



**“The newspaper for people
who love the north”**



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**THE
NORTHWOODS
CALL**

Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953



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2013**



Mary Lou & Glen Sheppard

Mary Lou Sheppard loses battle against cancer

Mary Lou Sheppard, widow and longtime business partner of former *North Woods Call* publisher Glen Sheppard, died December 29 at her home near Charlevoix. She was 79.

She had battled cancer in recent months, undergoing treatment last summer. In August, however, she was told by her doctor that the treatment was not working and that nothing more could be done.

Since then, she has been at home, being cared for by one of her daughters. In a recent e-mail to *The Call*, Mary Lou said she planned to stay there “until the end.” “Some days are good and some are not,” she said, “but there will be no more chemo or radiation treatments.”

During the last several weeks, low energy and

“chemo brain” sometimes made it nearly impossible for her to answer e-mail and otherwise operate her computer—or even talk on the phone—but she still enjoyed hearing from friends, loved ones and those she became acquainted with through *The North Woods Call*.

Despite her deteriorating health, she was reportedly in fairly good spirits over the Christmas holiday. In fact, she was delighted by several well-wishes and cards during the yuletide season, according to her daughter, Jackie Anderson.

“Last August, she flew out to see my sister in Seattle,” Anderson said in a recent e-mail update. “They had the best time. She really wanted to travel more

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North Woods Notes

GREAT LAKES REPORT: The Michigan Office of the Great Lakes released its annual State of the Great Lakes Report in mid-December. The report—compiled by the Office of the Great Lakes and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality—includes an introduction by Gov. Rick Snyder and discussions of such relevant topics as the sustainability of systems, water quality, water use, aquatic invasive species, Great Lakes Fisheries, coastal wetlands, localized restoration efforts and shared governance as key to the Great Lakes’ future. Overall, the focus is on cooperation and collaboration, and tangible improvements through restoration projects and partnerships.

SKI THE PORKIES: Porcupine Mountains State Park in Ontonagon County is hosting cross-country skiing and snowshoeing by lantern light on Saturday evenings in January and February. The one-mile trail is rated “easy,” although snowshoeing at night can be a challenge. There is a warming shelter where skiers can join the park naturalist for a campfire and refreshments.

SLED DOGS AT MUSKALLONGE: The 14th Annual Tahquamenon Country Sled Dog Race was held January 5 at Muskallonge Lake State Park. The race, which had been held at the Rainbow Lodge on the mouth of the Two-Hearted River for the past 13 years, was changed due to the 2012 Duck Lake fire, which swept through the northern section of Luce County last spring, destroying the lodge and much of the trail system that the race had run on in prior years.

WINTER CAMPING: A handful of select Michigan State Parks are offering a unique winter getaway experience—“yurts.” Yurts are sturdy, round tent-like structures that have become popular alternative lodging options for winter hikers and cross-country skiers. They are available at the Porcupine Mountains State Wilderness Area and Craig Lake State Park in the Upper Peninsula, as well as at the Pinckney and Waterloo Recreation Areas in the Lower Peninsula. They are equipped with bunk beds and mattresses, a table, chairs and wood stove. Cost is \$60 per night, plus an \$8 reservation fee. The yurts can accommodate four people.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP: The Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies near Mancelona, Michigan, continues to play a lead role in equipping Christian students for the important work of serving, protecting and restoring God’s earth. In 2012, Au Sable added an Applied Geographic Information Systems (GIS) course, grew its river research program and added two new graduate fellowship chapters at the University of Minnesota and the University of California-Berkeley, as well as 11 new graduate fellows. The institute is looking forward to continuing this work in 2013. For more information, or to contribute to the Au Sable Institute’s work, visit ausable.org.

FUR-BEARER REGISTRATION: Several Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offices are offering registration hours for successful trappers and hunters during the 2012-2013 fur-harvester season. Anyone taking a bobcat, river otter, fisher, marten, or incidental catch must bring the animal to a designated check station for examination. For a full list of locations—including hours and contact information—visit www.michigan.gov/trapping.

SPRING TURKEY APPLICATIONS: Spring turkey applications are now on sale through February 1. The application fee is \$4. Hunters may apply for one limited-quota license, or purchase a license for Hunt 234, which does not require the application fee. Licenses can be purchased at any authorized license agent, as well as online at michigan.gov/hunt/drawings. The turkey season runs from April 22 through May 31, with hunts lasting from seven to 39 days, depending on the hunt unit. A total of 114,290 licenses are available.

TRAIL PLAN: A draft plan for motorized, non-motorized and water trails in Michigan can be viewed at the DNR’s *State Parks and Trails and Pathways* web pages. Comments will be accepted through Jan. 25.

MOONLIGHT SNOWSHOE HIKE: The Pierce Cedar Creek Institute near Hastings will host a moonlight snowshoe hike from 7 to 9 p.m. on January 25. Snowshoes are available for rent (\$5), or participants can bring their own. Hot chocolate and treats will be available in the visitor center after the hike. You can register by calling (269) 721-4190, or at www.cedarcreekinstitute.org. The cost to non-members is \$6, while members are free.

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Mining severance tax

New law may hurt Michigan resource protection

Some Michigan conservationists are concerned that a series of new bills signed by Gov. Rick Snyder could pave the way for additional mining operations in the state and make it harder for citizens and advocacy groups to stop these activities in environmentally sensitive areas.

The governor signed the six-bill package revising the tax structure for mineral extraction in late December during a ceremony at the Rio Tinto Eagle Mine in Marquette County.

“This is not going to help our cause,” bemoaned one observer who is hoping to stop a proposed open-pit mining operation south of Newberry in the Upper Peninsula.

The legislation will place a 2.75 percent severance tax on gross mineral value on specified non-ferrous metallic minerals such as copper and nickel. The tax replaces the property tax, corporate income tax, sales tax and use tax on mining companies.

The bills allow 65 percent of the revenue from the severance tax to be retained by counties, townships, school districts and the school-aid fund, officials said. The remaining 35 percent would go into a rural development fund to support long-term regional economic opportunities, they said.

“This is phenomenal news for the people of the Upper Peninsula, who need more good-paying jobs that the mining industry can offer,” said outgoing state Rep. Matt Huuki (R-Atlantic Mine), who introduced the bills. “The tax reforms will lower start-up costs to encourage companies to locate here while protecting existing mining jobs.”

“This is transformative legislation that will have far-reaching implications,” added Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba) who helped get the legislation passed and was also on hand at the signing. “It is simple, fair, and transparent. As such, it is sure to attract mining companies to ex-

plore and invest in the Upper Peninsula, creating good-paying jobs and inspiring economic development in the region.”

As appealing as good-paying jobs and economic development are, conservationists say that the last thing state forests and natural areas need are large-scale mining operations to scar the land and pollute the waters of the Upper Peninsula. Besides, they say, promised financial returns for local governments often don’t fully materialize and the State of Michigan stands to make the lion’s share of any profit.

Supporters of the legislation, meanwhile, insist it is good for both local governments and new mining operations. Not only does it ease up-front costs for companies—they will no longer pay taxes until they start extracting minerals—but it also provides local communities with stabilized revenue for small townships throughout upper Michigan, they said.



Michigan Mines

The mining industry has a long and storied history in the Great Lakes State, as evidenced by these crumbling remnants photographed last summer at the old Cliffs Shaft mine in Ishpeming. Mining companies today have shown a renewed interest in Michigan—particularly the Upper Peninsula—much to the consternation of conservationists and citizens whose zeal for protecting nature often outweighs the arguments for economic development and job creation. It’s unclear whether the practical need to use resources will triumph over the noble desire to preserve them, as has often occurred. (See related story on Page 2).

Mary Lou Sheppard dies after battle with cancer

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and thought that she would have more time to do so, but then the cancer hit.”

Anderson said her mother was doing “OK” before she got a cancer spot in her neck at the top of her spine. That spot was treated, Anderson said, but the treatment weakened the neck so much that it broke. So, along with the cancer, Mary Lou had a broken neck and had to wear a neck brace 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“I think if she didn’t have the neck issue she maybe would have fought harder,” Anderson said, but the neck issue limited what she could do and she couldn’t be left alone—which she hated.

Anderson said it was difficult to watch her mother go down so fast, but Mary Lou held up as well as could be expected and they had a Hospice team helping with her last wishes.

As of this writing, no memorial services had yet been scheduled. Arrangements were being handled by the Winchester Funeral Home

in Charlevoix.

Anderson said she talked to her mother about these things and even shared a few laughs over it.

Mary Lou wanted to be cremated, she said, then divided up among her children.

“Whenever one of us travels, she wants a little bit of her taken with us and then spread somewhere special,” Anderson said. That way, she said she will be traveling with each one of us and seeing something special.”

Occasionally, when her mother would get frustrated or upset, Anderson would joke that she was going to sprinkle Mary Lou’s ashes someplace “yucky.”

“I’d get that look only a mother can give you,” she said.

Mary Lou was preceded in death by her husband, Glen, in January 2011. The couple had been stewards of *The North Woods Call* legacy since 1969.

After publishing a special memorial edition in February of that year, she closed the business and looked forward to other things. In

August of 2011, she sold what was left of the publication—basically the name and latest mailing list—to the current publisher.

“I don’t know why you would want to take on all that work,” she said at the time, clearly relieved that she was finally getting out from under the constant grind of the newspaper’s production schedule.

“Those who knew her best say she had a ‘heart of gold,’” said *Call* Editor Mike VanBuren. “She really seemed to be Shep’s compass and the one who held the business together all those years. There was a reason he often referred to her as ‘The Boss.’”

“I very much enjoyed the time I spent with her—both before and after Shep’s passing—as I tried to negotiate with the two of them over a period of several years about *The Call*’s future. I will treasure the lunches I shared with Mary Lou in the little Ellsworth restaurant they frequented, and the encouragement and support she offered me during the past several months.”

Rushing for minerals in the Upper Peninsula

There seems to be somewhat of a mining renaissance in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, as mineral extraction firms rush in to capitalize on high commodity prices.

With copper and other metals trading on commodities markets at consistently high levels, companies are eyeing long-neglected deposits for what could be billions of dollars in profits.

Many local citizens and conservationists, of course, are concerned about these activities and are scrambling to find ways to protect the land—if not stop the mining altogether.

According to a recent report in

The New York Times, Rio Tinto, the world’s second-largest mining company, is going after nickel and copper near Big Bay and Marquette, and expects to start pulling ore out this year. Elsewhere to the south, Hudbay Minerals, a public mining company, is pursuing an estimated \$225 million project to mine precious and heavy metals, including, gold, silver, zinc and copper. And Orvana Minerals, a Canadian-based company, is seeking chalcocite in another project near Ironwood that the firm says will create \$2 billion in economic activity over 20 years.

Smaller companies are joining

the rush, too, searching for new ore deposits and studying known ones.

According to industry analysts, prices for copper, zinc, iron ore and other metals are likely to remain strong and continue to feed this flurry of activity.

Among other things, opponents are worried about long-term damage to the environment and how sustainable a mining-led economic recovery would actually be. But supporters see it as a welcome comeback for an industry that historically helped shape the social and economic contours of the region.

Support has been particularly strong in the western U.P. community of Ironwood, according to reports, where dozens of iron ore mines once employed thousands of people. Many residents have hopes that some of those mining jobs might return—if only temporarily—to help reduce high unemployment rates.

Critics say that communities have exaggerated expectations for what mining will do for the local economy and warn that mining towns never succeed over the long haul. U.P. communities, they say, would be better off diversifying.

Others say that mining could hurt water resources—especially Lake Superior—and that state and provincial laws protecting these resources are inconsistent and inadequate.

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, meanwhile, reportedly asked the United Nations last year to investigate and confirm their rights to protect the land and resources.

So the battle lines are clearly being drawn on a variety of fronts and it remains to be seen where it all leads. Conservationists say that those with concerns need to make their voices heard—NOW!

Our 60th Year: Looking Back to Jan. 27, 1954

— From the pages of *The North Woods Call* —

The bridge & “progress”

By Marguerite Gahagan

The far north woods will soon become closer to all people of the lower part of the state.

The north woods of the Upper Peninsula remain the last part of the state’s green forests still not easily accessible to any but dyed-in-wool sports enthusiasts. The recent decision by the Michigan Supreme Court cleared the decks for immediate construction of the Straits of Mackinac Bridge, a gigantic engineering project destined to open the far north country to millions of people in 1957.

As Gov. Williams pointed out, the bridge “will mean much in the promotion of Michigan prosperity and recreation.”

The expected flow of hundreds of thousands of travelers to the far north will bring added business to many communities of the northern Lower Peninsula. Citizens of Atlanta will find themselves benefitting, they believe, since roads near them will be kept in top-notch condition.

Other communities may find themselves scratching to keep the long-accustomed tourist trade they enjoyed so many years.

The northern part of the Lower Peninsula has grown up in the past 10 years. Lake property is expensive and scarce. Cabins dot the most densely wooded areas. The heavy influx of hunters has resulted in more and more land being put “under wire.” There is an increased feeling among many tourists that freedom to roam in the woods in an area now being built up spells an end to the “back to nature” they seek.

The Upper Peninsula offers them that.

The northern resort owners and communities may indeed have to seek ways of keeping their fans. The bridge will cut down travel time immeasurably. The long, painful waits for ferries will end. More and more people, rightly or mistakenly, will seek recreation, sport and relaxation farther north.

The opening of the bridge is scheduled for 1957. During the next three years, complacency must give way to initiative, to promotion and to community action if the golden avalanche of summer tourists and winter sports fans is not to be lost.

* * *

There is little likelihood that any community will become a ghost town as a result of the Straits bridge. But there is good likelihood that some communities will have to fight to retain their present status quo.

Trained in modern American business methods, few individuals will be content to live and work in a community having no prospect of growth, better economic conditions, or modern progress.

The construction of the bridge is bound to have many ramifications on Michigan’s way of life.

Hunters and Wildlife Conservation

Though often not widely recognized for their efforts, hunters are major contributors to wildlife conservation.

They help conserve and manage wildlife in three important ways.

First, for many wildlife species, hunting helps maintain populations at levels compatible with human activity, land use and available habitat. For example, it helps limit deer browse in agricultural areas and deer-car collisions.

Secondly, hunters pay for the bulk of wildlife conservation across the country through the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937, which created an excise tax on guns, ammunition, bows, arrows and other hunting-related equipment. This money—which is matched by state hunting license fees—is then apportioned to state wildlife agencies based on the land area and the number of licensed hunters in each state.

Finally, hunters have banded together in local sportsmen’s clubs and national organizations to raise funds for conservation,

preserve private lands for habitat and lobby for legislation that benefits wildlife.

How many other resource-users can make these claims?

Wanted

Correspondents

We would like to hear from quality writers & reporters interested in contributing conservation-related news from across Michigan—particularly in the northern lower and upper peninsulas, and the capital city of Lansing.

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North Woods Notes

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LONG LAKE PROJECT: Thanks to a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy is one step closer to a new recreation area in Long Lake Township near Traverse City. The Timbers Recreation Area—formerly the Timbers Girl Scout Camp—will provide residents and visitors an opportunity to enjoy the Long Lake waterfront in a natural setting. It will also provide options for fishing, hiking, kite-flying, wildlife viewing and much more.

HUNTER EDUCATION AWARD: Richard Woodbury of Hart, Michigan, has been named the 2012 Volunteer Hunter Education Instructor by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Woodbury started teaching hunter safety in 1997 and serves with his wife, Melissa, as coordinator of Oceana County’s hunter education efforts. The couple not only conducts hunter education classes, but also assists other instructors in developing their classes and recruits additional teachers.

MEIJER INC. & CONSERVATION: Retail giant Meijer Inc. was recently presented with an award honoring the company as a partner in Michigan conservation. “Meijer is a valuable partner in our efforts to increase participation in hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation,” said DNR Director Keith Creagh in presenting the award. “We’re pleased to recognize this Michigan-based company for supporting the youth of this state and helping to keep our state’s outdoor tradition strong.” Meijer has long been one of the state’s top license vendors and has supported many local programs aimed at getting Michigan residents outdoors, Creagh said, but the company was singled out for a program it initiated in 2008 that pays for junior hunting licenses.

For updates, t-shirts & caps,
visit our website at:
www.mynorthwoodscall.com



Bill could expand registration rules

Guns targeted by U.S. lawmakers

Law-abiding gun owners would be required to submit to photographs and fingerprinting under proposed legislation by U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California).

Feinstein said she and her staff have been working on the legislation for more than a year and planned to introduce the bill early this year.

The bill ostensibly aims at stopping the sale of more than 100 so-called "assault" rifles and handguns, while exempting more than 900 hunting and sporting firearms, the senator said. Feinstein authored the 1994 "Federal Assault Weapons Ban" that expired in 2004 and this latest effort at gun control would update that earlier law, she said.

"It will be carefully focused on the most dangerous guns that have killed so many people over the years," Feinstein said, "while protecting the rights of gun owners by exempting hundreds of weapons that fall outside the bill's scope. We must take these dangerous weapons of war off our streets."

Feinstein said the legislation would protect legitimate hunters and the rights of existing gun owners by "grandfathering" weapons legally possessed on the date of enactment and exempting hundreds of specifically named weapons used for hunting and

sporting purposes, as well as antique, manually operated and permanently disabled weapons.

But there's more to it than she and her supporters might have American citizens believe.

In addition to banning the sale, transfer, importation, or manufacturing of semi-automatic rifles, handguns and shotguns that can accept detachable magazines and/or fixed magazines that take more than ten rounds, the proposed law would outlaw large-capacity magazines, clips and drums capable of holding more than ten rounds.

What bothers gun-rights advocates most of all, though, is a proposed requirement for background checks, photographs and fingerprinting of anyone owning these types of weapons—including those who already legally possess them.

While such weapons obtained earlier under existing law would be "grandfathered" in for current owners, they would still have to be formally registered under the National Firearms Act. That includes "positive identification"—including photos and prints—as well as certification from local law enforcement as to a person's identity and the fact that his or her possession would not violate state or local law.

More government spending would also be authorized, by providing dedicated funding to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to implement registration.

National Rifle Association (NRA) officials said that new gun regulations will not make children—or anyone else—safer and that a recently announced White House task force on gun violence may try to undermine the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

"A gun is a tool," said the NRA's Wayne LaPierre. "The problem is the criminal."

LaPierre said it makes little sense to pile another law "on top of twenty thousand laws, when most of the federal gun laws we don't even enforce."

"The average guy in the country values his freedom, doesn't believe the fact he can own a gun is part of the problem and doesn't like the media and all these high-profile politicians blaming him," LaPierre said in late December on NBC's "Meet the Press" television show.

See Page 5 Viewpoint article in this issue for more information about this bill and some additional perspective from the National Rifle Association.

2012 survey results

Call readers share broad range of outdoor interests

The 2012 Readership Survey has revealed a broad range of personal interests among members of *The North Woods Call* community.

An equivalent of 12.5 percent of current subscribers—or 50 people—responded to the survey. Those who took the opportunity to express their opinions ranged from a few who had never subscribed (6 percent of respondents) to individuals who have been subscribers for 30 years or more (18 percent).

The largest category of survey participants (36 percent) have subscribed to *The Call* for 10 to 20 years. Eight percent of respondents have subscribed for less than one year, six percent for one to five years, 12 percent for five to 10 years and 10 percent from 20 to 30 years.

Nearly all said they liked most aspects of the newspaper—both design and content—and a similar number reported that they planned to continue subscribing to the publication.

Sixty percent own a vacation home or recreational property—six percent of those located in southern Michigan, 44 percent in northern Michigan and 10 percent in the Upper Peninsula.

"We appreciate the insights provided by everyone who participated in the survey," said Publisher Mike VanBuren. "We had hoped to hear from even more people, but those who did respond offered valuable information that will help us shape our news coverage going forward. For the most part, we seem to be on track with the subjects we have featured so far."

Major interests were spread across most categories, with rivers and streams receiving the most mention (88 percent), and "other"—one percent suggested "climate change"—receiving the least (two percent).

Additional primary interests are as follows:

Hunting (50 percent), fishing (70 percent), air quality (46 percent), water quality (76 percent), energy (40 percent), public policy (64 percent), inland lakes (54 percent), boating (30 percent), rails to trails (28 percent), forestry (62 percent), the Great Lakes (74 percent), environmental organizations (54 per-

cent), Native American issues (18 percent), outdoor media (20 percent), wildlife management (62 percent), hiking (46 percent), camping (50 percent), canoeing & kayaking (62 percent), bicycling (24 percent), bird watching (64 percent), mushrooming (34 percent), snowshoeing (20 percent), nature study (58 percent), sustainable agriculture (22 percent), sightseeing (36 percent), parks & recreation (60 percent) and Michigan conservation history (72 percent).

"Probably the biggest surprise of the survey," according to VanBuren, "was the number of people who said they would be satisfied with receiving *The Call* once-a-month, as opposed to the current twice-monthly schedule."

Twenty-two percent actually opted for monthly distribution, he said, while another 44 percent said "either is fine with me."

"That's two-thirds of respondents who don't seem to be vested in the twice-monthly model," VanBuren said. "Only twenty percent clearly said they wanted to receive *The Call* twice-a-month."

As current subscription trends suggest, most readers still prefer the printed version of the newspaper—about two-to-one over the electronic option—and are willing to pay extra for that service.

About 16 percent of survey participants specifically mentioned additional things that they'd like to see in *The Call*—such as even more coverage of current environmental issues and greater "watchdogging" of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Quality. Others suggested more emphasis on breaking news; good photos; electronic links to government agencies in news reports; "serial stories" that begin in one issue and continue in the next; more about partnerships; interviews with "old timers (similar to what Marguerite Gahagan did in the publication's early days); Ranger Rick-type educational pieces; information about Boy & Girl Scouting; time-sensitive updates that need citizen action; and features about watersheds.

(See some specific reader comments on Page 4).

OKs streamlining purchases

Governor vetoes concealed gun bill

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder last month vetoed legislation that would have allowed concealed weapons in churches, schools and day-care centers.

Senate Bill 59 would have permitted concealed pistol license holders who completed additional training to carry a concealed pistol in places that are currently off limits under Michigan law. It would have at the same time prohibited openly carrying guns in those places, while allowing permit holders to carry concealed weapons—unless the locations declared themselves weapons-free zones. Under the bill as passed, only private venues could have opted out, as could college and universities with "constitutional autonomy," according to the governor's office.

Currently, Michigan law does not prevent a concealed pistol license holder from openly carrying a pistol in these zones.

While Snyder rejected Senate Bill 59, he did sign two other bills that streamline the process for handgun purchase and eliminate restrictions on interstate rifle and shotgun transactions to states contiguous to Michigan.

Snyder's veto primarily was based on the legislation's failure to let designated public entities—such as schools, day-care centers, hospitals and churches—opt out of the new concealed carry provisions.

"While we must vigilantly protect the rights of law-abiding firearm owners, we also must ensure the right of designated public entities to exercise their best discretion in matters of safety and security," the governor said. "These public venues need clear legal authority to ban firearms on their premises if they see fit to do so."

Snyder said he more closely scrutinized the bill in the wake of December's elementary school massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. He also pointed to memories of a fatal shooting in his college dormitory more than three decades ago as informing his decision.

"This type of violence often leaves society with more questions than answers," Snyder said. "The reasons for such appalling acts usually are numerous and complex. With that in mind, we must consider legislation like Senate Bill 59 in a holistic manner. While the bill's goal is to help prevent needless violence, Michigan will be better served if we view it through a variety of lenses. A thoughtful review that examines issues such as school emergency policies, disenfranchised youth and mental health services may lead to more answers and better safeguards."

Michigan firearm purchases

The two gun-related bills that Snyder did sign were House Bill 5225 and Senate Bill 984.

Under House Bill 5225, sponsored by Rep. Paul Opsommer (R-Dewitt), the permit to purchase was retained for non-concealed pistol license holders who wish to purchase a handgun through a private person-to-person sale.

The Michigan Pistol Database, managed by the State Police, is also retained under the law and citizens can obtain a permit to purchase a handgun at any law enforcement agency, rather than only at their local police or sheriff's department. In addition, individuals who have a permit to purchase a handgun will now have 30 days, rather than ten days, to make the purchase.

The bill also eliminates the requirement for obtaining a permit to purchase for all handgun sales that occur through a federally licensed firearms dealer.

Senate Bill 294, sponsored by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), eliminates restrictions on interstate rifle and shotgun transactions to states that are non-contiguous to Michigan. Currently, Michigan residents may purchase rifles and shotguns in any contiguous state if they conform to the Federal Gun Control Act, the regulations issued under the Act and the laws of the state in which the purchase is made.

Forest plan review period extended

Due to the complexity and importance of its draft Regional State Forest Management Plans, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has extended the public review and comment period through March 8, 2013.

The DNR developed the three draft plans—which cover the eastern Upper Peninsula, the western Upper Peninsula and the northern Upper Peninsula—by seeking input from a diverse group of stakeholders. This group represented government organizations, outdoor recreation, the forest industry, conservation agencies and citizens.

Once finalized, the plans will provide long-term, landscape-level direction for resource managers "that will guide DNR decisions about activities and treatments on state forest land,"

DNR officials said.

"Review of the plans has been under way since early October," said Bill O'Neill, chief of the DNR's Forest Resources Division. "While we've already received great feedback, some interested individuals and organizations have asked for more time."

The extension also gives the DNR an opportunity to update some of the harvest numbers in the drafts, O'Neill said. The update will provide a larger number of harvest acres for a number of species, including aspen, he said.

Those with comments should submit them either via e-mail to forestplancomments@michigan.gov, or by mail to DNR Forest Resources Division, Forest Planning and Operations Section, P.O. Box 30452, Lansing, Michigan 48909-7952.

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Please join our efforts to keep readers fully informed about conservation and outdoor issues by providing us with news tips and/or photographs. Send your tips, ideas and photos to: editor@mynorthwoodsall.com.

Opinion Page

Conservation Quote

"The purpose of conservation: The greatest good to the greatest number of people for the longest time."

— Gifford Pinchot

Guns and Outlaws

When Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder vetoed legislation that would have allowed concealed weapons in churches, schools and day-care centers, his reasoning was understandable. After all, it's difficult to make a coherent argument in favor of broader gun rights in the face of what occurred recently at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut.

Yet, it is equally incoherent to suggest, as some have, that guns in and of themselves—a mere mechanical assembly of steel hammers, springs, triggers and barrels—are somehow responsible for the darkness found in human hearts.

The root causes of this unspeakable mayhem run much deeper than the constitutional right of citizens to keep and bear arms. Society itself is broken and we've allowed evil in various forms to metastasize and spread across our culture. Simply adding to the myriad laws already on the books that regulate weapons and outlaw violent assaults will not fix this problem.

And blaming those who have taken the appropriate classes, submitted to background checks, and voluntarily allowed police to take their fingerprints so they could be legally licensed to carry a concealed weapon is counterproductive.

There are many millions of law-abiding gun owners across this land who are as abhorred as anyone at the murderous rampages we have witnessed at the hands of outlaws and maladjusted miscreants. Encroaching further on the rights of responsible citizens is not going to turn social misfits from their diabolical desires.

Those intent on doing evil will always find a way—to the everlasting shock and consternation of the rest of us. In fact, the deadliest school massacre on American soil reportedly occurred in Chicago in 1958 when a student set fire to the school, killing 92 children and three nuns. Closer to home—in Bath, Michigan, during 1927—a former member of the school board set bombs at three schools, killing 45 (mostly second- to sixth-graders), including the bomber himself.

We know that this is of little comfort to those wrestling with the current wave of tragedies. And gun critics sound credible enough when they say that the average sport shooter has no need for the firepower provided by semi-automatic weapons and large ammunition clips. That's probably true, in most instances.

But we must remember that the Second Amendment is less about hunting and target practice than it is about protecting individuals from tyrannical governments, foreign invaders and the seemingly growing number of bad guys in our midst. It is in those cases that citizens must have the weapons needed to defend themselves and their families.

On that point, we agree with National Rifle Association Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre, who said, "The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun."

The Population Bomb

In one of former publisher Glen Sheppard's first editorials after taking over *The North Woods Call* in 1969, he pondered a letter from a Cheboygan mother of five who complained about his position on population control.

"Is not a human soul more precious to God than that of animals?" the woman had asked.

Population control, Shep responded, is not to save the deer, fish, or quiet places. It is to save mankind from the problems associated with too much pressure on a finite number of resources.

That was nearly 45 years ago when the earth's population was 3.6 billion. We continue to debate this issue today while human population grows exponentially—to more than 7 billion at last count. On one hand, who but God is to decide who lives and who doesn't. Yet an overcrowded planet can result in aberrant human behavior, competition for food supplies, excessive pollution and numerous other strains on our "life support system."

This population growth was dramatically illustrated by an electronic map we once saw at the Monterey Bay Aquarium in California. The chronological map had a series of lights that came on to show population density each year from the beginning of human history through the present. At first, the increase seemed minimal, but quickly grew in brightness and intensity during succeeding years, as mankind spread around the world and continued to reproduce.

That's a disturbing message for those of us who don't like crowds.

We're not sure how to diffuse this ticking time bomb, but it's worth thinking about the moral and ethical alternatives.

Snow country: Living in a "winter wonderland"

Winter has finally arrived in Michigan and we're settled in for at least three more months of snow and ice.

At least that's the expectation—assuming we don't have another year of unseasonably warm temperatures and lower-than-normal precipitation.

Whatever happens, we're prepared for the worst (or best, depending on your perspective).

The snow blower is fueled and parked in the garage, the wooden-handled shovels are standing at rapt attention nearby, and the heavy coats and boots are hogging space in the closet near the back door.

We even have a bag of rock salt for those troublesome days when neither snow nor rain fall and slippery ice glazes the curving hill that dominates our 200-foot-long driveway.

The bird feeders have also been filled with seed and suet, and we have stockpiled a generous supply of shelled corn and wood pellets for the stove in our family room.

These preparations are performed in a half-hearted manner these days, as the thought of snow does not bring the same excitement that it once did.

Age may have something to do with this changing attitude—or maybe the general wisdom that is supposed to come with it. Cold is painful, my brain suggests, and higher temperatures are usually better—within reason.

If I owned a ski lodge, snow machine, or plowing service, I would probably feel differently, but as it is I sometimes yearn for a warm beach in Aruba.

Not that windswept snow and frozen lakes are all bad. There's something about winter that speaks joyfully of physical renewal and spiritual regeneration. And spring wouldn't be nearly as glorious if it wasn't for the frigid weather that precedes it.

As an adult, snowshoeing is one of my favorite outdoor activities. It is peaceful, exhilarating and filled with benefits for the

2012 survey

A brief sampling of specific reader comments

Here is a sampling of some comments that accompanied responses to the 2012 Reader Survey (*See story on Page 3*):

"As Shep would say, 'Do what's best for the resource.'"

"I want to know what's happening to Michigan's environment from a source who loves nature."

"Keep Michigan politicians honest and environmental issues transparent."

"The North Woods Call has been great over the years. The absolute death of good conservation and environmental reporting, and 'muckraking' is appalling."

"The Call is my favorite newspaper and keeps me informed on all the most important topics."

"It always came across as 'what is best for wildlife and the environment,' as opposed to many papers and magazines that seem to support special interest groups, or the personal opinions of the writers."

North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



heart and lungs. As a kid, there was nothing like riding a Flexible Flyer down a steep, snow-covered embankment, or gliding across an icy pond on a new pair of ice skates that came wrapped in paper and ribbon on Christmas day.

But shoveling sidewalks and driveways when I'd rather be doing something else—or helplessly watching my \$30,000 vehicle be eaten alive by excessive county road salt—just don't fit into my current definition of fun.

It could well be the length and incline of my driveway that soured my mood toward winter, but maybe I just come by it naturally.

For as long as I can remember, my father has ranted and raved against the miseries of winter. As a kid—when I didn't have anything better to do than jump out of trees into snowdrifts—I didn't quite understand this annual resistance to polar air masses and lake-effect accumulation.

Now it makes a whole lot more sense.

But I think even my dad enjoyed winter weather on occasion—such as when he would hook long ropes to our sleds and pull us down the road behind his 1949 Ford after big winter storms. I can still remember the rhythmic rattling and crunching of steel tire chains as the old Ford yanked us along the rural byways near our home.

Once, an equestrian neighbor did something similar for my friends and me during an off-road adventure that found our sleds tethered to her horse. That was more challenging, because each rider had to hook his feet into the next sled to pull it along. I was in front—directly behind the horse—bearing the collective weight of the other sleds, holding on tight with my hands and feet,

while trying to shield my face from clumps of hard-packed snow thrown from the horse's hooves.

Ah, the wonders of childhood.

I think winter is probably easier to take in the far northern parts of Michigan, where there generally seems to be more and better snow. In many downstate locations, the snow too often seems wet, dirty and unappealing compared to the pure white fluffiness that one encounters in the true north woods.

In the northern Lower and Upper Peninsulas, the culture and economy shifts with the advent of winter to accommodate the regularly replenished whiteness and its related outdoor activities. Further south, such inclement weather is just one more thing for people to complain about.

I guess I'm no different than anybody else these days. I love the snow when it's fresh and pure, but loathe it when it unceremoniously clogs my driveway and becomes contaminated with salty slush and dirty grime.

Each major snowstorm at once excites and disillusion me.

Years ago, when heavy snows first fell on the forests and fields near our home, I would curiously follow numerous trails left by cottontail rabbits as they traversed to and from the protective cover of low-hanging conifer branches and thick brush piles. It was a clear sign that winter had arrived.

I don't see so many rabbits anymore in the area where I live, but I remember the cottontails of days gone by and the happy abandonment with which they romped across the wilds of my youth.

I sometimes replay this image in my mind and think about the many wonderful things of winter—even as I gradually tire of the annual hardships that always seem to accompany the season.

"So happy to have The North Woods Call back."

The North Woods Call

Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

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Viewpoint

Feinstein goes for broke with new gun-ban bill

The following opinion piece was issued as a legislative update by the National Rifle Association and should be of interest to many North Woods Call readers:

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-California)—author of the federal “assault weapon” and “large” ammunition magazine ban of 1994—has announced that on the first day of the new Congress, January 3, she will introduce a bill to which her 1994 ban will pale by comparison.

On Dec. 17th, Feinstein said, “I have been working with my staff for over a year on this legislation” and “It will be carefully focused.”

Indicating the depth of her research on the issue, she said on Dec. 21st that she had personally looked at pictures of guns in 1993, and again in 2012.

According to a Dec. 27th posting on Sen. Feinstein’s website and a draft of the bill obtained by (the National Rifle Association), the new ban would, among other things, adopt new definitions of “assault weapon” that would affect a much larger variety of firearms, require current owners of such firearms to register them with the federal government under the National Firearms Act, and require forfeiture of the firearms upon the deaths of their current owners. Some of the changes in Feinstein’s new bill are as follows:

* Reduces, from two to one, the number of permitted external features on various firearms. The 1994 ban permitted various firearms to be manufactured only

if they were assembled with no more than one feature listed in the law. Feinstein’s new bill would prohibit the manufacture of the same firearms with even one of the features.

* Adopts new lists of prohibited external features. For example, whereas the 1994 ban applied to a rifle or shotgun, the “pistol grip” of which “protrudes conspicuously beneath the action of the weapon,” the new bill would drastically expand the definition to include any “grip—or any other characteristic that can function as a grip.” Also, the new bill adds “forward grip” to the list of prohibiting features for rifles, defining it as “a grip located forward of the trigger that functions as a pistol grip.” Read literally and in conjunction with the reduction from two features to one, the new language would apply to every detachable-magazine semi-automatic rifle. At a minimum, it would, for example, ban all models of the AR-15, even those developed for compliance with California’s highly restrictive ban.

* Carries hyperbole further than the 1994 ban. Feinstein’s 1994 ban listed “grenade launcher” as one of the prohibiting features for rifles. Her 2013 bill goes even further into the ridiculous, by also listing “rocket launcher.” Such devices are restricted under the National Firearms Act and, obviously, are not standard components of the firearms Feinstein wants to ban. Perhaps a subsequent Feinstein bill will add “nuclear bomb,” “particle beam weapon,” or some-

thing else equally far-fetched to the features list.

* Expands the definition of “assault weapon” by including:

1) Three very popular rifles: The M-1 Carbine (introduced in 1944 and for many years sold by the federal government to individuals involved in marksmanship competition), a model of the Ruger Mini-14, and most or all models of the SKS.

2) Any “semi-automatic, centerfire, or rimfire rifle that has a fixed magazine with the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds,” except for tubular-magazine .22s.

3) Any “semi-automatic, centerfire, or rimfire rifle that has an overall length of less than 30 inches,” any “semi-automatic handgun with a fixed magazine that has the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds,” and any semi-automatic handgun that has a threaded barrel.

* Requires owners of existing “assault weapons” to register them with the federal government under the National Firearms Act (NFA). The NFA imposes a \$200 tax per firearm, and requires an owner to submit photographs and fingerprints to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATFE), to inform the BATFE of the address where the firearm will be kept, and to obtain the BATFE’s permission to transport the firearm across state lines.

* Prohibits the transfer of “assault weapons.” Owners of other firearms, including those covered by the NFA, are permitted to sell them or pass them to heirs. However, under Feinstein’s new bill, “assault weapons” would remain with their current owners until their deaths, at which point they would be forfeited to the government.

* Prohibits the domestic manufacture and the importation of magazines that hold more than 10 rounds of ammunition. The 1994 ban allowed the importation of such magazines that were manufactured before the ban took effect. Whereas the 1994 ban protected gun owners from errant prosecution by making the government prove when a magazine was made, the new ban includes no such protection. The new ban also requires firearm dealers to certify the date of manufacture of any larger than 10-round magazine sold, a nearly impossible task, given that virtually no mag-

(Continued on Page 6)

2013 lake sturgeon season starts Feb. 2

Lake sturgeon fishing and spearing on Black Lake in Cheboygan County will begin at 8 a.m. Saturday, February 2.

All anglers must register to participate—but just once for the entire season.

Early registration is from 2 to 8 p.m. Friday, February 1, at the DNR Onaway Field Station. Those unable to register at that time may do so at 7 a.m. each day of the season at either the entrance booth to Onaway State Park, or a registration trailer located on Zolner Road at Black Lake.

The Wild Nearby

By Tom Springer



Thunk-a-trunk: A Christmas gift guaranteed to make you see red

Not until mid-afternoon on Christmas Eve Day was there finally a spare hour to inwardly prepare for the holiday. And to clear the head, there’s nothing like a long walk in the country—away from everything that jingles or bears a price tag.

At least that should have been the case. But you know how we mortals are; it’s the everyday blessings that we most overlook, and the routine of this three-mile route was one of them.

Such over-familiarity is a pitfall of the rooted life. After 17 years on the same route you, too, could describe it blindfolded. You’d know which neighbor’s house to covet and which cobbled-up barn repair jobs to pass judgment on. You’d know which untied dogs mean business and which ones will merely yip their fool heads off.

So on I trudged, lamenting about how much of our work and personal lives can drone along on autopilot. The grouching continued as I passed, for the umpteenth time, the same three horses in the same poop pasture.

A moment later, something jolted me out of my solstice doldrums.

It was nothing unusual; simply a cardinal, that most common and ordinary of native song birds. Yet this one, as he darted across the road like a scarlet comet, seemed at once the very embodiment of Christmas cheer.

I was, in the words of C.S. Lewis, “surprised by joy.” The little bird’s effusive red was the only bright spot in a landscape somber with gun metal gray hickories and ashen gray white oaks. He was for that moment—all two ounces of beak, claw and feather—the reigning king of his forest.

“How ‘bout that?” I blurted aloud. “What would a winter be without cardinals?”

Such luminous encounters with the wild nearby tend to open the mind’s eye. They quicken the senses and, for reasons unclear, are often signs of bigger revelations to come.

Sure enough, something truly unexpected showed up three minutes later. I was at the “dead coyote turnaround” (named for self-evident reasons)—the place where I usually turn back for home. What stopped me was the sight of another bird with a head crest. Except this one was a crow-sized 16 inches tall and of a kind I’ve not seen here before.

Picture a black, mini-pterodactyl that could have flown in straight from the set of the Flintstones. Imagine a black-and-white striped face set below a flame-red, punker mohawk of Johnnie Rotten vintage. Add a two-foot wingspan and there you have it: the pileated woodpecker, the largest bird of its kind on the North American continent.

The big fella flapped off (pileateds are too big to flit) into a silver maple swamp by the road. As he did, the undersides of its wings flashed downy white through the woods.

I sidestepped an empty quart bottle of Bud Light and eased into the tall timber for a closer look. A host of birds had sought shelter there from the harsh north wind. Downy woodpeckers and nuthatches flitted among the branches and pecked daintily at the trunks. Not so the pileated. He’d cock his head back at a 45-degree angle, then beak-slam forward with a thunk that rang out like a hammer’s fall. The chips he left behind could have been made by a carpenter with a wood chisel.

And what a racket his signature call made. Some birders maintain that artist Walter Lantz based his classic Woody the Woodpecker cartoon character on the pileated. When you hear the half-loony “nuk, nuk, nuk,” you’ll be inclined to believe that he did.

I stood and listened to the pileated’s stand-up routine until my frigid toes could stand no more.

But it was Christmas Eve and obligations waited at home as did two useful gifts: a warmer pair of walking shoes and a 35mm camera (my first that doesn’t use film). And now, thanks to the prescient ways of nature, a red-crested reason to use them both.

Gov. Snyder signs bill that opens door to wolf hunting

Michigan is another step closer to wolf hunting under a new law signed in late December by Gov. Rick Snyder.

Under the law, the Michigan Natural Resources Commission has the authority to establish hunting seasons for the gray wolf. The Commission was expected to get an update on the once-endangered species at its regular meeting this month.

The Humane Society and other opponents have been fighting the legislation for the past few months. A number of Native

American tribes in Michigan are among those against wolf hunting, because the animal holds a special status among tribal members and figures prominently in their creation stories.

The number of wolves in Michigan is about 700, wildlife experts say, compared to just under 300 a decade ago.

The population has reportedly grown since the federal government outlawed the killing of wolves four decades ago to keep them from going extinct in the lower 48 states.

Letter to the editor

Politics and the outdoors?

Editor,

I read with interest your response about the opinion page in a previous *North Woods Call*. My reaction to your opinion was, initially, why is he talking politics in an outdoor newspaper?”

I do know that politics play a part in most outdoor issues in today’s world. However, your choice of words in describing liberal/conservative voting probably set people off as to “tiresome,” etc.

I do know that I signed up for the “reincarnation” of *The Call* to read about outdoor issues and legislation that affects the outdoors.

As the editor, you have the right to give your opinion, but not everyone wants to hear what you think. I, for one, would rather hear about issues that affect nature, rather than how one feels politically.

Sincerely,
Woody Topp
Paw Paw, Michigan

Thanks, Woody. We hear you—and share your primary interest in the issues and legislation that impact the out-of-doors.

Unfortunately, an often-corrupt political system is part of the resource management equation and we all need to be open to various ideas as to how we can better govern ourselves in a free society.

In our view, a lot of what passes for leadership, civic debate and collective decision-making these days is rather pathetic—on both sides of the aisle. If we don’t stand together as responsible citizens to clearly identify and address this reality—wherever it exists—we will likely fall together as a society.

If that happens, it won’t much matter what we have done with our natural resources.

—Mike

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 street addresses or phone numbers, but we must have them to verify that letters are authentic. No unsigned letters will be used. It’s OK for your signature to be electronic.

Book Review:

“Waiting for the Morning Train”

By Bruce Catton
1972

Wayne State University Press
Detroit, Michigan

Here’s a thoughtful book by the late writer and noted Civil War authority Bruce Catton that lovers of northern Michigan and those troubled by the ever-growing influence of modern technology will want to read.

It is simultaneously a boyhood memoir and commentary on the “progress” of man—a story centered in Benzie County and the adjacent region along Lake Michigan’s eastern shore.

Catton grew up in Benzonia, a community built around a tiny, impoverished college, which later became an academy from which the author graduated in 1916.

The progress that mattered in those days was more moral and spiritual than material, and the lessons learned there shaped Catton’s values and personal perspective throughout life.

Like many of us, Catton was worried about such things as environmental decay, toxic pollution and nuclear holocaust. But what troubled him most was that people had apparently placed their faith in advancing technology, relinquishing control over it and mortgaging their future to it with the same trust that earlier generations had placed in God.

“The trouble with that kind of advance is that there is no end to it,” he wrote. “Development becomes compulsive. It is never possible to call a halt. Once you have taken the first step, you have committed yourself to take the last—some day—even if the last step goes straight off the edge of a precipice.

“The age of applied technology has one terrible aspect—each new technique has to be exploited to its absolute limit, until man becomes the victim of his own skills.”

The author laments the pervasiveness of automobiles and the “death” of Michigan’s wilderness at the hands of the lumber barons, who in the final third of the 19th century were directing an industry that “had ceased to be limited by the strength of man’s biceps and the power of running water.”

“In an unplanned, clumsy, unrecognized way (advances in technology) had led the lumbermen up to the edge of the headiest, most dangerous knowledge men had ever had—the knowledge that all the old limitations are gone and that quite literally he can do whatever he wants to do,” Catton wrote.

There was something about the north country, the author observed, that issued disquieting warnings about all this.

“To the south was the land of the mound builders,” he said, “whose best efforts produced nothing but unobtrusive scars on the earth; and all about us (in the north) were the bleak acres of stumps, the dying towns and the desolate farms that were being given up—discards in a game where most the players had lost. Now and then, these things demanded thought.”

Catton pointed to Sleeping Bear Dunes as something that looks eternal, but is not. The area’s constantly shifting sand shows that the earth is still being remodeled and hints that “the spirit back of the remodeling may be worth knowing.”

What protected man in the old days, Catton said, was his awareness that there were things he just could not do.

“Today, however, we can go anywhere and do anything,” he wrote, “and because the fabulous machine we have created can neither be reversed, put in neutral, or turned aside, we have to go and do to the utmost limit, which is as likely as not to be our own destruction.”



Hunting Milestones

A couple of Michigan hunters bagged their first white-tailed deer this past fall. It was a milestone for each. Ten-year-old Brien Keene of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan (above), got an 8-point buck on September 22 during the Michigan Youth Hunt—his first hunting experience. Brien is the son of Rick Keene and the grandson of Carole and Charles Keene, also of Mt. Pleasant. Meanwhile, Shirley Schneider of Bliss, Michigan (below), harvested her first deer on the opening day of the 2012 firearm season—just four days shy of her 70th birthday—at the family hunting camp near her home. Shirley’s brother—who was considered the “camp counselor”—and his wife both passed away recently, and the buck was shot from an apple orchard on their property. Shirley figures her brother sent the deer to her and who can argue with that? Although Shirley has hunted for many years, it was the first time she had actually fired at a deer. Her husband, Norm, was hunting with his son near Vestaburg that day and did not see his wife’s triumph. As a consolation prize, however, he bagged his own deer that day.



Viewpoint: NRA says Sen. Feinstein overreaches with new anti-gun bill

(Continued from Page 5)

azines are stamped with their date of manufacture.

* Targets handguns in defiance of the Supreme Court. The court ruled in *District of Columbia v. Heller* that the Second Amendment protects the right to have handguns for self-defense, in large part on the basis of the fact handguns are the type of firearm “overwhelmingly chosen by American society for that lawful purpose.” Semi-automatic pistols, which are the most popular handguns today, are designed to use detachable magazines, and the magazines “overwhelmingly chosen” by Americans for self-defense are those that hold more than 10 rounds. Additionally, Feinstein’s list of nearly 1,000 firearms exempted by name (see next paragraph) contains not a single handgun. Sen. Feinstein advocated banning handguns before being elected to the Senate, though she carried a handgun for her own personal protection.

* Contains a larger piece of window dressing than the 1994 ban. Whereas the 1994 ban included a list of approximately 600 rifles and shotguns exempted from the ban by name, the new bill’s list is increased to nearly 1,000 rifles and shotguns. Other

than for the 11 detachable-magazine semi-automatic rifles and one other semi-automatic rifle included in the list, the list appears to be pointless, because a separate provision of the bill exempts “any firearm that is manually operated by bolt, pump, lever, or slide action.”

On her website, Feinstein claims that a study for the DOJ found that the 1994 ban resulted in a 6.7 percent decrease in murders. To the contrary, this is what the study said: “At best, the assault weapons ban can have only a limited effect on total gun murders, because the banned weapons and magazines were never involved in more than a modest fraction of all gun murders. Our best estimate is that the ban contributed to a 6.7 percent decrease in total gun murders between 1994 and 1995. However, with only one year of post-ban data, we cannot rule out the possibility that this decrease reflects chance year-to-year variation rather than a true effect of the ban. Nor can we rule out effects of other features of the 1994 Crime Act, or a host of state and local initiatives that took place simultaneously.”

From the imposition of Feinstein’s “assault

weapon” ban (Sept. 13, 1994) through the present, the number of “assault weapons” has risen dramatically. For example, the most common firearm that Feinstein considers an “assault weapon” is the AR-15 rifle, the manufacturing numbers of which can be gleaned from the BATFE’s firearm manufacturer reports. From 1995 through 2011, the number of AR-15s—all models of which Feinstein’s new bill defines as “assault weapons”—rose by over 2.5 million. During the same period, the nation’s murder rate fell 48 percent, to a 48-year low. According to the FBI, 8.5 times as many people are murdered with knives, blunt objects and bare hands, as with rifles of any type.

Feinstein makes several claims, premised on firearm traces, hoping to convince people that her 1994 ban reduced the (relatively infrequent) use of “assault weapons” in crime. However, traces do not indicate how often any type of gun is used in crime. As the Congressional Research Service and the BATFE have explained, not all firearms that are traced have been used in crime, and not all firearms used in crime are traced. Whether a trace occurs depends on whether a law enforcement agency requests that a

trace be conducted. Given that existing “assault weapons” were exempted from the 1994 ban and new “assault weapons” continued to be made while the ban was in effect, any reduction in the percentage of traces accounted for by “assault weapons” during the ban would be attributable to law enforcement agencies losing interest in tracing the firearms, or law enforcement agencies increasing their requests for traces on other types of firearms, as urged by the BATFE for more than a decade.

Call your U.S. senators and representative: As noted, Feinstein (intended) to introduce her bill on January 3rd. President Obama has said that gun control will be a “central issue” of his final term in office, and he has vowed to move quickly on it.

Call your members of Congress at 202-224-3121 to urge them to oppose Sen. Feinstein’s 2013 gun and magazine ban. Our elected representatives in Congress must hear from you if we are going to defeat this gun ban proposal. You can also write or e-mail your senators and representatives to express your opinion

—The National Rifle Association

Guy Kistler: An insistent voice for better water quality

Michigan water quality may be much better today than in years past, but it has taken continued vigilance by generations of conservationists to make that happen.

And there's still more to be done.

For more than a half-century, Battle Creek native Guy Kistler was at the forefront of efforts to clean up southwest Michigan's Kalamazoo River and bring about stricter water pollution control laws in the state.

Year-after-year, Kistler studied and lectured about the river and the growing problem of water pollution across the state. He faced off with the so-called Lansing bureaucrats and lobbied hard to get "more teeth" in Michigan's anti-pollution laws.

Along the way, he was named 1969 "Water Conservationist of the Year" by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs and "National Water Conservationist of the year" by the National Wildlife Federation.

But he collected more notoriety than honors.

"As you can imagine, the paper mills didn't like me a bit," Kistler told *North Woods Call* Editor Mike VanBuren during a mid-1980s interview for the *Kalamazoo Gazette*.

One paper mill executive threatened to take his company and leave town if the firm was forced to clean up its pollution, he said.

"My answer to him was: 'Why don't you go ahead?' Then I said: 'Instead of spending all the money to do that, why not be a good citizen and clean it up.' He didn't have any answers to that."

Kistler was 89 at the time of the *Gazette* interview, but some of the old fire returned to his eyes when he recalled the many obstacles that water conservationists have had to overcome—such as

Fighting the good fight: Conservation battlers

Without the efforts of countless individuals who have given time, money and talents to conserve and protect our natural resources, the world would be a much more unpleasant and unhealthy place to live. The North Woods Call honors these conservation soldiers and will periodically profile some who made a significant difference. If you know of someone—past or present—who deserves this recognition, please let us know.

an anti-pollution bill that once passed the state House of Representatives, making it a violation of law to "knowingly pollute" the water.

"That burned me up," Kistler said. "Can you imagine anyone polluting and not knowing it? We got that word taken out of the law. Later, we got a more strenuous law that really started things going."

Kistler said he first became concerned about pollution when he noticed a decline in water quality caused by industry, highway construction, agriculture and urban sprawl.

"Being a fisherman and conservationist, I was seeing the river and the shape it was in," he said. "It made me so mad, I decided I was going to fight. I didn't know who, but I was going to fight somebody."

Through the years, he became a tough campaigner for a clean environment.

"After a while, you get hardened," Kistler said. "You aren't afraid of anybody or anything. ... I didn't care who I talked to, or how big they were. Anybody who tried to be dignified and nice on a deal like this was making a big mistake, because there's nothing nice about pollution."

Kistler lamented that it was sometimes frustrating that other individuals and organizations did not offer more help.

"Frankly, I fought the battle all alone (much of the time)," he said. "It was awfully hard to get anyone into this at all."

But Kistler said he was satisfied with the results of his efforts.

"There are laws in Michigan now that will take care of any situation— if you can get anybody to enforce them."

Kistler finally passed the torch to a new generation of water conservationists during the mid-1970s.

Even then, he didn't believe that one of his most passionate concerns—the Kalamazoo River—would ever be fully restored.

"I can't see where it will ever be cleaned up to its natural state," Kistler said prior to his death in 1990.

His reason: the sticky, toxic sludge that covered the river bottom—in some places several feet deep.

"That's why I say, with that messy pollution, it will never wash out," he said. "The only way to ever clean it is to dredge it out, but it would cost millions of dollars to do that. There are tons and tons of it. Even if they dredged it out, where would they put it? People are not going to want to spend millions of dollars in taxes to do that."

Nevertheless, Kistler continued to encourage others to carry on the fight.

"What a wonderful thing it would be if the river were a clean river," he said. "People could build homes along it, swim and fish like they used to. But as long as there are individuals who want to destroy something, decent things can never happen."

Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman



Protecting Habitat

We Michiganders are big on enjoying our outdoor resources, and many of us have an appreciation of what's needed to maintain them.

Despite the currently fashionable outcries against "intrusive government," my in-person observations have led me to believe that a well-run Department of Natural Resources—with all of its scientific, administrative, and enforcement capabilities—is a critical line of defense for the environment.

Think what our state would be like without that venerable taxpayer/user-funded agency. Unscrupulous people (ever met any of those?) would quickly strip our lands and waters of game and fish, with no thought of renewal. I've seen this happen in several locations where enforcement was cut back, usually due to lack of funding. The results were not pretty.

In some cases, bad actors even started removing trees illegally for profit, leaving patches of denuded countryside (aka. a degraded habitat). Not catastrophic in small areas, but if no one is around to stop such activity it can become ruinous.

Pollution also damages the living things we depend on. Private companies and even some communities are often desperate to achieve cost reductions, and few things lead to that end more rapidly than a disregard for pollution laws. Dumping toxic waste into rivers and lakes used to be a common practice until government regulations were formulated and enforced.

Private individuals and groups have worked diligently to become educated about such issues and to act as watchdogs in this area. The very possibility of being observed and identified tends to keep "bad guys" in check.

As a former lab person and industrial chemist, I have some understanding of the dangers posed by chemicals escaping into the environment. Fracking operations, we are learning, may poison and make unavailable for use millions of gallons of water for literally thousands of years. In the event of excessive leakage or migration, toxic compounds can cause local aquifers to become undrinkable, and sometimes flammable.

Give me a strong regulatory agency any day—one that works honestly to protect resources for the long-term good of everyone. Profit-making and job creation are vital, but we have to be smart enough to do those things with minimal harm to plants, animals and people.

Private citizens—besides being an important set of eyes dedicated to preserving habitats—contribute effort and money to many worthy conservation organizations.

It's all about saving our fields and forests, backyards and empty lots, whenever and wherever we can. Landowners can help by not over-developing their property, planting trees and food plants for wildlife, putting up brush piles in strategic locations, reducing all forms of erosion, and avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers and lawn products as much as possible.

Government and people working toward the same goals. Simple action plans. An innate respect for an environment that we depend on much more than we usually realize. The enhancement of hunting and fishing opportunities, as well as the traditional outdoor aesthetics that have always made Michigan a great place to be. Those are things we need to keep working on.

May our wild areas always remain so.

What happened to the CO field reports?

When this issue of *The North Woods Call* was being compiled, a fresh collection of bi-monthly conservation officer field reports was not readily available from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

To keep to our production schedule, we decided to not include them in this issue.

The CO briefs will return next time. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause, but hope you enjoy a couple of the other things on this page.

Marketplace of the North

Classified Ads

COMING SOON—*From Nebraska Ranchers to Nashville Rebels: The Story of the Glaser Brothers*. A 99-minute "oral history" about one of the more influential country music groups in Nashville history. For more information, visit the Newshound Productions page at mynorthwoodscall.com.

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King Copper

This 9,392-pound piece of copper ore on display in the historic Upper Peninsula community of Calumet, Michigan, is a reminder of the days when mining was king and entire communities grew up around the industry. Today, there is much more concern about the environmental impact of mining than there was during the early days when Calumet was a thriving center of commerce—complete with an ornate theater that drew some of the day's biggest stars. Calumet has bounced back in recent years with a wide range of community development activities and the Keweenaw National Historic Park managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior. The local theater is once again drawing major performers and the Upper Peninsula is attracting renewed interest from the mining industry. Some are happy about this, while others fear that the ongoing battle to protect the landscape, forests and water quality of the Great Lakes State is becoming more difficult to wage. The North Woods Call joins those who hope that common sense prevails as residents look for more ways to strengthen the economy and create new job opportunities.



Final Shot



A Stormy Legend

Frigid winter winds bring warm thoughts of the legendary Stormy Kromer cap—a gargantuan replica of which can be found on the outskirts of Ironwood in Michigan’s western Upper Peninsula. The venerable headgear was introduced in 1903, and has been a staple among outdoorsmen and railroad workers for generations. The “windproof” caps were the brainchild of George “Stormy” Kromer, a semi-pro baseball player and one-time engineer on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. Kromer reportedly made many long, cold trips across the Great Plains and often had to stick his head out the window of a steam locomotive to see where he was going. After the prairie winds stole his cap numerous times, Kromer asked his wife, Ida—an excellent seamstress—to modify an old baseball cap to better keep it on his head. Ida obliged, the story goes, making a six-panel cap with flaps that could be pulled over the ears. Soon other railroad workers wanted the cap, too, and when Ida could no longer keep up with the demand, George hired a few employees and a business was born. The caps were first mass-produced at factories in Milwaukee and Kaukauna, Wisconsin, but the company was purchased by Jacquart Fabric Products in 2001 and the operation was moved to Ironwood. Today, residents of the Gogebic Iron Range sew new Stormy Kromer Caps in a factory near this display.

“The bringers of winter”

Migration Day: The majesty of the tundra swan

By Doug Reeves
Assistant Chief
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November 12 was Veteran’s Day, but it was also a spectacular migration day.

A strong cold front came across mid-Michigan during the early morning hours, accompanied by rain. The rain ended about noon and the temperature dropped from the low 50s into the upper 30s.

There was a strong westerly wind—sometimes with significant shifts to the north or northwest—conditions just right for tundra swans to migrate.

And migrate they did!

I wish I knew how many flew overhead within earshot of me that afternoon. I was outside much of the day and I saw the first flock at about 11:30 a.m. From then until nearly dark, there were only a few minutes when I could not hear or see tundra swans. Flocks varying in size from about a dozen to nearly 80 flew all afternoon. It was truly spectacular.

One of the most substantial breeding areas for tundra swans is in western Alaska. Many of those birds migrate southeast all the way to the Atlantic coast, where they spend the winter. That route takes them

directly over central Michigan, with a stopover on Saginaw Bay.

The call of migrating tundra swans is unmistakable and always makes me look up. It’s kind of a haunting ow-oooh-ow-oh that I hear—very distinct from the Canada geese and sandhill cranes that are also in the area at that time.

Tundra swans are vocal birds, too, seeming to call as much during their autumn migration as Canada geese do during spring.

I have observed significant swan migrations as early as November 4 and as late as the Thanksgiving weekend.

I have come to think of tundra swans as the bringers of winter. They migrate overhead just before things turn very cold and snow starts to appear.

Sure enough, on the morning of November 13, the top and windshield of the car were snow-covered. Soon the ponds would be covered with ice.

But the swans will return again in March. At some point—shortly after the ice-out—several thousand will stop over at Saginaw Bay on their way back northwest.

You might want to make a visit to the east side of the bay about then to see and hear a true natural spectacle.

Winter advice

Keeping safe in the outdoors

Being outdoors in the winter requires more attention to safety than at other times of the year.

Simply getting wet—or getting lost in the woods—is much more significant when the temperature plunges into the single digits.

The best advice, according to Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials, is make sure someone knows where you’re going, what you’re doing and when you’ll be back.

“Tell them your planned travel route and expected time of arrival or return,” said the DNR’s Corporal John Morey. “Then, if someone is overdue, whoever has the travel plan can contact 911 and give responders a chance to get out and look for them right away.

Ice should always be checked out carefully, according to Morey. Always avoid areas where the ice is discolored, or there is vegetation and other objects sticking up through it. Use a spud to punch the ice ahead of you as you walk, he said, and carry a rope in case someone breaks through.

It is also recommended that anglers carry spikes—ideally encased in wood or plastic cylinders for handles—so they can grasp the ice with them if they break through.

Breaking through the ice into freezing water is extremely serious, Morey said. Anyone immersed in icy water must get his

or her head above the surface immediately, get breathing under control, attempt to breathe normally and work on getting out.

Get to good ice (generally in the direction from which you came) and place your arms up on the ice. Use your arms to pull your upper body onto the ice while you kick your legs in a swimming motion.

If you succeed in getting out, initially roll or crawl along the ice. Do not get back on your feet right away until you are sure you are on safe ice. Then immediately walk toward heated shelter.

If you are unable to get out of the water, reach out as far as you can, hold on and yell for help.

“If you see someone falls through the ice, make sure you do not put yourself at risk when attempting to assist them,” said Morey. “Call 911 immediately.”

When attempting to reach someone who has fallen through the ice, distribute your body weight by laying on the ice. Toss a rope, or reach for them with a pole, stick, or ladder. Don’t compound the problem by breaking through the ice yourself.

“Outdoor recreation can be enjoyable, invigorating and fun,” Morey said, “but, for it to be any of those things, it must also be—first and foremost—safe.”

—DNR Report

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