



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



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**THE
NORTHWOODS
CALL**

The logo features the words "THE NORTHWOODS CALL" in a stylized, blocky font. The letters are filled with a wood-grain pattern. In the background, there is a silhouette of a wolf standing on a log, with two evergreen trees behind it.

Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

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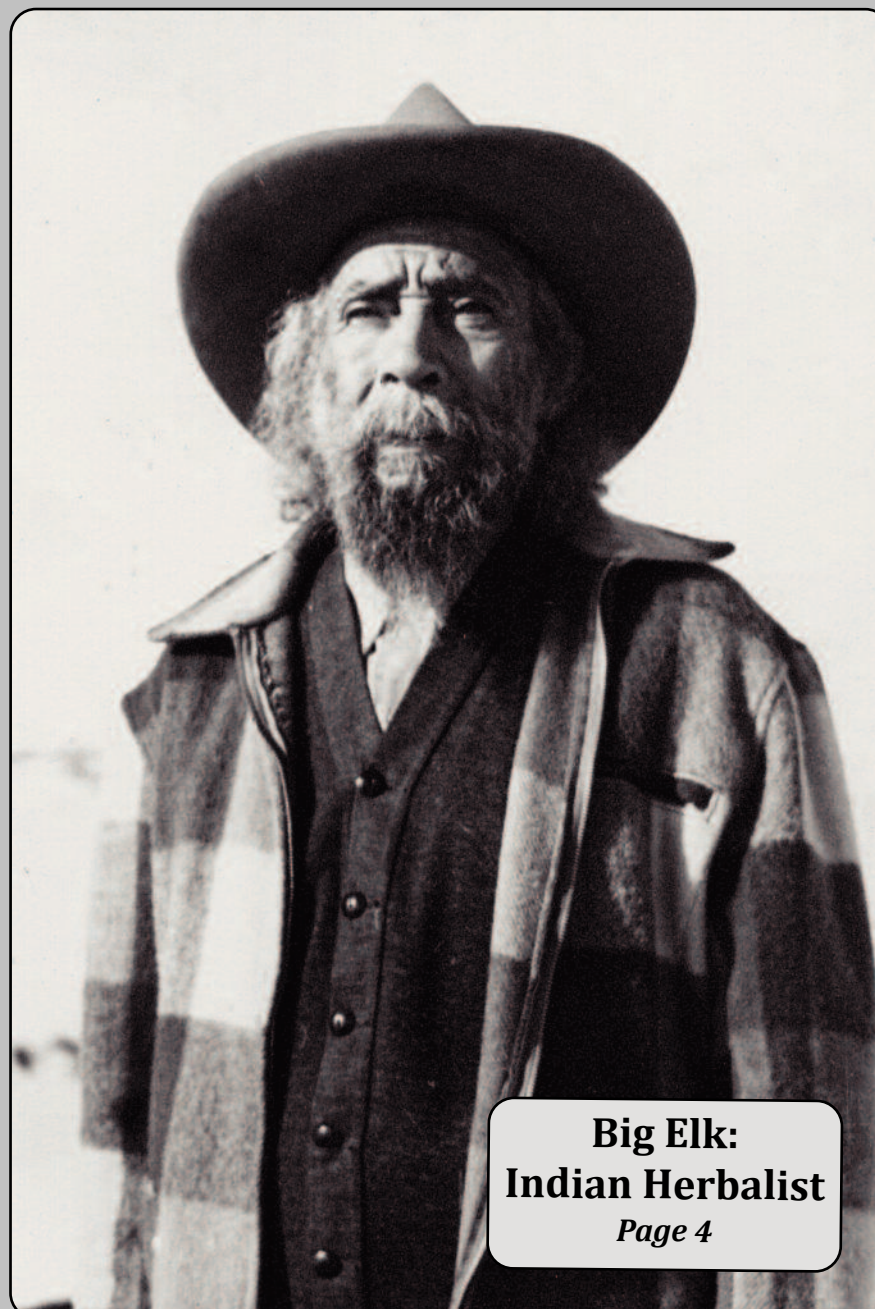
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THE NORTHWOODS CALL

Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953



North Woods Notes

LICENSE SALE INTERRUPTION: An upgrade to a state computer system will interrupt the sale of hunting, fishing, snowmobile, off-road vehicle and assorted other licenses from 11:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 18, through 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 21. Online license sales, as well as retail store sales, will be affected.

HARBOR DREDGING: Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder has called for spending \$21.5 million or more this year to dredge Michigan harbors in danger of losing their connections to open water because of low Great Lakes levels. The proposal was included in the governor's 2013-14 budget and is part of a broader initiative being developed by state agencies to help water-starved harbors, as the federal government cuts back on dredging and the lakes continue declining because of drought and warm temperatures that boost evaporation rates.

NRC MEETINGS: The Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) will hold its next meeting March 14 at the Saginaw Field and Stream Conservation Club, 1296 North Gleaner Road in Saginaw. On April 11, commissioners will gather at the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center, 415 Beaumont Road in Lansing. On May 9, the NRC meeting will move north again to the Ralph A MacMullan Conference Center on Higgins Lake, 104 Conservation Drive, Roscommon. Agendas and minutes can be found on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources website.

LAKE SUPERIOR LEVEL: The level of Lake Superior dropped two inches in January, a month when Gitchee Gumee usually drops about three inches, according to the International Lake Superior Board of Control.

SLEEPING BEAR LEGISLATION: The U.S. Senate in late December passed legislation preserving nearly half of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore as wilderness. The bill, which as of this writing had yet to pass the U.S. House of Representatives, designates about 32,557 acres of the 71,199-acre lakeshore as wilderness under the National Wilderness Preservation System.

MUSKEGON CLEANUP: The Marathon Petroleum Company has agreed to begin cleanup of oil byproducts at the long-closed Old Dutch/Aurora refinery site in Muskegon Township, Michigan. The toxic pollution under the 100-acre site near Laketon Avenue and Walker Road has contaminated downstream groundwater, as well as a county drain the empties into the Mona Lake Watershed. The method, timetable and thoroughness of the proposed cleanup had not yet been revealed at the time of this writing.

MINING ROAD DENIED: Michigan officials have declined to grant a permit for a new road near the Rio Tinto Eagle Mine in the Upper Peninsula's Marquette County. Regulators are concerned about damage to wetlands and wildlife habitat, they said. The Marquette County Road Commission had proposed building the 21-mile link between the nickel-copper mine—which is currently under construction—and U.S. 41. In lieu of the proposed road project, the company will likely transport its ores on an existing roadway network that runs along the northern end of Marquette before stretching south to U.S. 41 west of town.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS: Michigan Sea Grant is soliciting research proposals for funding of projects focused on the following issues: 1) keeping the highways of the sea open, 2) habitat enhancement and the Grand River, 3) Great Lakes education, 4) sustaining small harbors, 5) muck in Saginaw Bay, and 6) bird die-offs and botulism. Pre-proposals are due Feb. 22 and selected invitations for full proposals will be sent March 18. For details, visit miseagrant.umich.edu.

LIME ISLAND HOSTS: If you're looking for a challenge to your skills, the Michigan DNR is recruiting outdoor recreation enthusiasts to be summer campground hosts at the Lime Island State Recreation Area. The 980-acre island is located in the St. Mary's River Navigation Channel, three miles offshore at the eastern end of the Upper Peninsula. For information, contact Straits State Park at (906) 643-8620, or Miguel Rodriguez at (517) 241-4129.

INLAND SHORELINES: A workshop to help inland lakefront property owners create, restore and manage natural shorelines will be held March 16 at Michigan State University. Cost is \$45 per person on or before March 8, 2013. Final registration deadline is March 13. For details, contact: Bindu Bhakta at (248) 858-5198, or send an e-mail to bhaktabi@anr.msu.edu.

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"Biodiversity bill" relevant to state forest plans

With public comment being solicited on Michigan's Regional State Forest Management Plans through March 8, conservation-minded citizens have an opportunity to challenge legislation that would restrict the ability of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to consider "biodiversity" when managing these resources.

"You should be paying attention to what the Legislature is doing right now," said Brad Garmon, director of conservation and emerging issues at the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC). "They're redefining conservation in a different way than it has been understood for one hundred years of Michigan's conservation legacy."

The bill, which remained on tap for Senate action at the time of this writing, would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act of 1994 to do the following:

- * Revise the definition of "conservation" with regard to biological diversity, removing key provisions about restoration, distribution and the "continued existence" of native species and communities.

- * Prohibit the DNR, the state Natural Resources Commission and other state agencies from promulgating or enforcing any rule or order that designates or classifies an area of land specifically for the purpose of achieving or maintaining biological diversity.

- * Delete the conservation of biological diversity from the DNR's duties in respect to forest management, and require the DNR to balance its management activities with economic values.

- * Eliminate a requirement that the DNR manage forests in a manner that promotes restoration.

- * Delete a legislative finding that most losses of biological diversity are the result of human activity.

The MEC opposes this bill for a variety of reasons.

"Michigan is blessed with a wide variety of native plant and animal species and communities," said James Clift, the organization's policy director, in a February 4 "Capitol Update" memo. "These are assets that must be actively protected. The stewardship of threatened and endangered species, the protection

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SS Badger Awaits Permit

The coal-fired SS *Badger* leaves the harbor at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, enroute to Ludington, Michigan, last June. The 410-foot car ferry's federal permit to discharge coal ash into Lake Michigan expired December 19 and Lake Michigan Car Ferry Inc.—owner of the *Badger*—was still waiting in early February for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to renew the permit. The company wants the permit extended for at least another five years while it explores alternative fuels. The permit renewal is being challenged by U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Illinois) and others who say the company has already had plenty of time to move the *Badger* away from coal and toward greener energy. The EPA said it would likely propose a decision on the permit application by March 1 and planned to seek public comment before making a final decision. Lake Michigan Car Ferry officials said they hope to start their 2013 sailing season in May.

Multi-disciplinary "fracking" study under way

In late December, *The North Woods Call* reported on a formal evaluation being conducted by University of Michigan researchers on the controversial gas-drilling practice of "hydraulic fracturing."

While the two-year study is not yet complete, additional information has become available.

The purpose of the research is to provide the public with "a well-reasoned, objective explanation of what the technology is and what it is not," said Gov. Rick Snyder.

The detailed examination of potential environmental and societal impacts of "fracking," as the process is commonly known, began in December and will culminate in a report and recommen-

dations sometime in 2014, officials said.

Researchers are working with government regulators, oil and gas industry representatives, environmental groups and others to explore seven critical areas related to the use of hydraulic fracturing—human health, the environment and ecology, economics, technology, public perception, law and policy, and geology and "hydrodynamics."

"While there have been numerous scientific studies about hydraulic fracturing in the United States, none have been conducted with a focus on Michigan," said John Callewaert, director of integrated assessment at the University of Michigan's Graham

Sustainability Institute, which is overseeing the study.

Of particular interest is drilling done horizontally to expose the drill bore to more shale rock formation. In those cases where shale fracturing is required, water with added chemicals is injected into the reservoir rock at high pressure to cause the rock to fracture and open up for gas extraction.

"Hydraulic fracturing has been around for decades, but with horizontal drilling now coming into play, people are increasingly questioning and scrutinizing the risks involved," said Andrew Maynard, professor of environmental health sciences and

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Forest plan biodiversity comments encouraged

(Continued from Page 1)

of functioning natural communities, and the restoration of native plants and wildlife are concepts that date back more than one hundred years in Michigan.”

Clift said the DNR is “right and justified” in deploying the best scientific and professional expertise and strategies to ensure the continued existence and normal functioning of native species and communities in Michigan.

“Protecting, enhancing and restoring Michigan’s biological diversity is a completely logical and scientifically sound management tool,” he said. “It protects the natural communities and native plants and animals of Michigan, and ensures a healthy and robust natural system for this and future generations.”

Last October, when contacted by *The North Woods Call*, state Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba)—sponsor of the bill—said the legislation is aimed in part at protecting access to public land for all users.

Casperson said that he held public hearings on the issue and most people at the hearings opposed the

DNR’s biodiversity management initiatives.

That notion can be tested, conservationists say, if more people comment during the plan review period. For details about the review—and availability of the regional plans online—see “North Woods Notes” in this edition of *The Call* (Page 2). Management for biodiversity is reportedly a key part of the plans.

“This bill is one of the worst we’ve seen in a while,” Garmon said, “in terms of just throwing out the respect for the (DNR) and the trained experts in ecology, forestry and (other disciplines). and pretty much saying, ‘We don’t trust them to do a good job anymore and we the politicians are going to tell you how to manage our forests.’”

“Biological diversity is a fundamental part of a mission that lies at the foundation of Michigan’s long tradition of strong and responsible public land management,” added Clift. “Managing lands for biodiversity, ecosystem health and genetic resilience ensures that our forests can survive new invasive species ... and our fisheries can withstand diseases.”

Multi-disciplinary “fracking” study under way

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director of the U of M’s Risk Science Center.

Areas of concern include perceived lack of transparency, potential chemical contamination, water availability, wastewater disposal, and impacts on ecosystems and human health.

“What concerns us is the application of horizontal hydraulic fracturing,” said Grenetta Thomassey of the Tip-of-the-Mitt Watershed Council and a member of the project steering committee. “We are very glad to be ... taking

a proactive, multidisciplinary look at the impacts and implications of this practice...,” she said.

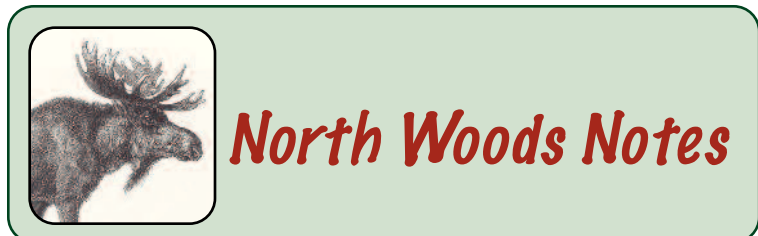
Researchers are using a collaborative methodology called “integrated assessment,” Callewaert said, which is well-suited for “addressing complex sustainability challenges. “Fortunately,” Callewaert said, “we have been able to draw together some exceptional researches across multiple disciplines—as well as several key stakeholders—to conduct a thorough, unbiased assessment to determine what new approaches

might be needed for Michigan.”

“This unbiased, science-based study will investigate not only the potential environmental risks of hydraulic fracturing, but also the potential air quality and economic benefits of using the domestic low-cost natural gas produced by hydraulic fracturing for electrical generation and manufacturing,” said John DeVries, a steering committee member specializing in oil and gas law.

Hydraulic fracturing has the potential to touch issues that virtually all Michigan residents care about—drinking water, air quality, Great Lakes health, water supply, local land use, energy security, economic growth, tourism and natural resource protection,” said Andrew Hoffman, a researcher and director of the Erb Institute. “In the end, our goal is to provide valuable insights and information to help address these important and legitimate concerns here in the Great Lakes State.

As part of the investigation, research teams are soliciting public input through an online comment form on the Graham Institute website.



North Woods Notes

(Continued from Page 1)

REGIONAL FOREST PLANS: Updated drafts of three Regional State Forest Management Plans are now available for review online. They are designed to help the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) sustainably manage nearly 4 million acres of state forest land. Public comments on the plans will be accepted until March 8, 2013. To view the plans—which cover the western Upper Peninsula, eastern Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula—visit www.michigan.gov/regionalforestplans.

WOLF ADVISORY COUNCIL: Michigan’s Wolf Management Advisory Council will meet Feb. 19 from 1 to 5 p.m. at Little Bear Arena, 275 Marquette Street in St. Ignace. The Council includes members from a diverse group of organizations with an interest in wolves and wolf management, and will gather input from members regarding future wolf management activities. The public will be able to provide written comments at the meeting. The DNR will also host a series of public meetings around the state in March to receive public input.

CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR: Brian Frawley, a 14-year veteran wildlife biologist and survey specialist at the DNR, has been named 2012 Outstanding Conservationist of the Year by the National Wild Turkey Federation. Frawley was cited for his hunter survey contributions, which are crucial to managing wild turkeys in Michigan.

CIVIL PENALTY INFLATION: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is amending its regulations to adjust the Class I penalties under the Clean Water Act and the National Fishing Enhancement Act to account for inflation. The civil penalties remain at \$11,000 per violation, but the maximum penalty will increase to \$32,500. The rule is effective March 29, 2013, without further notice, unless the Corps receives adverse comments by Feb. 27.

MASTER ANGLER CHANGES: Multiple changes have been made to the Michigan Master Angler program, which since 1973 has recognized large fish caught by recreational anglers. Entry weight and length were updated for several species—including Atlantic salmon, brook trout, brown trout, bullhead, channel catfish, Chinook salmon, coho salmon, crappie, freshwater drum, muskellunge, rainbow trout, rock bass and smallmouth bass. The changes are based on the number of entries received for individual species from the last five years, as well as increased fish growth in Michigan waters over several decades.

2012 a safer hunting season

Michigan’s 2012 hunting season saw only one fatality in the 15 incidents reported, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials said.

That makes it the safest season in the last five years, they said.

By comparison, there were 12 incidents with five fatalities during the 2011 season, 14 incidents with three fatalities in 2010, 18 incidents with two fatalities in 2009, 22 incidents with two fatalities in 2008 and 32 incidents with two fatalities in 2007.

DNR Law Enforcement Division Chief Gary Hagler credits Michigan’s hunter education program for the low rate of incidents over the past few years.

“There is no question that hunter education saves lives and reduces injuries,” he said. “It is incumbent that anyone consider-

ing hunting as a recreational pursuit completes a hunter education course with one of our highly dedicated volunteer instructors.”

The 2012 incident involving a fatality occurred Sept. 20 in St. Clair County, when a coyote hunter reportedly shot and killed another hunter in and apparent accident.

“We continue to emphasize the importance of the hunter orange law, knowing your target and safe firearm handling, and how they all are key factors in having a safe season. We also continue to encourage mentors to work closely with youth hunters to teach them safe firearm handling skills.”

For information on Michigan’s hunter education program, visit www.michigan.gov/huntereducation.

—Michigan DNR

Our 60th Year: Looking Back to Feb. 24, 1954

—Excerpts from *The North Woods Call*—

School bell rings for Danny

Danny is going to school.

Everybody around Johannesburg knows Danny. They know his pleasant grin, his little jokes, his interest in what they are doing and where they have been.

He’s usually sitting in the “burg’s” restaurant waiting for school to let out so he may visit with the boys.

School is something that has been unknown to Danny. Once, many years ago, he went for a brief period of time to a special school in Detroit, but it was for a very brief time and he could hardly remember what it was like.

Now he’s in school again and life has taken on a richer meaning.

Danny is the 23-year-old son of Mrs. Harriet Dreffs, hostess at Ed’s Village Inn, which she and her husband operate. And Danny is a victim of cerebral palsy resulting from a birth injury.

Little four-corner north woods towns don’t have the wonderful, modern facilities the big cities have for handicapped boys and girls, but Johannesburg found a way to help.

When it became known that Mrs. Dreffs wanted a tutor to help Danny with his reading—so his narrow world could be widened—the burg’s school supplied the need.

Mrs. Mary Kasky, who teaches the little folks, said she thought Danny should be right in her classroom. There he could receive more individual attention than in the higher grades and he wouldn’t feel that he was being pushed in a competitive way that might be pretty hard to take.

Comes the hour when Danny is to have his reading lessons, School Superintendent Charles Hamilton sends some of the big boys over to th Inn. They carefully carry Danny and his special wheelchair to the school and, when class is over, return him home.

Able to read the big words, he will find the hours won’t pass so slowly while he waits for the boys after school to play cards with him. And the TV set also helps bring the larger world to him now.

* * *

He saw the pigeons darken the sun

“I’ve seen the sky filled with pigeons—so many pigeons that you couldn’t see the sun,” Delos E. Michael said. “You could take a fish pole and knock them down when they flew low over the house.

This week, he looks back to those days around 1865 when the sky over Dennison, west of Grand Rapids, was filled with the beating wings of the pigeons. They may have been the last of the great passenger pigeons that nested in those years around Petoskey.

Now extinct, few men are alive today who can recall witnessing those tremendous flights.

“There were millions of them,” the old man said.

On March 1, Michael will celebrate his 94th birthday. Sitting in Mae’s Variety Store, operated by his granddaughter in Johannesburg, the venerable old man watches the daily comings and goings in the store with blue eyes alert and sparkling.

He is quick with a joke, an avid reader of western fiction, and a dyed-in-the-wool baseball fan.

“I made my own living since I was nine,” he said.

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 capitol city of Lansing.

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Ford Kellum: Beating the drums on sprawl

Ford Kellum had a lifelong passion for protecting natural resources against all manner of assault.

And the late Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist remained in the trenches right up until the day he died in October 1991.

When current *North Woods Call* Editor Mike VanBuren first met him in 1978, Kellum had already retired from his DNR position, but was continuing to collect information and photographs on the history of the Deward area—a tract of land near the intersection of Antrim, Kalkaska, Crawford and Otsego counties that was heavily logged during the early 20th century, becoming a barren wasteland of weathered and decaying white pine stumps.

By studying the area, Kellum hoped to demonstrate the need for sound land management in Michigan.

He believed that land use was the most important outdoor issue in the state and he had been speaking out about it for several decades.

In 1958, Kellum was able to get a 55-acre stump preserve dedicated on the Deward tract—land so delicate that bruises left by horse-drawn wagon wheels more

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.

than 60 years earlier could still be seen. Repeated fires and soil too poor to bring the great forests back kept much of the land from recovering. Later, oil production and other development activities put additional pressure on the resource.

While relatively few people paid attention to Kellum's pleas for sensible land use, his wisdom is evident today in the outcries against "sprawl"—which is actually the lack of land-use planning and controls.

Stationed in Traverse City, his influence helped shape that DNR office into one of the best in Michigan. When the Traverse City office was switched to Cadillac, Kellum elected to transfer to Gaylord on the outskirts of the Pigeon River Country.

Already skilled in the management of moose in the Upper Peninsula at Cusino, along with deer throughout the state, he quickly found himself as a champion for the threatened elk herd in

the Pigeon River State Forest.

That involvement was not well-received by Kellum's Lansing bosses and they did everything possible to stop him. He finally took early retirement to push for protection of the Pigeon River Country, which eventually was declared off-limits to oil and gas drilling (at least temporarily).

While that effort was successful, other efforts to gain similar protection failed.

The Lake of the North development surrounding Lake Harold on the Deward tract, for example, never would have happened if Kellum had gotten his way. It is located on what was once a time-honored dancing grounds for prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse.

He also tried to convince the powers-that-be to take advantage of the opportunity to buy up all the land surrounding Pearl lake in Benzie County. The price was only a tiny fraction of what the DNR eventually paid for a small

stretch of frontage. The rest has reportedly been covered with cottages and permanent homes.

It is this lack of wise stewardship of wild lands that has negatively impacted much of northern Michigan's wildlife, Kellum said, even though the wildlife and open areas are primary reasons many people want to live in the north country.

Much of today's focus on "sprawl" seems to concern the heavy traffic problems which plague urban areas like Traverse City and Petoskey in the northern Lower Peninsula, and also parts of the Upper Peninsula.

But poor land-use planning has much broader impacts, according to experts. It plunders wildlife, pollutes water, congests roads, smears night skies (with light pollution), threatens land-based industries, cripples schools and increases taxes, they say.

Despite this threat, wild land continues to disappear at an alarming rate, as an increasing number of subdivisions and urban extensions are developed in places they should not be.

A few years after he and Kellum met, VanBuren received a letter from the conservationist—who once again lived in Traverse City. Kellum said that a house had been

built on the last known dancing hill for sharp-tailed grouse and he was sure that this would end their breeding in the Deward tract. He talked about oil wells being drilled and power lines that crisscrossed the area, and lamented how the north was getting lost "in the maze of people development."

But some good news, too.

"I've learned to be an instant geologist and an instant lawyer," he wrote. "It's sure tough trying to conserve a little for the generations yet unborn, but I have faith. The public is slowly beginning to see the light and we up here in the Traverse area are winning one once-in-a-while."

"But you can't do much alone, so I'm working through various organizations—mostly Audubon—and we have excellent programs and well-attended board meetings. We write letters and pass resolutions like mad."

Michigan lost a great conservation pioneer when Kellum passed from the scene. But we can still travel through the Deward tract—part of which has been designated the Deward Management Area—and hear his distant cries.



Management Dispute

Canines of the wild are at the center of a dispute over Michigan's recently enacted Wolf Management Law. Opponents are challenging the legislation and are seeking a statewide referendum on the matter.

Wolf-hunting battle is not over

Not everyone supports recent legislation that opened the door for wolf hunting in Michigan.

Animal welfare activists—who for the past few years have protested in vain while the federal government dropped the gray wolf from its endangered species list and legislatures in at least five other states (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming) voted to allow hunters to shoot the predators—are hoping to force a statewide vote on the matter.

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed a bill in December that designated the wolf as a game animal and the state Natural Resources Commission is exploring a possible hunting season.

Commissioners have asked for recommendations from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the DNR has begun to gather information—including wolf population numbers and livestock predation statistics—for its report, which is expected to be released by early summer.

But opposition groups—including the Humane Society of the United States and some Native American tribes—are campaigning for a referendum on the new law. If they gather enough petition signatures to get the issue on the November 2014 election ballot, the legislation—and hence any potential hunting season—would likely be put on hold until after the vote.

At least 161,300 valid signatures are needed to place the referendum on the ballot.

"We make wildlife management decisions based on sound science," said Tony Hansen, chief information officer of the Michigan United Conservation

Clubs (MUCC). "The Humane Society of the United States is just another out-of-state interest group trying to hijack Michigan's ballot to push its radical animal rights agenda."

If voters reject the wolf-hunting decision, it wouldn't be the first time citizens have overruled legislators and bureaucrats on a hunting policy. In 2006, voters said 2-to-1 that they did not want to allow hunting of mourning doves.

Supporters of the referendum are currently planning a series of meetings across the state to recruit people to help gather the signatures.

By the mid-20th century, wolves had been shot, trapped and poisoned to the brink of extinction in the lower 48 states, but they bounced back after being given legal protection in the 1960 and 1970s. Natural migration from neighboring states and Ontario gave Michigan's wolf population a renewed lease around 1990 and their numbers have grown steadily since then—as well as complaints about them attacking farm and domestic animals.

Although a 2008 law allows owners to kill wolves attacking livestock or pets, it hasn't always been easy catching them in the act. Some farmers—particularly in the western Upper Peninsula—say they need hunting and trapping to keep wolf numbers in check.

"The animal rights groups claim that there simply isn't enough data or science available to determine whether wolves can sustain a hunting season," said Erin McDonough, the MUCC's executive director. "That's precisely what the Wolf Management Law provides."

Higher taxes on sportsmen & fuel?

Higher gasoline taxes and vehicle fees, along with double-digit hikes for hunting and fishing licenses, will be coming your way if Gov. Rick Snyder has his way.

The governor, who proposed the increases in his \$50.9 billion budget for 2013-14, said the revenue is needed to fix bad roads, expand the state police force, hire more conservation officers and improve habitat for fish and game—among other things. Snyder also wants to spend \$21.5 million or more dredging harbors around the Great Lakes (with \$11.5 million of that coming from the state general fund and the rest coming from a supplemental appropriation for the 2013 fiscal year).

The budget plan, which reportedly would provide \$28 million in new revenue for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), would increase the annual amount raised from sale of hunting and fishing licenses by 38 percent—from \$48.2 million to \$66.6 million—with much of the impact aimed at non-residents of the state. A base hunting license fee of \$10 for Michigan residents and \$150 for non-residents would cover small game like squirrels and rabbits, as well as migratory birds and waterfowl, but hunters wanting licenses for deer, elk, turkey, moose and other game would have to pay additional fees.

The cost of a deer tag would increase from \$15 to \$20 for residents and non-residents alike, according to the DNR. Assuming the proposed hunting season for wolves goes forward in the face of challenges to the recently approved law, residents would pay \$100 for a license and non-residents would pay \$500, they said.

Fishing licenses would be simplified under the plan by moving away from a system based on fish species to a single-price license for all species. A one-day fishing license would increase from \$7 to \$15, but a season-long fishing license for all species would drop from \$28 to \$25 for residents, while increasing from \$42 to \$75 for non-residents.

If approved by the Michigan Legislature, it would be the first significant increase to hunting and fishing license fees since 1997.

Interestingly, the governor's proposal assumes a seven percent decline in license sales due to expected resistance to the fee changes. It retains senior discounts at 60 percent for all currently eligible licenses—except for bear and 24-hour fishing—and would require that all replacement licenses be charged at the same rate as the original licenses.

The overall budget plan, which would increase the amount of the DNR budget coming from the general fund from \$17.6 million this year to \$24.6 million in 2014, also calls for the number of Michigan conservation officers to jump by 24 percent—from 173 to 214. Nearly \$2 million would be earmarked for grants to stakeholders to increase fisheries habitat in inland lakes and streams. Another nearly \$1 million would be set aside to increase the rearing and stocking of fish.

It is estimated that the typical family would pay \$120 per vehicle more each year in gas taxes and vehicle fees under the governor's budget plan.

Gasoline and diesel taxes would reportedly increase from 19 and 15 cents per gallon, respectively, to an equivalent of 33 cents for both, with the fuel tax beginning to fluctuate after two years depending on fuel consumption and construction. Annual registration fees would rise 60 percent for cars and SUVs, and 25 percent for big trucks and trailers.

Opinion Page

Conservation Quote

"My fishing is at once an endless source of delight and an act of rebellion; because trout do not lie or cheat and cannot be bought or bribed or impressed by power, but respond only to quietude and humility and endless patience."

— Robert Traver (John Voelker)

Grading Michigan lawmakers

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder recently received an overall performance grade of "C" from the Michigan League of Conservation Voters due to the environmental impacts—or lack thereof—of his actions. And the Sierra Club has called the 2011-2012 class of state lawmakers "by far the most anti-environmental legislature we've had in Michigan for decades."

While the Republicans currently control every branch of state government and can rightly be hammered for many of the decisions they have made, Democrats and independents are not without fault when it comes to evaluating and offering solutions to today's numerous environmental challenges.

Far too much legislation and too many bureaucratic initiatives are conceived, argued and sometimes implemented based on errant and narrow-minded beliefs rooted in partisan ideology, and a general disregard for balance and truth.

That's not always the case, of course, but it happens way too often. And it's not limited to elected and appointed representatives of the people. We all seem to fall prey to the twisted propaganda and general misinformation from time-to-time.

We urge all who care about protecting our natural resources—politicians, bureaucrats, nonprofit groups and citizens alike—to start grading ourselves and respond accordingly.

Conservation is too important for so many people to be failing the course.

Givin' 'em hell

In the five months we have published *The North Woods Call*, various readers and potential subscribers have asked the same question: "Are you going to give 'em hell like Shep did?"

It's not exactly clear who they want the hell administered to, but we like to think that we will call things as we see them and won't balk at criticizing if we feel such an approach is needed.

In fact, we have already done so on several occasions.

Curiously, our experience thus far has shown that many of these well-intended observers do not cheer so loudly if the criticism is doled out to those public servants, ideas, or issues they support. That's when they start giving us hell.

All this is to be expected in a free and open debate, but we think there should be less ridicule and mockery of our fellow citizens, and more careful listening to sincerely held beliefs. If we would stop pretending that anyone who disagrees with us is an ignorant fool, maybe we could actually solve some problems in a way that honors our noble tradition of self-government.

Scoring the work of Rio Tinto

It is interesting to note that the world's second-largest mining company has created a scorecard that reportedly gauges how well it is meeting its goals in the eyes of community residents in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Rio Tinto is going after nickle and copper in the Eagle Mine near Big Bay and Marquette and is expecting to start pulling out ore this year.

In early January, the company released results of its "community scorecard," which features aggregate data from five initial community forums held last fall in Big Bay, Michigamme, Champion, Marquette and L'Anse, as well as subsequent selected group sessions held in Ishpeming and Marquette. Every six months, the company plans to record additional votes with the same groups.

Perhaps not surprisingly for a company sponsored survey, reported responses indicate that Rio Tinto is meeting or exceeding expectations in all five survey areas—1) environmental protection, 2) local hires, 3) safety, 4) transparency and communication, and 5) leaving the area better than when the company arrived.

While we hope the company is indeed going about its work in a safe, economically sound and environmentally positive way, it's easy to be suspicious of such glowing community scorecard results—especially when a request by the *Marquette Mining Journal* for individual results from each of the survey sessions was declined.

The newspaper wanted to publish the individual session results and make side-by-side comparisons, but the company said it would be contradictory to how it told the community that the data would be shared.

That's all well and good, although we always favor more information, rather than less. In the spirit of full disclosure, *The North Woods Call* invites residents of these communities to share their impressions on our opinion page.

We may not learn anything new, but it could be an interesting and informative exercise.

Big Elk: Stanwood's Native American herbalist

When Herbert Gleason Mingo was born on February 22, 1851, Millard Fillmore was president of the United States and Abraham Lincoln was still a prairie lawyer nine years from the White House.

It was the year that Yosemite Valley was discovered in California, Herman Melville published his classic novel "Moby Dick" and abolitionist Sojourner Truth addressed the first Black Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio.

By the time Mingo died on February 25, 1957—at the enviable age of 106—automobiles and airplanes were in widespread use, America was rushing headlong into the space age, and the mighty Mackinac Bridge would soon make Michigan's Upper Peninsula more easily accessible to hunters, fishermen and tourists.

Better known as Big Elk, Mingo was a Native American medicine man—a skilled herbalist whose extensive knowledge was based in years of hand-me-down mentoring from tribal elders, and an expert eye for wild plants and potions that were proven cures for human ailments.

I have vague memories of Big Elk—perhaps because I may have seen him once as a small child, but more likely from family stories about his legendary powers as a traditional healer.

I have clearer memories of visiting his home south of Stanwood with my parents and sister in the years following his death, and talking to Mrs. Arnold—Big Elk's longtime assistant, understudy and housekeeper—who at the time was still dispensing herbs to legions of loyal customers who came to her door.

On one such occasion, Mrs. Arnold was angry with the medicine man because, she said, he had appeared to her when she visited his grave at the White Cloud Cemetery and told her there was no reason for her to do so.

"I'll never go back," she said.

Our family became acquainted with Big Elk when my great-grandfather, Phillip Spalla—a Sicilian immigrant with asthma who used to spend the annual pollen season picking fruit on farms in the Traverse City area—learned of the herbal healer and sought help with his breathing problems. Spalla was so satisfied with the results that he began referring friends and relatives to Big Elk.

According to my father, my grandmother was once so deathly ill with an unknown malady that medical doctors had given up on fixing the problem. Spalla and other family members wrapped her in a blanket, put her in the back seat of a Model A Ford and hauled her to northern Michigan. There Big Elk brewed a concoction of herbs and had her drink the aromatic liquid as hot as she could stand it. A few hours later—after napping and sweating out the illness—she was feeling well enough to drive part-way home.

Big Elk liked my great-grandfather and other family members, and sometimes would cook up several of the large catfish that he raised in a small pond behind his house on Mecosta County's 177th

North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



Big Elk (center rear) at home with the Spalla family during the 1930s.

Avenue along the old Pennsylvania Railroad tracks.

He was reportedly a soft-spoken and friendly man of relatively few words, who stood tall and straight, even as an old man. I remember an over-sized wooden chair at his home that seemed—to a small child, at least—to have been built for a giant.

Even as he neared his 101st birthday, Big Elk was "surprisingly agile, hears remarkably well, reads without glasses and retains his own teeth," according to a February 20, 1952, story in the Big Rapids Pioneer newspaper.

He told the reporter that he expected to live significantly longer, thanks to "the strength, faith and trust sent to him from his friends in various parts of the world, consumption of his own herbs and faith in the Great Spirit God."

Big Elk knew the land on which he lived and the medicinal quality of the plants he found there. He gathered them in the woods and fields surrounding his house, then dried, milled and packaged them in another small building next door. His office was usually closed on Mondays while he searched for the herbs.

Today, the beginnings of a residential housing development have appeared in the nearby woodland where the medicine man found his plants. And Morley-Stanwood High School and football stadium occupy the property just across the railroad tracks from the two-story clapboard house where Big Elk lived for the last 27 years of his long and storied life.

Born in Mashpee, Massachusetts—the son of a Pequot chief—Big Elk was already nearly 80-years-old when he settled in Mecosta County. Prior to that, he had reportedly traveled over most of the American continent, as well as portions of Siberia, Australia, China, Japan, Africa and the South Pacific islands.

As a young man, he was a courier from Fort Simcoe, Washington, traveling to Wanatchee, the Powder River basin, Okanagan in British Columbia, and Penderilla—a route of about 700 miles. It was a six-week trip that he usually made on horseback over Indian trails through wild and hostile country, requiring significant physical strength, endurance and courage.

There is little else I know about Big Elk—or his life and times—except that his house still sits at the dead-end of 177th Avenue between Morley and Stanwood, along what is now the White Pine Trail Linear State Park. Another family lives there now and I wonder whether they are aware of the rich legacy of herbal medicine that their home represents.

It's a fine history of a memorable man—connected in a small way to my own family's story.

I think there's still much to be learned from Herbert Mingo, as we journey through life and seek to heal our own bodies and souls.

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Since 1953

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Viewpoint

In defense of Michigan's best idea

By Drew YoungeDyke

If Teddy Roosevelt's national parks are "America's Best Idea," as posited by documentary filmmaker Ken Burns, then the Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) might be "Michigan's Best Idea."

When oil wells were proposed in the Pigeon River Country—a 100,000-acre wilderness tract in northern Michigan and the brain-child of Aldo Leopold protégé P.S. Lovejoy—conservationists and energy interests argued, fought, and eventually compromised on a plan to use the proceeds from state oil and gas royalties to fund the acquisition, development and protection of public recreation land.

Since 2010, though, when the NRTF reached its \$500 million cap after a record-breaking auction of state-owned mineral rights, a limitless deluge of legislation has been introduced to divert, micro-manage, and subvert the purpose of the fund.

Never mind that the people of Michigan put the NRTF into the Constitution and under the control of a NRTF Board in 1984 to keep it away from the Legislature after multiple legislative raids for other purposes. The current Legislature sees a big pot of money which they don't control, and they've used excuses ranging from local taxes to bizarre conspiracy theories to back NRTF-raiding bills. Some of them have even become law; thankfully, most have not.

The bills introduced this legislative term seek to impact the NRTF in three primary ways; they either limit the purpose of the fund, divert the money to other uses, or exert legislative control over which projects are funded. While some of the bills may have genuine motives behind them, the sheer number of bills trying to pry money out of the NRTF cannot be ignored.

Reader Comment

Editor:

I was in the National Rifle Association for 40 years, but not anymore.

They have become nuts and too extreme.

We need gun checks for everyone and no larger clips.

Everyone should at least be for that.

I hope you are.

Richard Hansen
Lakeview, Michigan

Not necessarily, Richard. We can understand the reasoning behind your position on background checks and clips, but we're not convinced that scaling back personal liberty and Second Amendment rights will actually stop the violence. In our view, there is something much deeper and more sinister going on with our society and the individuals who commit these heinous crimes than mere access to the collection of inert hardware known as guns.

—MV

In the "subvert the purpose" of the trust fund category are bills to limit public outdoor recreation land in Michigan. Without the ability to purchase additional land, the NRTF would lose its primary purpose, though development grants to local communities would still be allowed. These proposals would make the fund idle, and idle money is vulnerable money.

HB 4473, sponsored by Rep. Ed McBroom (R-Vulcan), and SB 248, as originally introduced by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba), would have put hard caps on state land ownership. (The version of SB 248 that was signed into law included a temporary statewide cap and a removable northern Michigan cap, contingent on legislative approval of a land acquisition plan. While still a terrible bill, tough opposition from conservation groups helped force it to be a little less terrible).

The stated rationale behind the land cap bills was the shorting of payments-in-lieu of taxes (PILTs) by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to local governments. However, the DNR can only pay what the Legislature appropriates to it, and the legislators pushing these bills could appropriate adequate funding to the DNR if that was a priority. A separate package of bills authorized PILT payments from the NRTF for trust fund purchases, which is allowed in the Constitution and illustrates a more direct way to address the PILT issue.

More disturbing is the idea that these bills are based on a bizarre conspiracy theory proposing that the United Nations is trying to take away private land rights by conspiring with state agencies to buy public land that will be off-limits to humans. As ridiculous as this sounds, supporters of SB 248 cited it in written testimony and a group of representatives actually introduced a bill to stop this phantom conspiracy, called Agenda 21. It's probably easier for them to position themselves as protectors of private land against the evil United Nations than it is for them to admit that they're really just abandoning the conservation heritage of Teddy Roosevelt. Either way, conspiracy theories are a terrible basis for Michigan conservation policy.

Some of the bills are a little more brash about diverting NRTF money. HB 4021, sponsored by Rep. Dave Agema (R-Grandville) would divert 20 percent of oil and gas royalties to an aeronautics fund and 60 percent to the transportation fund, leaving a scant 20 percent for outdoor recreation opportunities for present and future generations.

Similarly, SB 1273, introduced by Sen. Bruce Caswell (R-Hillsdale), would divert oil and gas revenues into the transportation fund after the State Parks Endowment Fund reaches its \$800 million cap (royalties have gone into this fund since the NRTF reached its cap). The theory behind the trust fund is that minerals like oil and gas are nonrenewable re-

sources that belong to current and future generations, and so current and future generations should benefit from their sale. Road repairs don't even last long enough to benefit this generation, let alone future ones. Those royalties should continue to conserve our natural resources in compensation for the natural resource rights that are sold.

Sen. Casperson, who owns a log trucking business, also introduced bills SB 822 and SJR Q to amend the Michigan Constitution to use NRTF dollars to build logging and mining roads and fund dredging operations.

Finally, there are bills that would exert legislative control over the selection of NRTF projects. These bills started with Rep. McBroom's proposed amendment to the annual trust fund appropriation bill, HB 5364, to remove four eco-regional acquisition projects that provide money for the DNR to acquire private in-holdings in existing tracts of state land that become available for purchase throughout the year. The House rejected the amendment and voted to fund all four projects, but the Senate removed them. In a conference committee to reconcile the two versions of the bill, the funding for the northern Lower Peninsula and Upper Peninsula eco-region acquisitions was stripped from the bill.

Since then, Rep. McBroom introduced HB 5944 to prohibit any future eco-regional project recommendations and Sen. Darwin Booher introduced SB 1238 that would have packed the NRTF Board with two extra Legislature-approved members, imposed term limits on the board, prohibited any acquisitions which were solicited by the DNR, a local township or a land conservancy, and required the board prioritize motorized use projects. A substitute version of the bill keeps the term limits and the motorized prioritization, even though there are already three times as many motorized as non-motorized pathways in the trail system. A provision in the substitute bill prohibits purchases in which the sale was involuntary, as if this was necessary, since the NRTF Board's internal procedures already forbid involuntary acquisitions.

These legislative intrusions into a process that is the province of a constitutionally mandated executive agency board are contrary to the intent of the Michigan Constitution.

Article IV, Section 35 of the Michigan Constitution specifies that Natural Resources Trust Fund projects shall be recommended by the Trust Fund Board. The Michigan Supreme Court has held that boards are presumed to carry out the duties assigned to them, and to this end the Trust Fund Board has developed policies, procedures and priorities to comply with their constitutional mandate.

The NRTF Board has set out specific criteria for evaluated projects proposed for funding. Their priorities for 2012 include

(Continued on Page 6)

The Wild Nearby

By Tom Springer



Requiem for a self-made man

The layer-cake loveliness of new snow always looks best when left unmarred by track or trail. But who could resist the six fresh inches on the walking paths behind the barn?

My chore boots sent up little geysers of white as I chugged past the dried stalks of goldenrod that our bees had worked to fill their hives with dark, autumnal honey. Callie, our eight-month old lab/border collie, kicked up a sugar-fine rooster tail as she slalomed around the withered canes of blackberries and the shiny trunks of little oaks.

After a week of sickness, death and grief, the glisten of cold air was tonic enough.

We'd lost my father in the wee hours of Tuesday morning. He, purveyor of the one-man, small-town barber shop where he'd stood, clipped and ministered until age 82, when the tremors of Alzheimer's finally turned his strong hands weak. He, proclaimer of time-worn aphorisms that from his mouth rang no less true: "Plan your work and work your plan ... Always do a little more than what's expected of you ... If you can't say something nice about somebody, don't say nothing at all ... If you're waiting on me, you're backing up." (OK, that last one, like several others, we couldn't quite decipher).

But in the end, Dad couldn't say anything. A stroke had taken his voice and pneumonia had stolen his very breath. There would be no last words of the Hollywood variety, with the family gathered at bedside as a good life ebbed peacefully away. Absent that, I'd have to speak my piece for both of us.

On this particular day, he'd had a restless, trying afternoon and I wanted to help him calm down for the night. So I began to recount touchstone memories we both knew and loved. They're mostly true, but have been greatly honed by the re-telling, their edges now polished smooth as greenstones on a Lake Superior beach. The stories were part litany, part lamentation. They brought to mind the Kaddish that a Jewish son prays after his father's passing. Except that my gentile version had fish and trees in it:

"Dad, you remember how sick you got on that crowded troop ship headed to Okinawa? For two weeks you slept on the deck, ate nothing but Hi-Ho crackers and puked off the fantail."

"Dad, you remember how in Florida, we'd dip blue crabs and jumbo shrimp off the pier by the Melbourne library? One night I lost that long-handled net with two crabs still in it and you didn't even cuss me out. At least, not much."

"Dad, you remember how Jeff and I dug sand fleas for bait while you waded into the ocean to catch whiting with a cane pole? And that day when you showed the snow bird with a fancy surf rod how to fish?"

"Dad, you remember when I lost that big steelhead in the Muskegon River below the Hardy Dam? That night, we camped in a tent and a blizzard blew it half down. That was the same storm that sank the Edmund Fitzgerald."

"Dad, you remember the time we camped at Mud Lake and Warren insisted on sleeping by the fire? The next morning his lips were so swollen by bug bites he could hardly chew your blueberry pancakes."

"Dad, you remember when I called your barber shop from Fort Benning after I earned my Army paratrooper wings? There was no one else in the world that I wanted to tell first."

I ran again through the stories in my head as I walked the trail. Even there, alongside me, was life and death. The dog tore past, a black furry streak of youthful energy. By the barn, grey tufts of rabbit fur and wing swipes on the snow marked where a red-tailed hawk had swooped in for the kill.

Then, from across the field, love personified.

"Tom-m-m-m," my favorite feminine voice called, "dinner's ready!"

Inside the kitchen, a steaming dish of Nancy's spinach tortellini, juicy with home-canned tomatoes, awaited. Famished. Ready to eat—now. Dammit, where's the girls?

"Get down here, or we'll start without you!" I hollered up the stairs. "And if you're waiting on me, you're backing up."

Tom Springer writes from rural Three Rivers, Michigan. A collection of his essays, Looking for Hickories, (University of Michigan Press), was a Michigan Notable Book in 2009. Another collection of essays in under way.

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. It's OK for your signature to be electronic.

More Opinion

Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman



Refuge from the storm

Every Michigan winter brings with it some serious weather, no matter where you live.

Here in the northwest corner of Muskegon county, we regularly deal with 30-mile-an-hour winds; stinging, driving snow; and temperatures dipping toward zero. Shelter becomes an absolute necessity for animals and people alike.

Deer and birds tend to hunker down in the thickest cover they can find. Woodchucks, skunks, possums, and other small mammals make their dens underground, in hollow trees, or in hidden spots inside buildings where there's access and minimal human activity. Livestock move into their barns and sheds, and can't be easily coaxed out until conditions moderate.

Our barn is a pretty good place to get out of those fierce Lake Michigan winds. Long and low, cobbled together, it's not perfect. Worse yet, I'm no carpenter. That being said, I've managed to fill in most of the open wall spaces with used windows, planking, and panels, a portion of which can be removed again come spring.

Snow blows in through the numerous small holes and cracks, but the interior feels surprisingly comfortable, especially when you've just slammed the door on a roaring blizzard.

The building has electricity for lights and power tools, along with neatly arranged hay bins, feed drums, bales of straw, bags of cedar shavings and a heated water basin used mostly by our crew of barn cats.

If that's not enough, my lovely wife and I haul buckets of warm water from the house every twelve hours or so, a walk of about eighty yards. No getting out of it. The hooved critters drink a lot.

When the drifts are waist-deep, a short-handled aluminum shovel cuts a nice path. Great exercise, but tiring if you have to clear the same route more than twice a day.

Then there's the after-storm shoveling. Clearing snow away from doors and opening up the barnyard is a requirement. Goats are fussy animals, I've learned, and don't like to fight their way through the white stuff. Horses and ponies are much more willing to venture out to the winter wonderland, and will push along even when the snow is up to their forelegs—provided there's some place they want to go.

Whatever edibles are left over from outdoor feedings don't go to waste. Birds of many species flock in to grab the loose oats, corn, and seed. At night, rabbits and deer slip silently into the yard to nibble on nourishing snacks of alfalfa and grain, while enjoying a break from the wind on the barn's lee side.

On nights that aren't so cold, possums come out to share cat food, waiting patiently until the felines have eaten their fill. Two of those unflappable marsupials are currently residing in our barn—the larger one in the loft. A juvenile likes to curl up in an old plastic drum otherwise used to store pieces of scrap lumber. My wife thinks they look like large rats, and isn't particularly in love with them. I find them to be good company, and appreciate their non-aggressive temperament.

A little gray fox pokes in and out of the barn from time to time. I'm not sure what he or she is up to, since our cats keep the rodent population very low. Possibly the drinkable water is an attraction, since most of our local creeks are frozen over in January's mid-winter cold. No problem. We definitely have water to spare for any unobtrusive winter visitor.

In another couple of months, the snow will melt away. Skunks and woodchucks will emerge cautiously from their burrows beneath the barn, and life will become easier once again.

It's a time to which we all look forward.

Doug Freeman is a writer and amateur naturalist living near the Lake Michigan shoreline north of Montague, Michigan.

Anglers review fisheries plan

The Grayling-based Anglers of the Au Sable organization has reviewed the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) draft Fisheries Division Strategic Plan and members are "generally pleased with the overall direction" of the document.

The majority of objectives in the plan are in agreement with those of the Anglers, the group said in comments submitted to DNR Fisheries Division Chief Jim Dexter.

Both the group's Au Sable Resource Agency Committee and its Habitat Restoration and Environment Committee said they "hear the call for partnership" and of-

fered volunteers to help execute the plan. They asked for more specifics around the various goals, however, and concurred that additional revenue will be needed to bring the plan to fruition. More dialogue is needed around resource investment strategies, they said, and the Anglers would like to remain part of those discussions.

The comment period for the plan—which may still be available on the DNR website—ended Feb. 10.

More than 11,000 people provided input into the plan—which will guide future management activities—via online surveys and phone interviews, the DNR said.

Viewpoint: Defending Michigan's best idea

(Continued from Page 5)

trails and greenways, wildlife and ecological corridors and winter deeryards, and projects in urban areas. When the Legislature forbids eco-region projects and requires the board to prioritize motorized use projects, it violates the intent of the Constitution to have the NRTF Board decide which projects will or will not receive funding.

The citizens of Michigan put

the trust fund into the Constitution to keep it away from the Legislature after it was diverted for other uses. Legislators have no business micro-managing the selection process, diverting funds, or subverting the purpose of the trust fund.

People who care about conservation of public lands and outdoor recreation have to speak up, though, or our silence will be assumed to be acquiescence.

Henry David Thoreau wrote, "Let every many make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it."

We do have to speak up, though. Michigan's best idea can't go down without a fight.

Drew Younger is a blogger and grassroots manager at the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.



Waitin' for Summer

This icy beach on the south side of Whitefish Bay patiently awaits the inevitable spring thaw and return of the summer tourists. On this particular day in mid-January, the water was frozen several yards from shore, although it was still open further out in the bay. Temperatures hovered near zero degrees Fahrenheit that morning, but the week before had seen unseasonably warm temperatures across the state.

Dredging is wrong use of money

Conservationists oppose trust fund raids

Another proposed raid on the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) has sparked outcries from conservationists who say the fund should only be used for special activities that preserve the beauty of Michigan for future generations.

Some politicians now want to dip into the fund to pay for harbor dredging at various locations. But that is an inappropriate use of the money, opponents say.

"Despite deep support for this constitutionally enshrined fund, legislators have consistently looked to it as a short-term solution to budget challenges in recent years," said the Michigan League of Conservation Voters (MLCV). "Though none of these raids

gained much traction last season—in no small part because we and fellow conservation groups drew a big, thick line in the sand—it took only three weeks for a legislator to introduce just such a bill this term."

In late January, Michigan Rep. Bob Genetski (R-Saugatuck) introduced House Bill 4106, which would allow NRTF money to be used for dredging Great Lakes Harbors.

Without immediate dredging, Michigan stands to lose significant tourism dollars as many small- and medium-sized harbors may be unable to open this summer due to record-low Great Lakes water levels. The levels are reportedly down due to recent widespread

droughts and warm temperatures that boost evaporation rates.

But raiding the NRTF is not the answer, according to the MLCV.

"Instead, we support a solution closer to the more comprehensive approach that Governor Snyder has proposed," the organization said. "We are echoing the governor's call for a one-time use of general fund dollars in this year's budget, paired with quicker permitting for dredging.

"We can work together to find a creative solution to this problem, but raiding the NRTF is not on the table."

(For more thoughts about the NRTF, see Drew Younger's related commentary on Page 5 of this issue).



A Winter's Catch

A young angler shows off a bluegill while ice fishing recently in Michigan. Winter can be a great time to enjoy the outdoors, as many of the state's 11,000 lakes offer cold-weather fun and world-class fishing.

(Michigan DNR photo)

Conservation Officer Logs (1/7/13 through 1/20/13)**Snowmobile dunked in Lake Gogebic; poaching along the Wisconsin line****DISTRICT 1**

CO Grant Emery responded to the scene of a snowmobile that sank on Lake Gogebic. A 20-foot wide pressure crack opened up and one snowmobile was lost in 12 feet of water. The snowmobile was recovered later that day.

CO Dave Painter is assisting the local Wisconsin warden with an ongoing investigation involving a deer poaching ring along the Wisconsin border. Multiple deer and suspects have been uncovered and the investigation is ongoing.

DISTRICT 2

CO Kyle Publiski was at a local taxidermist when he observed a nice 10-point buck. While admiring the 10-point, he noticed that the deer tag indicated that the deer was shot on the 27th. Further investigation revealed that the tag was purchased after legal hunting hours on the same day that it was shot. The CO began an investigation into the suspicious deer and was able to get a full confession that the subject was hunting without a license and only buys a kill tag if a deer is harvested. The 10-point was seized and arrest warrants have been sought and approved. Restitution for the deer is being sought in the case.

CO Kyle Publiski responded to a complaint of illegal traps being set on private property. Upon arriving on location, the CO found an illegal Conibear 330 trap and illegally set snares. After several days, a suspect was identified and ticket was issued for the illegal traps.

CO Robert Crisp checked an inland lake where there were several anglers using tip-ups as well as jigging rods. At one point, a subject noticed CO Crisp watching from shore and quickly reeled up his line and dropped the rod on the ice. CO Crisp then moved his patrol truck a short distance away and returned to where the anglers' vehicles were parked. He watched and listened from nearby. The angler he saw drop the pole stated to a friend that he was surprised the CO didn't see him with his fishing line. Just before the group was about to leave the parking area, CO Crisp contacted the suspect and was able to get the angler to bring up the part about trying to hide his fishing line. The reason was that he had not purchased a fishing license. A ticket was issued.

DISTRICT 3

An investigation into an unlicensed taxidermist led **CO Mark DePew** and five other District 3 officers to serve a search warrant on an Otsego County man. Officers found evidence of the unlicensed taxidermy business along with other illegally harvested animals, on which officers are following up.

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.

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.

CO Kelly Ross received a confession from one hunter who shot a 12-point buck and had his wife buy a tag so he could continue hunting.

COs John Sklba and **Bill Webster** received a complaint of a deer that had gotten stuck in the slush ice in Lake Huron. The COs put on their waders and went into the frigid waist-deep water. They were able to circle around the deer and move it in the right direction, and ultimately had to drag the deer onto the shore.

COs Andrea Erratt and **Andrea Albert** patrolled the Jordan Valley snowmobile trails and encountered several snowmobilers who failed to purchase trail permits. Tickets were issued. One rental sled didn't have a trail permit and the rental agency/owner was ticketed for the violation.

CO Jon Sklba took down names and addresses of ice shanties on Grand Lake during the January thaw last week, which proved to be very beneficial, as two shanties went through the ice later in the week. The owners have been contacted and given some time to get the shanties out.

DISTRICT 4

CO Holly Pennoni responded to a complaint of subjects catching and keeping undersized northern pike on a Wexford County lake. CO Pennoni contacted the suspects and located two undersized pike. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Angela Greenway was patrolling in rural Lake County when she encountered a vehicle stopped in the roadway. Upon contacting the occupants, she learned that they were coyote hunting with hounds. Further investigation revealed that the two occupants possessed two partially uncased firearms in the vehicle, one of which was loaded. Tickets were issued for the safety violations.

DISTRICT 5

CO Mike Hearn was patrolling state land and found a snare set and fresh signs of the snare being checked. Officer Hearn walked the area and located four foothold traps with only one having a tag. CO Hearn followed up with the name on the tag and the subject admitted to setting the traps and snare. Enforcement action was taken.

Area 5-1 conducted patrols during the first weekend of Tip-Up Town in Houghton Lake. Numerous violations were found for

unregistered snowmobiles, no trail permits, no helmets, careless operation, and fishing with too many lines. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Jason McCullough finished an investigation of a trapper not checking his traps on a daily basis. The investigation started with a complaint of a raccoon that had been in a trap for three days and concluded with a confession from the suspect and a ticket being issued.

DISTRICT 6

CO Quincy Gowenlock had a bench trial with a defendant who shot an eight-point buck from a vehicle last November while using a spotlight. Numerous other game laws were also violated. When the defendant arrived at the courthouse, he had a change of heart and pled guilty. The prosecutor dropped seven additional charges and let the defendant plea to just the illegal deer. During the sentencing the judge gave him 10 days in jail and a \$500 fine. The subject then stated he was planning to move out of the state. The judge then suspended his jail sentence and gave him 45 days to leave the state of Michigan and to show proof of moving. If he failed to show proof he would be doing the time.

Sgt. Ron Kimmerly was checking walleye anglers as they were pulling their boats off the ice ledge on the Saginaw River. The sergeant approached one of the anglers and asked if he'd caught any fish. The angler said not a single fish. When Sgt. Kimmerly advised he was going to search the boat, the angler then stated he'd caught one, and reached into the live well and handed the sergeant an undersized walleye. The angler said when he measured it he thought it was 15 inches. The sergeant then asked if there were any more walleye in the boat. The angler again said no. The sergeant again said he was going to check the boat. The angler again reached into the live well and said, "Well, there is one more walleye and it's the same size as the other one." The sergeant then searched the boat and no additional walleye were found. When asked for his fishing license, the angler couldn't find it, but swore that he bought one. After checking the license system, it was found that he hadn't purchased a fishing license in 2012. Tickets were issued.

DISTRICT 7

CO Jeff Robinette obtained a four-count warrant for a subject who was repeatedly harassing a lawful hunter during the firearm deer season. At one point during the investigation of the complaint, CO Robinette accompanied the

hunter to his stand and observed the suspect trespass onto the property and harass the hunter. Three counts of hunter harassment and one count of criminal trespass were authorized by the prosecutor.

CO Mike McGee was on patrol when he observed a large cloud of black smoke in the distance. CO McGee followed the smoke to three men who were burning a fiberglass boat. CO McGee issued the subject who was burning the boat a ticket for the illegal burning.

CO Mike Mshar contacted two juveniles who were trapping with untagged traps. The CO instructed them on how to properly tag their traps, reviewed other laws and met with their grandmother to advise her of the rules as well. A positive learning experience was had by all.

DISTRICT 8

CO Derek Miller checked two subjects fishing in a shanty. He announced his presence and the subjects took a while to open the shack and wanted to talk through the portable shanty. CO Miller convinced them to open the door and immediately smelled marijuana. Only one subject was able to produce a fishing license. During the contact CO Miller was unable to locate any marijuana but the subjects admitted to smoking a small amount earlier. One subject was issued a ticket for a fishing violation. The other subject had a state-wide warrant for his arrest and another warrant for possession of stolen property. That subject was transported to the county jail.

CO Kyle Bader received four different Report All Poaching (RAP) complaints for the same small cove on Rose Lake of people taking over-limits and double tripping (returning to catch another limit). CO Bader checked the cove and there were several anglers who all had near their limit of panfish. CO Bader set up on a ridge across the lake with his spotting scope and watched and took notes on all 10 anglers that showed up and when they left. Less than an hour after they left, a pair of anglers came back to the same holes they drilled earlier. CO Bader watched them catch fish for a bit, then drove to their residences. One angler had 48 bluegill and the other had 56. They said they thought the 25 limit was per trip so they took their fish off the ice and came back. Enforcement action was taken. As he was going out to check them on the ice, multiple residents pointed them out to him and said the two are there twice

each day.

CO Todd Thorn and an Ingham County animal control officer responded to a RAP complaint of a deer that had been hanging in a yard since the middle of November. When they arrived at the residence, an untagged antlerless deer was found lying on the ground under a tree beside a house. The man living at the residence, as well as his son, were questioned. They admitted to having shot the deer on November 17th and leaving it in the yard without ever putting a tag on it. The deer was gutted, but the meat was wasted. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 9

COs Ben Shively, Kris Kiel, and **Mike Drexler** conducted an inspection on a taxidermy shop in Oakland County. The inspection led to an illegally taken bear, a subject taking an over-limit of antlered deer, an otter that had been taken during the closed season and not sealed, three fawn hides with no scientific collection permits, and two cases of using/lending kill tag of another. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was contacted and responded to the taxidermy shop after the COs located a full bald eagle, three bald eagle heads and parts, a great horned owl, a red tail hawk, and a sandhill crane. The COs located approximately 100 specimens that were not tagged. Tickets were issued to the taxidermy shop for failing to keep accurate records, failing to tag specimens with specimen ID tags, and possession of a road-killed fawn. Evidence was seized by the COs and USFWS agents. The COs have been conducting interviews and obtaining confessions, and warrants will be sought on the illegally taken game. The USFWS agents will be investigating the protected species.

CO Ben Shively contacted a man and woman who had just set up six tips near an access site in Oakland County. When asked for their fishing licenses the woman stated that she was not fishing and the man stated that his license must be in his other wallet. CO Shively asked if all of the tip ups had his name and address on them. He stated that three did and the others did not because he just bought them. A check of the license system showed that the man did not have a 2012 fishing license. The subject was ticketed for fishing without a license and fish with more than three lines, and was given a warning for failing to have his name and address on his tip ups.

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Final Shot



Brrr...

Thick ice covers a frozen water fountain near Shepler's ferry dock in downtown Mackinaw City during a cold, cloudy and windy day in mid-January.

“Mitten Mixers” offer outdoor social networking

You may enjoy huddling around a bright computer screen, but colder temperatures and snowy days are no reason to stay indoors this winter.

Especially if you're looking for social networking opportunities.

New relationships and friendships can be found outside—along with improved physical health, mental well-being and a stronger kinship with the natural world.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has tried to facilitate such interactions with a series of Valentine “Mitten Mixers” at state parks and recreation areas.

The events—scheduled for Feb. 14-17 at various locations—have been geared to help singles make connections with like-minded individuals.

“Whether you want to meet new people, or simply enjoy a dif-

ferent kind of ‘date night,’ our Mitten Mixer lineup has something for just about everyone,” said Maia Stephens, recreation programmer in the DNR’s Parks and Recreation Division.

From snowshoeing at Cadillac’s Mitchell State Park to stargazing at Emmet County’s Wilderness State Park to ice-skating at Muskegon State Park, several fun and healthy activities are being offered.

Even if you’ve missed these opportunities, the DNR plans a number of family and couple-friendly events each winter, Stephens said.

“For just eleven dollars, you can get the Michigan Recreation Passport, which gives you access to every state park and recreation area in Michigan,” she said. “With the passport, your outdoor playground just got a whole lot bigger.”

Stephens said love of the great outdoors can bring people together and provide common ground for them to establish and nurture relationships—family or otherwise.

“Try something different, meet new people and surprise yourself,” she said. “It’s time to learn or rediscover just how much fun a Michigan winter can be.”

For more details about Mitten Mixers on Valentine’s weekend and beyond—as well as other outdoor recreation programs—visit www.michigan.gov/state_parks.

—Michigan Department of Natural Resources



Social networking can be done as successfully on a winter trail as it can on a home computer or smart phone. (DNR photo)

Finding footprints in the snow

There’s an old bluegrass song that contains the line, “I found her little footprints in the snow.”

The song is talking about a young child, but—with a stretch of the imagination—the lyrics might just as well apply to wild animals.

If you’re feeling cooped up this winter, try taking a walk outside and become what Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) officials and outdoor educators call “a nature detective.”

Looking for signs of animal activity—such as footprints—can be fun all year-round, but it is especially rewarding in the winter. All you have to do is bundle up, head outside and look for animal tracks, then follow them to see where they lead.

You might learn where an animal is spending the winter months, or perhaps the trail will take you for a long, scenic walk through forests and fields. Deer, rabbits, squirrels and fox are just a few of the critters whose tracks you may come across if you venture out in the snow.

You can learn a lot about wildlife in your own backyard, or favorite hiking spot, DNR officials said.

Before you go out, however, you might want to gather some useful supplies—such as a field guide, notebook, pencil, ruler and camera—which will help you identify the tracks you see.

“When I was a youngster many years ago, I ordered a volume from the *Outdoor Life* Book Club called ‘Tracks and Trailcraft,’” said *North Woods Call* Editor Mike VanBuren. I think I still have that book around somewhere, along with my Peterson Field Guides and assorted Golden Guides to nature. It was a handy reference tool when my friends and I would track rabbits, deer and other animals through the hills and valleys surrounding our homes.”

The DNR offers these tips for identifying tracks:

- * Look at the overall size and shape of the track. Draw a picture or take a photo of it. Is it circular in shape, or more long and oval? Is there only one track, or are there multiple tracks?

- * Look at the details of the track. How many toes does it have? Do you see any toenail marks, or toe pads? Or does it look more like a hoof?

- * Observe what kind of habitat in which you found the track. Take note of what the weather is like. By following the tracks, did you discover anything interesting? A nest? A feeding site? Different tracks?

- * Have fun. Even if you don’t know exactly what kind of animal tracks you have found, take a guess and see what other clues the tracks lead you to.

You can help ensure that there are plenty of wildlife tracks to follow, they said, by purchasing a Michigan wildlife habitat license plate and a living resources wildlife patch, or by making a tax-deductible contribution to the Nongame Wildlife Fund.

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