit filed over the sales of Michigan oil & gas leases.

Officials seek cause of Oct. 6 Boardman River flood problems

TRAVERSE CITY – Federal, state and local officials were still trying to determine a cause more than two weeks after Brown Bridge Pond unexpectedly emptied into the Boardman River near here.

Crews had been working for several weeks to remove Brown Bridge Dam when the October 6 incident occurred. The resulting flood raised the river by five feet, damaging several bridges and homes downstream.

The short- and long-term impact from tons of possibly tainted silt and muck that flushed down the river also remained unknown.

The investigation could take months to complete, officials said. Answers are imperative, though, because other Boardman River dams also are slated for removal and the public will need to be as-

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Conservationists condemn Senate “biodiversity bill”

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conservation—biological diversity restoration—from the state laws which address it,” Youngedyke wrote in the aforementioned paper. “Biodiversity restoration is part of managing for the health of the whole forest, not just a short-term maximum output of board feet. Michigan should not ignore its forests for the trees.”

Burton Barnes, professor emeritus of the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment, called the multiple elements of the bill “regressive” and said they apparently derive from a desire for focused timber management unencumbered by new terms such as biodiversity, sustainability, invasive species and other challenges.

“Every aspect of the DNR’s mission concerning biological and ecological diversity, restoration and conservation has both economic importance and essential values conferred by ecosystem services to Michigan citizens,” Barnes said in an open letter published on the MLCV website. “The essence and main points of Bill 1276 are without merit and vision for the complex challenges of today and the future of state lands. ... All of these challenges and opportunities are directly or indirectly about economics—money and jobs for Michigan.”

Barnes said that the DNR’s job of managing the diversity of plants and animals are special cases—due to enormous past and present human disturbances—that include species that have become overabundant (white-tailed deer and zebra muscle), as well as those species that are rare or in danger of extinction (the Kirtland’s warbler and the bald eagle).

“Both aspects are integral parts of 21st century management, which includes commodity production, conservation and restoration,” he said.

The DNR must also deal with the new biodiversity of invasive species—a product of human commerce and global trade—which threaten native species, Barnes said. Valuable species, such as the American chestnut, American elm, American beech, eastern hemlock, white walnut and all ash species of Michigan are gone, dying out, or threatened due to these aliens, he said.

“Who but the DNR on state lands is going to address this important biodiversity decline and the loss of these ecologically and economically important species?” Barnes said. “Citizens and legislators should encourage the DNR to continue its mission in addressing and solving the increasing array of so called ‘environmental’ problems, which are really people problems.”

Casperson said that he held public hearings on this issue—including one in Gaylord—and most people opposed the biodiversity management plan.

“Originally, I was told it was just a U.P. issue,” he said, “but people came from Gaylord, Petoskey, Grayling, Alpena and other areas and said, ‘Don’t do this to us.’ The only ones who spoke in favor of (the biodiversity efforts) were the DNR and a couple of people I think were from the Sierra Club.

“What we took away is that the environmental groups want it, but the public doesn’t.”

When asked whether the “public” at these hearings included special interests—such as timber companies—that want access to such areas for economic reasons, Casperson said he didn’t recall anything like that at the hearings—except some “horse people” who were concerned about access issues in the Pigeon River State Forest.

“They want to be able to use those areas, too,” he said.

Ed Golder, public information officer at the DNR, said the agency is currently neutral on Senate Bill 1276.

There is some concern, however, that the legislation could affect the forest certification process, he said, which would disrupt the market for lumber in Michigan.

“We are evaluating that possibility,” Golder said. “If the legislation might in any way damage the certification process and lumber sales, our position on the bill could change.”

The DNR is reportedly certified by two forestry organizations, the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. These certifications—both of which require biodiversity management by program participants—tell major lumber purchasers and retailers that lumber harvested from DNR-managed lands were sustainably harvested, something that consumers, retailers and purchasers are requiring at an increasing rate, according to Youngedyke’s paper.

In a related issue, some Michigan conservationists have expressed concern over what they see as “unwarranted assaults” on the DNR b Sen. Casperson. But DNR officials say they have a good relationship with the senator and value him as an important partner in shaping public policy on critical natural resources questions.

“Senator Casperson has been an active and passionate voice when it comes to natural resources issues,” said Golder. “Understandably so, since the DNR’s activities touch so directly on the lives of his constituents. We have supported some of his bills and opposed others.”

Weeks later, officials say cause of Boardman River flood was still unknown

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sured that such a calamity won’t happen again.

The breach occurred while a construction crew was at work on a “dewatering structure” adjacent to Brown Bridge Dam. The dewatering structure is meant to allow for a slow release of water, but the pond gushed into the river within a few hours. Property damage claims had exceeded four dozen at the time of this writing.

Key parts of the Brown Bridge Dam remained underwater, so the plan was to draw it down for inspection of the portion of the structure that failed.

The Michigan Department of environmental quality had conducted interviews with most of the people who were on the site at the time of the incident and were trying to understand from an engineering perspective what happened. A comprehensive analysis of the flooding’s impact on the

Boardman fishery is also under way.

Steve Largent, Boardman River program coordinator for the Grand Traverse Soil Conservation District, said the flood could have had even greater impact on the resource if the fish couldn’t have escaped to tributary streams that feed the river.

Significant amounts of sediment had also been removed from the Brown Bridge impoundment prior to the incident, which also helped lesson the environmental impact, officials said. And earlier lowering of water levels at The Brown Bridge and Keystone ponds helped avert a more dangerous flood, they said.

It could have been much, much worse,” Largent said, if on-site trucks and equipment hadn’t been able to control the breach. “A wall of water at least twice the estimated five-foot crest that did occur would have swamped the valley, possibly taking out roads

and causing much more property damage,” he said.

Nevertheless, of primary concern are the people whose lives have been affected by disruptions, and damage to homes and property. Many property owners reported close calls, where the water threatened, but did not enter their homes and businesses. Others weren’t so fortunate, Largent said.

“It’s those folks I feel the most badly for,” he said.

The river itself took a major hit, according to Largent, but appears to have handled the flood-water fairly well. Biologists had collected nearly 300 dead fish—approximately 85 percent of them warm-water species—downstream from the dam, he said. Closer to the dam, they found significant numbers of both river and pond insects that survived, which means the food base should recover fairly quickly.

“Within the pond itself, it was too late (the day after) to rescue

“Public Trust Doctrine” could help govern water levels in the Great Lakes

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Lake Huron—could be addressed through the Public Trust Doctrine, Olson said.

“When we have a conflict, those types of uses would be subordinate to public trust uses, such as navigation, fishing, boating, swimming and other forms of recreation,” Olson said.

Public trust principles can be traced from Rome to the present through both civil law and common law systems. These principles—which have become known as the Public Trust Doctrine—deem water a public resource, unlike land that can be transferred with exclusive rights of possession. As a result, water is generally considered to be in the public domain in Canada, and for the benefit and welfare of citizens in the United States.

According to the comments submitted to the IJC by FLOW, courts in all eight American states and two Canadian provinces surrounding the Great Lakes basin have recognized the public trust doctrine in regard to the lakes, as well as connected or tributary waters. These principles have been routinely applied to the public’s

Great Lakes Education Meeting

The Great Lakes Place-Based Education Conference is slated for November 13-14 at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

The meeting will bring together practitioners, teachers, local community partners and other organizations from across the region to help develop environmental stewards of the Great Lakes and its ecosystems.

For additional information visit www.glstewardship.org

paramount right and use of public or navigable waters and offer an established “multi-generational standard” to aide the IJC in sorting out and making decisions on management and protection of water flows, levels and pollution threats, now and in the future, for the waters of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

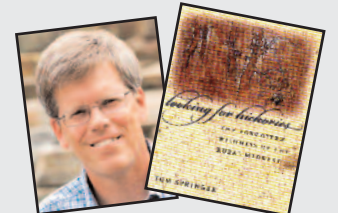
FLOW said that public trust principles can serve as an overarching umbrella framework for the IJC, its staff and the diverse public interests to balance priorities among uses and various courses of action. The systemic threats to flows, levels, ecosystem, and public and private uses of the Great Lakes boundary waters pose complex and multi-layered challenges, they said.

“The public trust offers a substantive methodology and set of established principles for common bodies of water, like the Great Lakes and its tributaries, to assure long-term protection and management of these waters, their quality, quantity, and public and private uses,” the FLOW document says.

As of this writing, no official decisions had been made regarding these recommendations and Olson said that dialog with the IJC was continuing.

Looking for Hickories: The Forgotten Wildness of the Rural Midwest

A Book of Essays by Tom Springer



A Michigan Notable Book
thewildnearby@gmail.com

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Those who encroach on public land given opportunity to resolve cases

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is working to resolve 129 cases of encroachment—or trespass—on public lands through a streamlined process, DNR Director Keith Creagh told the Michigan Natural Resources Commission at its October meeting in Ontonagon.

The deadline to file for quick resolution on an encroachment case is Dec. 31, 2012.

According to the DNR, The Encroachment Resolution Initiative (ERI) is an incentive program that works with property owners who are trespassing, either by having a permanent structure or historical encroachment on public land.

Property owners who have known encroachments on public land were notified by letter that they are eligible to resolve their cases through the ERI.

Those who own property adjacent to public land and are not sure they are encroaching can use tools on the DNR website at www.michigan.gov/dnr-encroachment to determine if they may be trespassing on state-managed land.

"This customer-focused process has (so far) helped us address nearly 20 percent of the encroachment cases we have in the system," said Creagh. "By resolving these cases, we can refocus our staff and resources on properly managing the public's land and the state's natural resources."

Some observers are wondering why the DNR doesn't just tell the trespassers to move off state-managed land, rather than resolving such cases through transfers, or land sales. They ask whether it's just a way for preferred individuals to get ownership of state land.

DNR officials say that they're just trying to be practical and fair.

"Many of these encroachments have been in place for years and have become part of people's understanding of their own property," said Ed Golder, public information officer at the agency. "Our intent with this initiative is to resolve these encroachments in a way that meets the needs and expectations of property owners, while obtaining some fair compensation for public land. We think that's fair to property owners and the general public.

"Note that the initiative has a time limit. Penalties for encroachment will resume after the initiative ends. We're hopeful the program will resolve many of these longstanding trespasses, to the benefit of the state and citizens."

Under the ERI, property owners who are encroaching on state-managed land can apply to have their cases resolved. DNR staff will work with the property owner to properly document ownership. If the property owner can show that

the encroachment began prior to March 1, 1973, the property will be transferred to the property owner after a new property survey is completed and new boundaries are established.

Structural encroachments that have occurred after March 1, 1973, will be resolved through land sales. The DNR will streamline its land sale process for encroachment cases resolved through the ERI.

Individuals with non-structural encroachments occurring on public land after March 1, 1973—such as fences, gardens, sheds or other non-permanent structures—will need to remove the items from state-managed land. During the ERI, the DNR will not seek penalties, or take escalated enforcement action, for these types of encroachments.

After the application period closes on Dec. 31, any existing or new cases of encroachment that were not brought forward will be dealt with through DNR encroachment and enforcement procedures.

Individuals with specific questions on the ERI should contact Lori Burford, the DNR's encroachment specialist, at 989-275-5151, ext. 2100. For more information on the ERI, go to the DNR's website at www.michigan.gov/dnr-encroachment.

The Kirtland's warbler

"A conservation success story"

The Kirtland's warbler population has reached an all-time high in Michigan, according to a recent study.

"We are witnessing a conservation success story," said Dan Kennedy, Michigan Department of Natural Resources endangered species coordinator.

Biologists, researchers and volunteers in Michigan observed 2,063 singing males during the official 2012 survey period, compared to the 1,805 males seen in 2011. This represents the largest single-year increase since 2007.

The lowest numbers were recorded in 1974 and 1987, when only 167 singing males were found.

This year, singing males (numbers in parentheses) were found in 12 northern Lower Peninsula counties: Antrim (2), Alcona (266), Clare (40), Crawford (322), Iosco (248), Kalkaska (72), Montmorency (63), Ogemaw (540), Oscoda (388), Otsego (11),

Presque Isle (24) and Roscommon (49). Surveyors identified 38 singing males in seven Upper Peninsula counties: Alger (4), Baraga (2), Chippewa (13), Delta (5), Luce (3), Marquette (4) and Schoolcraft (7). Twenty-seven additional singing males were observed outside Michigan in Wisconsin (23) and Ontario (4).

According to DNR officials, the Kirtland's warbler survey is conducted during the second and third weeks of June, when the birds are defending their nesting territories. Warblers are detected by listening for their songs, which can be heard at distances up to one-quarter mile. Only the males sing, so estimates of breeding population size are obtained by doubling the number of singing males recorded, based on the assumption that each male has a mate in its territory.

For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/wildlife.



Annual Fish Egg Collection

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Fisheries Division has been collecting eggs necessary for the continued production of hatchery fish to support Michigan's world-class fisheries. Fall egg takes were organized for wild Chinook and coho salmon, and for captive broodstocks of brown, rainbow, brook and lake trout. Michigan contributes to the collaborative efforts of neighboring states to support the Great Lakes fishery. Of the Chinook salmon eggs collected, 3 million will be used in Michigan, while 600,000 will go to Indiana and 850,000 to Wisconsin. Of the coho salmon eggs collected, 2.8 million will be used in Michigan while 1.2 million will go to Indiana, 850,000 to Illinois and 600,000 to Wisconsin. Shown here is the interior of a historic fisheries railroad car at the Michigan Fisheries Visitor Center at Oden. (North Woods Call photo)

Lawsuit filed October 24

Conservationists continue to challenge state officials over "hydraulic fracturing" in Michigan

Despite concerns expressed by conservationists, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) went ahead with a planned October 24 auction of oil and gas leases on nearly 196,000 acres of state-owned land in 22 counties.

Some 15,000 acres of this land reportedly include state parks, recreational trails, and game and recreation areas, parcels that conservationists say should be off-limits and protected under the public trust.

"These are jewels in the system and represent only a small percentage of state land," said Jim Olson, a Traverse City environmental law attorney. "They are held in public trust according to DNR policy guidelines and ought to be treated that way."

Olson and others had requested that an emergency meeting with DNR Director Keith Creagh and other state officials be held prior to the October 24 sale.

"If the sale goes forward, it should not include parks, recreation areas, or game and wildlife areas," Olson said a couple weeks before the sale. The governor can put a stop to it and the DNR can put a stop to it, because they are the leasing agency."

Local citizens and conservationists are particularly concerned about the use of deep-well hydraulic fracturing, a controversial operation that pumps massive amounts of pressurized water, sand and chemical ad-

ditives into wells with the purpose of fracturing surrounding rocks and allowing gas and oil resources to be removed.

"Our point is that this 'fracking' activity is so much more massive in terms of size and impact than any other oil and gas development we've ever had," Olson said. "Nobody really knows what will happen in the long-term with what is left in the ground after these operations. They also have large impacts in terms of noise, trucking, etcetera, and are flatly incompatible with wildlife, hunting, fishing and other general recreation in state parks and game areas."

Olson said that nobody in the DNR is looking at the cumulative effects of hydraulic fracturing and this needs to be done. As of this writing, he said the DNR had not responded to the request for an emergency meeting to discuss the issue.

"This is a major blow to every citizen of the state who treasures these special areas," he said.

When asked about this issue by *The North Woods Call*, the DNR said only that it would continue to evaluate its leasing procedures and the classifications of land, and encourage concerned citizens to be part of the conversation about the development of oil and gas wells on public lands.

Following public comment at the September 13 Michigan Natural Resources

Commission meeting, the DNR director instructed staff to review the classifications of land that were to be offered for auction on October 24, according to Ed Golder, public information officer at the DNR.

"These classifications are used to make sure that appropriate environmental protections are in place," Golder said. "For instance, we never auction leasing rights on Great Lakes bottomlands, or critical dunes. Those lands are always classified as 'non-development,' which means there can be no development of wells on the surface of that land. We determined that the classifications for the lands being offered for lease in October were correct."

"The DNR needs to zero in on the difference between traditional oil and gas development on state land and this deep-shale 'fracking,'" Olson said. "We now have a technique that's not conventional in the way that putting down a pipe and drawing from a pool is. Even placing these operations near one of those special jewels of our system can have large impacts."

Golder said the DNR will continue to review land classifications in subsequent auctions to make sure the proper protections are in place.

When asked whether the DNR is satisfied with industry assurances of the safety of hydraulic fracturing, Golder said, "We are con-

fident that Michigan has a rigorous regulatory structure for hydraulic fracturing."

"That said, we are going to continue to listen to those who have concerns about the practice to make sure the utmost care is taken with any method of extraction on public land, which is where we have authority," said Golder.

Golder acknowledged that oil and gas extraction could potentially impact natural resources, which is why the DNR continually evaluates methods of extraction and its own role in those processes.

NOTE: Michigan Land Air Water Defense (MLAWD)—a nonprofit citizens' group—filed a lawsuit against the DNR on October 24, just as *The North Woods Call* print edition was coming off the press.

The group seeks to nullify the May 8 and October 24 auctions of mineral rights within Barry and Allegan State Game Areas, and the Yankee Springs Recreation Area.

"Yankee Springs Recreation Area—and Barry and Allegan State Game Areas—are irreplaceable treasures," said Steve Loshier, president of MLAWD. "For the state to risk the sanctity and integrity of these areas, with scarcely a glance toward 'due diligence,' is a betrayal of their obligation to responsibly manage our public lands."

The North Woods Call will have more about this in the next issue.

Opinion Page

Conservation Quote

"We show too little respect toward the natural world. We are impatient and peevish in our contemplation, demanding that everything be changed frequently, like children reaching for new toys to suck paint from."

— R.D. Symons

Oil & gas leases demand caution

Conservation groups have asked the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for a moratorium on state leasing of oil and gas interests—particularly within and near environmentally sensitive areas.

Despite this continuing public outcry and many unanswered questions about "horizontal hydraulic fracturing" technology—commonly known as "fracking"—the DNR went ahead with an October 24 auction for nearly 196,000 acres of state-owned oil and gas lease rights. Some 15,000 of these acres reportedly include state parks, recreational trails, and game and recreation areas.

While we understand the desire to proceed with business and know that some land areas are probably appropriate for leasing—at least with conventional drilling techniques—we believe officials should honor such moratorium requests and at minimum cancel lease sales for environmentally sensitive areas.

These special areas are supposed to be protected under the public trust and it seems that much more needs to be known about the overall safety of hydraulic fracturing before oil and gas operations are allowed to proceed there.

Even though the DNR says that "non-development leases" in these areas do not allow drilling and wells on the surface, there are still questions about the impact of drilling underneath such land from adjacent parcels.

It simply makes sense to exercise more caution when leasing these areas—and any other area that involves hydraulic fracturing—until more is known about the process. We don't need any unintended accidents, spills, or other side effects that could result in water pollution and more damaging environmental problems.

It's time for DNR officials to ignore the lure of added revenue for the state treasury in favor of their responsibility to protect the public interest.

Should we alter our Constitution?

A lot has been said about Michigan Ballot Proposal 3, which would amend the state constitution to require that 25 percent of Michigan's energy comes from renewable sources by 2025.

On the surface, it's a great idea. After all, who doesn't support the increased development of renewable energy? If we can decrease our dependency on fossil fuels, reduce energy costs and create jobs at the same time, why not? It seems like a no-brainer for conservation-minded citizens.

The anticipated environmental and economic advantages of approving the amendment have been laid out in viewpoint articles in the last two issues of *The North Woods Call*—in discussions by Hans Voss of the Michigan Land Use Institute and Elizabeth Kirkwood, of the FLOW Public Trust Policy Center. They see good things happening if we have the wisdom and foresight to approve the proposal.

We have a couple of lingering concerns, however, that should at least be aired.

Five of six proposals on the November ballot would amend the Michigan Constitution and proponents of each believe their issues need this remedy. We are not so anxious to change fundamental governing documents at the whim of special interests. It seems like there ought to be better ways to move toward the policy choices we desire through education and market-driven initiatives.

Constitutional changes—although done before—do not always result in the best solutions to the problems they intend to fix.

Some say, for example, that passing the amendment will increase electricity costs through an arbitrary 25 percent mandate for politically favored energy sources. Supporters of the proposal insist this is not true, but what if it is? In a stagnant economy already burdened by high energy costs, this could spell trouble.

In addition, we have seen some green energy initiatives falter in recent years because there was no market for the products produced, or the costs were so high that they didn't present viable alternatives to the old way of doing things. Wouldn't it be better if we could work together to develop energy-efficient products and utilities that people want at prices they can afford?

Maybe if we were more transparent and truthful in civic debates we could come up with solutions that wouldn't always send special interests scurrying to the law books for yet more adjustments to the Michigan Constitution.

It's something we all should think about when we go to the polls on November 6.

Newspaper Management 101: Lessons from Shep

The first time I encountered Glen Sheppard, I was an upstart reporter at a small weekly newspaper in the northern Michigan community of Mancelona.

That's when the phone rang.

"This is Shep at The North Woods Call," said the gruff, no-nonsense voice on the other end of the line. "They're screwing up the Cedar River."

It seems the Michigan Environmental Protection Foundation had filed a civil action suit against the Antrim County Road Commission in hopes of halting two culvert replacement projects on the pristine trout stream. The plaintiffs wanted bridges installed over the river, while the top brass at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) had approved the large steel culverts to be placed in the water.

Shep wasn't about to accept this sitting down. He believed that extensive excavation in the stream bottom would introduce many tons of silt into the Cedar and harm the fishery resource. He urged me to visit the site, take photographs and do a story—which I gladly did.

After 35 years, I don't recall today just how the conflict was resolved, but I still remember the passion in Shep's voice and his steely determination to protect the river. It was that way whenever he called with story ideas.

Later, during the mid-1980s, I attended two gatherings for *North Woods Call* subscribers that Shep hosted at the DNR conference center at Higgins Lake—ostensibly to get-acquainted with incoming DNR directors Ron Skoog and Gordon Guyer. When one subscriber questioned the Call's editorial stance on some conservation issue, the response was classic Shep.

"If you don't like it," he said, "buy your own damned newspaper."

North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



Given this legendary combative personality, I wasn't sure what to expect when I visited Shep's home several years later. The first thing I noticed was a sign next to his door that said something like this:

"If you knock and we don't answer, it's because we are either busy, or don't want any visitors. So just go away!"

Fortunately, Shep was expecting me and answered the door in good cheer. I found both he and wife Mary Lou quite hospitable and easy to talk to, although perhaps somewhat suspicious of my motives. After all, I was there because he had hinted in a column that he might be ready to retire and turn *The North Woods Call* over to someone else.

That, of course, was easier said than done.

I'm not sure he really wanted to step aside. He certainly didn't want to surrender *The Call* to just anyone and I was asking way too many technical questions to suit his style.

"Someone who is going to continue *The Call's* tradition will have to be an aggressive risk-taker," he said. "Sure, you need to set goals, but to hell with analyzing the odds before deciding to take the risks."

He conceded that this is not the way in today's high-tech corporate world, but declared, "The Call ain't about high-tech."

Besides, he said, he didn't know the answers to most of my questions and couldn't rightly say why the newspaper had survived for so many years without more attention to textbook business practices.

"I would know these things if I

were more prudent," he admitted, "in which case *The Call* would have died years ago."

Instead, Shep lived by a lesson learned from his military rifle company commander more than 50 years earlier when as a young soldier he questioned the wisdom of charging a hill without proper reconnaissance.

"You're telling me that discretion is the better part of valor," the commander reportedly said. "Discreet cowards cower. Get those rifles up that hill!"

I'm still not sure what to make of all that—I've never been one for blind foolishness—but I probably ignored a fair number of traditional business principles when I took on the uncertain task of resurrecting this newspaper.

"We have had a lot of people look at and crave *The Call*," Shep told me during one of our discussions, "but none that I judged would carry on its mission. I think you could."

That's as close to an endorsement as I ever got from him.

In the end, my business instincts were probably too cautious and his personal identity with *The North Woods Call* too strong for us to reach a satisfactory agreement while he was at the helm.

Shep insisted that discretion could not sustain *The Call's* contribution to conservation for another half-century and left me with three words of advice:

"Just do it!"

Well, I finally did, though not in the way Shep envisioned. Turns out, that was the easy part.

Now I'm learning to harness my natural discretion and live with the risk.

Free hunting and fishing licenses for disabled vets

Hats off to the state of Michigan for making hunting and fishing licenses available free to disabled veterans, beginning in March 2013.

These veterans will be able to obtain any resident hunting or fishing license for which a lottery is not needed. Proof of eligibility is required, however.

This is but a small token of appreciation for the significant sacrifices such veterans have made in service to the country.

Thank you, vets!

Remembering Joe Johnson

Generations of school children in southwest Michigan remember Joe Johnson and his passion for birds and waterfowl.

Field trips to the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary often included time with Johnson during his 48 years at the conservation facility near Augusta. In addition, college students, educators and members of the community benefited from his extensive knowledge of wildlife, habitat preservation and species restoration. He inspired many budding biologists and environmental educators to take up the cause.

We join the conservation community in mourning his recent passing.

Johnson's contributions to Michigan conservation were legion and his work on behalf of trumpeter swans helped restore the endangered species back to one of its native habitats. His continuous research led to better waterfowl management and was instrumental in the return of the giant Canada goose to the state.

These personal accomplishments and his efforts on behalf of environmental education cannot be over-estimated.

The North Woods Call honors this important legacy that will pay dividends for years to come.

Well done, Mr. Johnson, well done.

The North Woods Call

Michigan's Conservation Sentinel
Since 1953

Published regularly by:
Newshound Productions LLC
5411 East DE Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004.

Telephone: (269) 342-8724

E-mail: editor@mynorthwoodscall.com

Website: mynorthwoodscall.com

Online subscription: \$35 per year
and \$60 for two years.

Print subscription: \$55 per year
and \$95 for two years

Address changes: Please send \$2 to
cover costs.

Editor & Publisher: Mike VanBuren

Publishers Emeritus:
Marguerite Gahagan
Glen and Mary Lou Sheppard

Advertising rates upon request.

A Newshound Publication

Viewpoint

Michigan ballot question 25 X 25 is really about water

By Elizabeth Kirkwood

When you think Michigan, you can't help but think water. I just moved here and I recently met a friendly Michigander who didn't skip a beat to proudly tell me that the state has the longest freshwater shoreline in the nation. The economy of this beautiful state is intricately connected and bound to the waters of the Great Lakes.

So what does water have to do with the proposed 25 by 25 bill on the ballot this November that asks Michiganders to generate 25 percent of the state's electricity with renewable energy sources by 2025? Simply, everything.

It's a perspective that hasn't been discussed much, and that's not surprising given that the economy is on everyone's minds. 25 by 25, or the Michigan Energy Michigan Jobs initiative, promises to create at least 74,495 jobs and spur \$10.3 billion in investment according to a recent MSU report, commissioned by the Michigan Environmental Council. Nearly 43,000 of those jobs would be in operations and management of new renewable energy facilities—commercial and small-scale wind projects, solar photovoltaics, anaerobic digesters, landfill gas, and biomass—and another 31,000 construction jobs. And in terms of job creation, according to Wei et al. (2010), renewable energy and low carbon sources actually generate more jobs than the fossil fuel sector per unit of energy delivered.

So with water and the economy on your mind, let's focus on two points: (1) how our fossil fuel economy currently is affecting water levels in the Great Lakes,

and (2) how lower and more unpredictable lake water levels in turn will negatively affect every economic endeavor in this state.

It is clear that our current carbon-producing energy practices are directly affecting lake levels throughout the Great Lakes. Scientific studies on climate change over the last several decades are linking more frequent storm patterns and shorter winters to higher erosion rates. In addition, warmer water temperatures, coupled with less ice coverage during the winter in the Great Lakes, contribute to increased evapotranspiration rates, which in turn may lead to continued lowering of lake levels.

For example, on Grand Traverse Bay—which is part of Lake Michigan—there are historical records of ice coverage dating back to the mid-19th century, or approximately 160 years. From the 1850s through the 1970s, Grand Traverse Bay froze at least seven years every decade. In the past two decades, this bay has frozen over only a total of five times. Plot this data and one sees a "hockey stick" type curve, which does not represent typical and natural fluctuations of water data.

Lower water levels in the Great Lakes are already causing a host of problems for all industries, including shipping, tourism, commercial and recreational fishing, agriculture, manufacturing, utilities, as well as for the natural ecosystems themselves (e.g., fisheries, aquatic habitats and lakeshore wetlands). A small decline in water levels, for example, is significantly affecting the shipping industry and its overall rev-

enues as ships are now forced to carry lighter loads to avoid scraping the bottom in channels linking the ports. This industry provides some 227,000 jobs and contributes \$34 billion in economic activity according to the Lake Carriers' Association. Last summer in 2011, tourism and the overall ecological health of Lake Erie were both at stake as high 1970s-like levels of phosphorus contamination created an enormous "dead" or hypoxic zone, the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined. With current lake levels approaching record lows, another drop of just a few inches will have unprecedented impacts on all lake uses.

These signs, which link all of our collective actions, demonstrate a clear nexus or connection between energy, water, and climate change. The Great Lakes are a shared public "commons" that the organization I work for, FLOW (For Love Of Water), aims to protect by applying an overarching governing legal framework called the public trust doctrine.

This ancient legal doctrine is deeply rooted in our history. Years ago—actually 2,000 years ago—the Roman Emperor Justinian established water as a commons held in trust for its citizens. Not long after the Magna Carta in 1215, British Courts ruled that the sea, its fish, and habitat were also held in trust, and that the Crown could not interfere with or alienate (transfer) the public's right to fish, boat, or swim. Fast forward to 1892, and since then, the United States Supreme Court, and virtually every Great Lakes state, including Michigan, have ruled that the Great Lakes are a perpetual trust in favor of citizens, and that neither government nor others can diminish, impair, or dispose of these treasured waters. It is the government's duty to protect these waters, exactly like that of a bank trustee protecting the trust for a beneficiary.

What the public trust adds to nearly all natural resource use

conversations is an absolute backstop to the traditional command-and-control environmental laws and regulations established in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Now, as we will plan for the future and make decisions about our energy consumption and generation, we must understand how it affects our water, our legacy preserved by the public trust.

This November, Michiganders face a watershed moment where we can alter our energy consumption and generation practices through legislation like 25 by 25, or we can stay the course. According to Keith Schneider from Circle of Blue (www.circleofblue.org), we have about another generation, or approximately thirty years, to change our thirsty fossil fuel energy habits; otherwise, the uncertainty and harms we are already witnessing, such as those to the Great Lakes, may be irreversible.

Let's avoid business as usual and chart a new course that isn't tethered to fossil fuels and their heavy environmental impacts to air, water, and land. Since the first modern environmental laws enacted in the 1960s and 1970s, Schneider and the American public have witnessed enormous pollution clean-up efforts; we can do it again by drawing on our ingenuity, innovation, capacity, and sheer will.

Adopting a renewable energy strategy like 25 by 25 may not be easy, but it's the right thing to do to avoid another impending energy crisis, to gain improved energy security with a shift to renewable energy sources, and to create an economic engine for state-wide growth.

Equally if not more important, 25 by 25 will protect our precious Great Lakes, the real driver behind our economy, jobs, and quality of life.

Elizabeth Kirkwood is policy law director at the FLOW Public Trust Policy Center in Traverse City.

What's with the paper being used?

Readers of *The North Woods Call* print edition may be asking why so many different kinds of paper are being used.

"We're simply experimenting to find the right paper at the right price," said Publisher Mike VanBuren.

The first issue was printed on premium 50-pound newsprint, which allowed for cleaner reproduction of photos and text at a higher contrast, he said. The second issue was printed on an industry standard 27-pound paper, which is less expensive to both purchase and mail. This issue was printed on a middle-of-the-road 35-pound paper.

"We want to get the best look with the most cost-effective choice for printing and mailing," VanBuren said. "We will be settling on one of these options very soon, so the general look will be more consistent from issue-to-issue."

As of this writing, 293 subscribers had signed up—193 for print and 100 for online delivery, according to VanBuren.

"We are grateful to those who are showing their support—particularly past subscribers who are returning—and are hoping to reach a level in the near future that will allow us to sustain the publication over time," he said.

"We want to thank all of you who have stayed on board—even with increased subscription costs—and for the encouraging comments that many of you have made," VanBuren said. "We will do our best to maintain that trust."

Due to an initially low number of subscribers, the first three issues have been published at three- to four-week intervals, VanBuren said. The final number of subscriptions will ultimately determine how soon the publication can return to the traditional twice-monthly schedule, he said.

Letter to the Editor

The efficiency of government programs

I'd like to comment on your editorial in the October issue. "*Less is more...*"

It is commonly said that government is less efficient than private firms, but in general, where a direct comparison is possible, government is nearly always more efficient.

Social Security's administrative expenses are less than 1 percent (See www.ssa.gov/OACT/STATS/admin.html). This can be compared to the administrative costs for Medicaid and Medicare, which are carried out by private insurance firms. Their administrative costs run around 12 to 14 percent—nearly as high as private insurance.

According to a recent poll I read about, the most respected organization in the U.S. is the U.S. military. This is certainly a government program. We can actually make a price comparison in this case, by looking at the costs and effectiveness of the hired mercenaries in Iraq. It is vividly clear that the private firms were a disaster.

It is also true that government does many, many vital activities that people take for granted—activities that would never be carried out by a private corporation.

(See www.scsuintellectuals.wordpress.com/2010/01/03/is-the-government-inefficient/).

It is OK to have an ideological objection to government, which is certainly our right as citizens, but a person can't make the argument on the basis that government is less efficient. It isn't.

But, whatever our political differences, thank you VERY much for reviving *The North Woods Call*. It is one of my most favorite publications.

Bob Johnson
Ann Arbor

Bob,
Thanks for the perspective and pleasant debate. Glad to have you on board. While I agree there are some limited things government does well and efficiently, a valid argument can be made that there is much more waste, fraud and abuse in government programs than there is efficiency. —MV

Letter to the Editor

Protecting Pigeon River Country still an important goal

Editor,

Please sign me up for a year's subscription to *The North Woods Call*. I believe I was a previous subscriber for more than a half-century.

Glen Sheppard's printing kept we hunters here in northern Michigan up to speed on many important conservation issues.

My "sandbox," or place where I hunt and fish, is the Pigeon River Country. It is a place that received special consideration as a management unit about 40 years ago. Glen was very instrumental in assisting the needs of Ma Nature, and provided the reading public factual and accurate information to try to maintain the character of this great piece of wild country.

If you're not aware, the problems that existed in the 1970s are still going on today. Modern, fast-mov-

ing man is still demanding special privileges and easy access, because we have become a lazy, fast-fix type of society—and to hell with tomorrow.

I've included a little example (two articles) of how our concerns are still bad in need of someone with "the power of the pen" to make people realize how important the Pigeon really is.

There is no compromise in freshwater. The three rivers that come from this area are why the Great Lakes are so important.

We have high hopes that you might be a person that realizes the needs of this type of country. We're sure willing to work with you.

Doug & Judy Mummert
Gaylord

A note to letter writers

All letters must be signed. Please include your name and mailing address (e-mail address, too, if you don't mind).

We won't publish addresses or phone numbers, but we must have them to verify that letters are authentic. No unsigned letters will be used.

Calling all store owners

If you own a store and want to stock *The North Woods Call*, please contact us. Let us know who you are, where your store is located and how much commission you would want from sales. We may be able to accommodate you if we can find a cost-effective way to deliver the product.
editor@mynorthwoodscall.com

The Wild Nearby

By Tom Springer

**Country dogs: Born to be wild**

When it comes to chew toys for dogs, some last for years but others ... well, they're much easier to swallow. Consider the coyote—we dubbed him Crunchy Calvin—that showed up at our farmhouse in April.

"Calvin" had obviously had a rough winter. By the time our black lab dragged him home, he was little more than a scruffy pelt with a few crunchy parts attached. During their first dog/coyote play date, Calvin lost his head—and not just figuratively. Within three days, his feet, tail and other random tufts were likewise detached and most likely eaten.

So: would you let your dog eat a dead coyote? Or browse on the spoils of a compost pile? Or eat a baby rabbit that it just dug, still squeaking, from a grassy burrow?

If you answered "yes" to at least two of these questions, then chances are you've got a country dog—or at least, a city dog that lives by country dog rules. By that, I mean a dog that's left as free as possible to pursue its own doggy nature. Country dogs enjoy plenty of freedom, with all the adventure and hardship that a life lived out-of-doors entails. Country dogs are loved, but never smothered; they're cared for, but rarely pampered; they're well-trained, but not expected to act like a miniature human being.

When I was a kid in the 60s and 70s, dogs occupied a much lower rung on the social ladder. Even in town, they lived in backyard dog houses where they chewed real bones and survived on table scraps or cheap pet food. They had dog names like Sport, Dixie, Buddy and Sarge. They were friendly enough, but your hand always smelled a little funky after you petted one. Except for the occasional rabies or distemper shot, they rarely saw the inside of a vet's office.

Nowadays, millions of Americans have elevated their dogs to the status of life partner or surrogate child. In his book "One Nation Under Dog," author Michael Schaffer writes that eighty-five percent of pet owners now refer to themselves as the Mommy or Daddy of their companion animals. Forty-seven percent of dog owners say their pet sleeps in bed with them at night.

Across the United States, spending on pets mushroomed from \$15 billion in 1995 to \$45 billion in 2009. There are now pet-food nutritionists, veterinary dermatologists, dog kennels with TVs, and—inevitably—lawyers who specialize in pet custody cases.

The sad paradox, animal experts say, is that dogs get confused and misbehave when we treat them too much like people. They still expect us to be leaders of the pack. Consequently, thousands of "pet parents" now medicate their animals for doggie A.D.D., anxiety, depression and other suspiciously human-like disorders.

But what if we're trying to make a simple, fur-bearing mammal serve a social purpose that it's biologically unsuited to fill? Furthermore, what if it's not the dog that needs therapy? As Edward Abbey once said, "When a man's best friend is a dog, then that dog has a problem."

With a country dog, you try to balance reasonable safety with the canine need for self-directed exploration. Sometimes they'll kill little live things that you wish they hadn't. Other times they'll roll in something dead, flat and stinky that you wish they'd left on the road. Yet these are dogs ... must we micro-manage their every instinct and pleasure?

It's been about 10,000 years since dogs first consented to live with humans. So in truth, they're no longer born to be wild. But every so often, it doesn't hurt to unhook the leash, cry havoc and let them live that way.

More Opinion**Book Review****Traver on Fishing**By Robert Traver
Edited by Nick Lyons2001
The Lyons Press
Guilford, Connecticut

We always seem to be running across interesting books that are out-of-print, or otherwise hard to find. *Traver On Fishing* is one of them.

No one wrote with more warmth and down-home affection for fly-fishing than the late Robert Traver (1903-1991) — also known as John D. Voelker, former associate justice of the Michigan Supreme Court.

This collection of essays and yarns by the author of *Anatomy of A Murder* contains excerpts from his memorable books, *Trout Madness*, *Trout Magic* and *Anatomy of a Fisherman*, as well as essays and stories he wrote for a wide variety of magazines. These tales allow readers to accompany Traver as he fishes for his beloved native brook trout in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, mostly on what he called "Frenchman's Pond" near Ishpeming.

It is an enjoyable journey of wit, wisdom and anecdote shared by a master storyteller—a good read for a cold winter night while you wait for the next trout season to begin.

Copies are still available at places like Amazon.com (although at sometimes breath-taking prices). Your best bet is probably to scour your local used book stores. If that doesn't work, you can still get the original books from which many of these excerpts were mined.

Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman

**Unsportsmanlike firebugs leave wildlife with no sporting chance**

Some years ago, in an era before we all carried cell phones, I was cutting up a fallen oak limb near the rear of my small wooded parcel in northern Muskegon County.

The late September afternoon was sunny and breezy. Patches of color were already gracing the trees.

After an hour of steady work with a bow saw, I piled the last piece of wood neatly into my ancient and rusty wheelbarrow for transport back to the house. I dawdled briefly to cool down from the exertion—at the same time cleaning the teeth of my saw with an old toothbrush.

Two hunters unexpectedly popped into view some distance to the west. They looked like they had stepped out of the pages of an upper-end sporting goods catalogue—spotless calf-high leather boots, lined orange hats, matching coats and pants with factory sewn fluorescent panels, and a pair of very nice over-under shotguns that I knew were well beyond the price range of the average Joe.

A small-game hunter myself, the last thing I wanted to do was disturb anyone's hunting experience. As yet undetected, I very quietly began trundling away with my heavy load of wood. When I was fifty or sixty yards along, I turned to see if the two men were out-of-sight.

I straightened up, but my jaw dropped.

Flames were licking around the base of an eight-foot stub of a dead tree, which I knew to be an animal den. The men stood poised, guns ready to fire on any critter that was driven out.

Definitely not a legal or sporting tactic. Dangerous, too, as the woods hadn't seen rain for nearly a month.

Suddenly, one of the culprits spotted me. He tapped his buddy's shoulder, and pointed in my direction. As an unarmed witness to a criminal act, I was not exactly feeling comfortable at that moment.

Fortunately, my two new "friends" chose to vacate the scene at a fast walk. Unfortunately, I had little background in fighting forest fires.

In a few minutes, the stub was chugging smoke and flames out the top like a stack of an old-time locomotive. It was also beginning to lean.

There was nothing else to do. I grabbed my saw and sprinted to the tree. Soon, I'd managed to cut and scrape the fall zone of most combustible materials.

About ten minutes later, the old stub crashed to earth, exploding with flaming debris. I stomped out all the secondary fires, partially melting the soles of my boots in the process.

The burn site eventually cooled. Dew was forming in the openings and the wind had finally quit by the time I'd returned to my wheelbarrow to resume the long haul home.

Despite making some phone calls that evening and doing immediate research, I was unable to learn the identities of the two firebugs. No one I spoke with had seen the pair, either coming or going. There were no reports of unfamiliar vehicles on any of the local roads that day.

All I knew about the men was that they had access to expensive gear, and were willing to devastate a beautiful piece of our natural environment for a nonsensical small gain.

They looked like sportsmen, but turned out to be uncaring and reckless opportunists.

People like that need watching.

Michigan loses conservationist and waterfowl authority Joe Johnson

Michigan conservationists are mourning the loss of Wilbur "Joe" Johnson, former manager of the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary near Augusta, who died October 9 in Kalamazoo as he neared his 71st birthday.

Johnson, a lifetime resident of the Kalamazoo area, was a certified wildlife biologist whose interests focused primarily on waterfowl and wetlands. He retired from the Bird Sanctuary in 2007 after 48 years. He had served as manager since 1985.

A 1959 graduate of Kalamazoo Central High School, Johnson earned bachelor and masters degrees in wildlife ecology from Michigan State University. Over the years, he lectured to thousands of children, students, educators and members of the community on wildlife, habitat preservation and species restoration.

Johnson served as president of the Gull Lake Water Quality As-



Joe Johnson with trumpeter swan

sociation, the Four Township Water Resource Council Inc., and the South Central Pheasants are Forever. He also was a member of Ducks Unlimited and the Ruffed Grouse Society, and recently retired after 16 years from the Pheasants Forever national board of directors.

Among other things, he wrote and implemented a trumpeter swan restoration plan for the state of Michigan and was the state's

trumpeter swan restoration coordinator. Since 1987, he was chairman of the Mississippi Flyway Council Technical Section Swan Committee and was part of a team that wrote the Mississippi and Central Flyways Technical Section Plan for the trumpeter swan. His involvement with the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary and the trumpeter swan restoration project helped bring a nearly extinct waterfowl population back to one of its native habitats.

Johnson's diverse talents led him to conducting training workshops for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' frog and toad survey, and he was the primary biologist working to control an over-abundant white-tailed deer population on the Kellogg Biological Station property. He conducted research that led to better waterfowl management and was instrumental in the successful return of the giant Canada goose

to Michigan.

Banding tens of thousands of waterfowl during his lifetime, Johnson not only increased the knowledge of birds, but also helped inspire hundreds of hunters and students to pursue their own lifelong passions for the natural world. He received numerous awards for his efforts.

Surviving is Johnson's wife, Anita; two daughters, Kimi (Roger) Funk of Laguna Niguel, California, and Kele Griffiths of Roseville, California; and five grandchildren.

A private memorial service is being planned for a later date.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Joe Johnson Endowment Fund for Wildlife Conservation at the W.K. Kellogg Biological Station, 3700 East Gull Lake Drive, Hickory Corners, Michigan 49060, or Rose Arbor Hospice, 5473 Croyden Drive, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49009.

Grant program to address dam issues

A new dam management grant program to address Michigan's failing dam infrastructure has been announced by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The program will provide \$2.35 million during Fiscal Year 2013 to fund dam removal and critical maintenance.

"More than 90 percent of Michigan's dams will reach or exceed their design life by 2020, said DNR Director Keith Creagh. "Many dams are abandoned, no longer serve any useful purpose, degrade our aquatic resource and pose safety hazards to downstream residents," he said.

Funding and technical assistance will be provided to state or local units of government, non-profit groups and individuals to manage dam removals, or repair/maintenance projects.

Panel makes recommendations for Michigan parks & recreation areas

A 16-member panel says Michigan should encourage greater connections between recreational assets and communities to promote the long-term viability of state parks.

The Blue Ribbon Panel on State Parks and Outdoor Recreation was appointed last year by Gov. Rick Snyder to consider the entirety of Michigan's outdoor opportunities at the local, state and regional level—not just state-managed facilities—and examine their collective role in growing Michigan's economy and improving the health and well-being of residents.

"My goal was to create a blueprint to help state parks adapt for 21st Century growth and investment," said Snyder.

In addition to connecting communities with outdoor assets, the panel recommended protecting important natural, cultural, historic and pre-historic resources; diversity funding and new criteria for targeted investments; giving high priority to developing regional connected trail networks; creating four or five "signature parks" in Michigan's core urban areas as a tool for revitalizing those areas; integrating tourism and economic development marketing; and prioritizing investment in safety and maintenance of—as well as access to—parks and recreation spaces.

The panel included representatives from nature conservancies, trails and marine groups and environmental agencies, as well as other acknowledged experts in recreation, parks and tourism issues.

The full report can be seen by visiting the documents page at www.Michigan.gov.



Another State-Record Whopper

For the second time in a little more than a month, a Michigan angler has landed a state-record fish—this time a muskellunge. Joseph Seeberger of Portage (center) pulled in this 59-inch lunker October 13 on Antrim County's Lake Bellaire. He was actually bass fishing with a minnow when the 58-pound giant struck. It took nearly two hours to land the muskie and required the help of two friends. On September 5, Bryan DeGoede of Kalamazoo pulled a state-record black buffalo from the Kalamazoo River in Allegan County. That one weighed 37.4 pounds and measured 39.3 inches. Earlier this year, a state-record flathead catfish was taken by Rodney Akey of Niles in the St. Joseph River. These catches show that "Michigan waters are capable of producing huge fish," said Jim Dexter, state Department of Natural Resources fisheries chief. "Great waters, coupled with appropriate management strategies can result in even more record fish."

Conservation Officer Logs (10/1/12 through 10/14/12)

Family lost while tracking deer in dark; "pretty cool" adventure for kids

DISTRICT 1

CO Marvin Gerlach assisted several agencies on a lost hunter complaint. A subject had shot a buck with his bow late in the day. His wife and small children went with him to track the deer after dark. After a while, the family's only flashlight died while tracking the deer. The subject had spotty cell phone coverage at his location but was able to contact Menominee County Dispatch and give a general location. A siren was activated at the hunters' vehicle and the family walked out of the woods on their own, following the sound of the siren. All members of the family were in good condition; the children thought the adventure was "pretty cool".

CO Jason Wicklund received a complaint of someone burying nails along a U.S. Forest Service road. CO Wicklund contacted the local U.S. Forest Service officer and a suspect was developed. The officer also recovered over 60

A NOTE TO READERS:

These are brief excerpts from the CO's bi-monthly field reports. To conserve space, we have excluded the more routine activities in favor of what we think are the most unusual and interesting.

Some readers have asked that we include more specific information about where each conservation officer lives and works. We have been told, however, that most conservation officers don't like their home locales publicized. Instead, they can be contacted by calling the district office and getting a phone number.

We are checking into what is possible in this regard. For now, please bear with us. We want to do what is best for both our readers and the conservation officers.

If you want a more complete log than we are able to provide, you can find an archive of them under the Law Enforcement tab on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website.

nails buried all along the road. The officers interviewed the suspect, who confessed to burying the nails to deter ORVs from operating near his hunting area.

CO Marvin Gerlach responded to assist emergency crews with a bow hunter who had fallen approximately 20 feet out of a tree holding his deer stand. A

limb broke that the subject was standing on as he attempted to climb into his stand. No safety belt was located at the scene. The subject suffered severe internal injuries as a result of the fall. His condition is unknown at this time.

DISTRICT 2

CO Robert Crisp was on pa-

trol when he contacted a driver who was shining for deer. The driver was intoxicated, his license was suspended and there were outstanding warrants for his arrest. CO Crisp arrested the driver and lodged him in the Alger County Jail.

CO Kevin Postma was conducting surveillance of several anglers on Nunn's Creek in Mackinac County. After watching the subjects fish for some time he proceeded to make contact. Upon checking several fishing licenses he noted that two subjects who were fishing earlier no longer had fishing poles. When asked, the two claimed that they were never fishing. The CO explained that he had watched them for quite some time and the hiding of their fishing poles in the weeds wasn't going to work. Tickets issued for fishing without licenses.

DISTRICT 3

On opening day of archery season, CO Jon Sklba checked on an illegal blind and bait pile on state land he had found earlier. The subject had also made his own food plot in front of the blind. Upon contacting the subject in the blind, the CO found that he was in possession of a .308 rifle. The subject promptly informed CO Sklba he was hunting squirrels, not deer. After a brief discussion, the subject admitted to hunting deer with a firearm during the closed season. A warrant is being sought and his rifle has been seized.

CO Andrea Erratt worked the Boyne River in plain clothes and fished alongside other anglers. CO Erratt was next to a fly-fisherman when he foul-hooked a salmon in the tail and then retained it. While he was walking up to his vehicle with the salmon, CO Erratt identified herself, issued the subject a ticket and confiscated the salmon.

CO Matt Theunick caught a young man tearing up state land in his truck, doing donuts and spinning out. The truck also didn't have plates or insurance. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 4

CO Sean Kehoe received a litter complaint and responded to the area. CO Kehoe took photos of the litter and then went to an address he had found in the trash. CO Kehoe interviewed a female at the address who admitted that she and her husband were in the process of cleaning out a new house they had purchased. She advised CO Kehoe that her husband had taken the trash to a landfill and even produced photos of the trash on the trailer before her husband had left with it. CO Kehoe observed that the trash in her photos matched some of the trash in the photos he had taken. CO Kehoe advised the female he would need to talk with her husband when he returned and left a contact number. A short time later the husband contacted CO Kehoe and admitted that he dumped the

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Michigan wildlife photographer Rick Baetsen gets close to a ruffed grouse on one of his excursions into the woods. A long-time contributor to The North Woods Call, Baetsen will be featured in the next edition. (Rick Baetsen photo)

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Final Shot



Fishtown

The boardwalk at historic Fishtown in Leland welcomes many visitors each year and also serves as a gateway to North and South Manitou Islands—part of the picturesque Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The collection of weathered fishing shanties, smokehouses, docks, fish tugs and charter boats represent the heart of a commercial fishing village.

CO field logs: Poachers, snaggers, dopers and militant rebels on parade

Continued from Page 7
trash instead of taking it to a landfill. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Steve Converse was on foot patrol along a closed portion of the Betsie River when he encountered three subjects fishing with illegal gear and attempting to snag salmon. As CO Converse observed the subjects, he noted that all three were snorting some substance. The subjects were contacted and issued tickets for the illegal fish. The suspected drugs were seized and will be sent to the lab. One of the subjects was arrested and lodged on an outstanding warrant.

CO Angela Greenway and **Sgt. Kevin Hackworth** were watching from a concealed location when they observed several subjects attempting to catch salmon with spawn bags and legal methods. As time went by and more salmon moved in, the group gave up fishing legally and attempted to snag while fishing with unbaited treble hooks. Four subjects were ticketed for attempting to foul hook salmon.

DISTRICT 5

While patrolling state land, **CO Mark Papineau** observed a vehicle parked on a closed forest trail. When he approached the vehicle, CO Papineau discovered the bed of the pickup truck was full of sugar beets. Officer Papineau had received a report of excessive bait

piles in the area the previous year; however, he was unable to make contact with the responsible parties. After a thorough search on foot, CO Papineau was able to locate a subject deer hunting from a tree stand. The subject was also hunting over a pickup truck load of sugar beets. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Brian Olsen apprehended a subject who was road hunting for grouse. The subject had a loaded, uncased .410 shotgun right next to him in the front seat of his truck. The subject was from Ohio and stated he didn't know it was illegal. CO Olsen educated him on Michigan laws.

DISTRICT 6

CO Jason A. Smith observed a vehicle pull into a state game area (SGA) parking lot after dark and shut off the headlights before disappearing on foot into the dark. CO Smith waited the subject out and contacted him when he returned to the vehicle. A search of the vehicle ultimately resulted in the seizure of an oversized duffel bag full of marijuana. Charges are pending.

While patrolling Isabella County, **CO Larn R. Strawn** received a complaint of persons trespassing and hunting waterfowl on the Mt. Pleasant water treatment facility ponds. While investigating the complaint the CO contacted three waterfowl hunters who were hunting the ponds when

they shot 20 minutes later at a flock of Mallards searching for a good roosting spot. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 7

CO Chris Simpson and **Sgt. John Jurcich** were on patrol scouting for the waterfowl opener and checking deer hunters in eastern Muskegon County when they checked two hunters slowly moving along a two-track road. The hunters were returning to their camp and the smell of the interior of the vehicle led to a passenger surrendering the marijuana he had been smoking prior to beginning his afternoon hunt. Enforcement action taken.

CO Greg Patten was called to a dispute between waterfowl hunters as one was reported to have set a blind 15 feet lakeward of another blind on Muskegon Lake. When he arrived, CO Patten determined this to be true and had to attempt to settle the issue of sportsmanship and sharing the resource between the two hunters. Several COs reported conflicts related to very low water levels and confined hunting areas.

DISTRICT 8

While conducting a shining patrol, **CO Kyle Bader** stopped a vehicle shining a remote road. The driver had an uncased bow in the back seat. He said it was in there because he was hunting earlier in the day. The excuse he

Vandalism blamed for 5,700 coho deaths at Platte River Hatchery

BEULAH—State officials say that vandalism is the likely cause of late night damage to the Platte River State Fish Hatchery that killed 5,700 coho salmon here.

The incident was discovered on the morning of October 5 when Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fisheries Division staff arrived for work. The dead fish were in one of the maturation ponds in the upper weir, they said.

"This is the first time in 45 years where we have had this type of incident at this facility," said Gary Whelan, DNR fish production manager. "It could have put our entire coho salmon program in serious jeopardy."

It appeared that the fish were forcibly crowded into a small area, which blocked water flow through the screens and created conditions in which the dissolved oxygen concentrations became lethal, he said.

"The loss of this program would have cost the state economy millions of dollars in revenue," Whelan said. "We were exceptionally fortunate to have an above-average coho salmon spawning run this year and will still have enough adults to fully meet our coho salmon egg take needs."

The dead salmon—which included 5,130 adults and 570 small jacks (yearlings)—were salvaged by American-Canadian Fisheries Inc., the contractor for the surplus salmon carcasses from DNR weirs that are used in the fish meat industry.

Additional security measures were put in place to protect the remaining fish at the hatchery, a key egg take facility.

"We would appreciate any information on this incident to assist us with our investigation," said Edward Eisch, the DNR's northern Lower Peninsula fish production manager.

Eisch said the information can be provided to any Michigan conservation officer, or by phoning the RAP (Report All Poaching) hotline at 1-800-292-7800.

gave for the loaded and uncased .22 rifle on the back seat was that he was shooting cats in his yard. The rifle safety was in the "fire" position. He was advised of legal issues with shooting cats and issued tickets for the uncased weapon and shining with weapons in possession.

CO Jeff Goss contacted a subject next to the railroad tracks coming out of a hunting blind. After talking to the subject it was discovered that he was not hunting; however he had been hanging marijuana plants in his blind to dry. A subsequent search of the area located several marijuana plants growing in the woods. A search of the residence revealed several bags and jars containing marijuana as well as four illegal muskrats and a mink. All total, over 600 grams of marijuana were seized and charges are being sought.

DISTRICT 9

While checking anglers in the evening hours, CO Todd Szyska encountered anglers attempting to cast for and catch walleyes. However, one of the subjects did not

have a fishing license; he claimed he had never bought one in his life. After running the subject's information through the license system, it was determined that he was telling the truth and had never purchased one. Enforcement action was taken.

While responding to a complaint in Macomb County, **COs Todd Szyska** and **Kris Kiel** observed a subject dressed in green carrying a long gun in a field. The COs attempted to contact the subject, who put his firearm down but barricaded himself in his barn and refused to come out. The COs called in back-up. In the meantime, as the COs tried talking the subject out, the subject was yelling profane, anti-government and anti-law enforcement language at the COs. Shortly after back-up arrived, the subject came out. After talking with the subject, it was determined that he had some previous bad experiences with other law enforcement agencies. The subject admitted to hunting woodchucks on his own property without wearing hunter orange. Enforcement action was taken.

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