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Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

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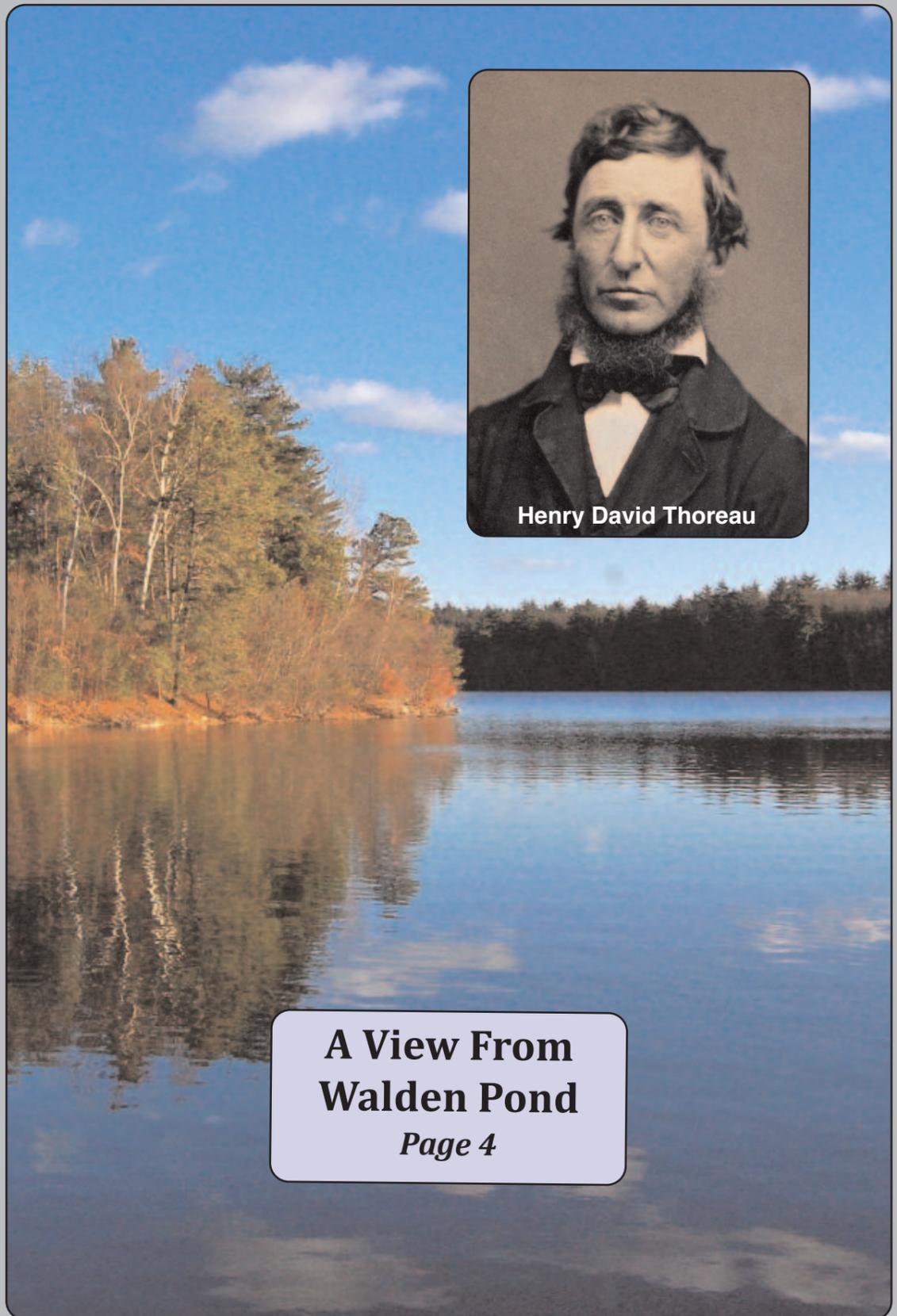
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North Woods Notes

OIL PIPELINE EXPANSION: Canadian oil transport firm Enbridge Inc.—the company involved in the catastrophic heavy oil spill in the Kalamazoo River during 2010—now wants to nearly double the amount of crude oil shipped on a major pipeline from Canada to Lake Superior. Enbridge is seeking federal approval to increase the capacity of its 1,000-mile Alberta Clipper pipeline from the oil sands region of western Canada to Superior, Wisconsin. If approved, the 36-inch pipe could ship up to 880,000 gallons of oil (and tar sands) per day into the Great Lakes region, which conservationists say would increase the risks of damaging oil spills.

GREAT LAKES OIL SHIPPING: A project being explored by Calumet Specialty Products Partners of Superior, Wisconsin, would build a barge-loading dock at the company's refinery on the shores of Lake Superior. The loading facility would allow the shipment of up to 13 million barrels of crude oil per year throughout the Great Lakes to Midwest refineries, according to papers filed with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Relatively little shipping of crude oil now occurs on the Great Lakes, which contain nearly 20 percent of all surface freshwater on earth. If approved, this project could change that.

ASIAN CARP: Despite efforts to prevent the invasion, at least some Asian carp may have reached the Great Lakes, according to a scientific report released in April. The paper summarizes the findings of a two-year study by University of Notre Dame researcher Christopher Jerde, and other scientists from Notre Dame, the Nature Conservancy and Central Michigan University. They disagree with government scientists who say many of the positive Asian carp "DNA hits" recorded in or near the lakes in recent years could have come from other sources, such as excrement from birds that fed on the carp in distant rivers. It is more likely, they say, that there are some carp in the Great Lakes, although there is still time to stop them from becoming established.

WINDMILL LAWSUIT: Neighbors of a large wind farm in Mason County south of Ludington have filed suit against the Jackson-based Consumers Energy Co. The plaintiffs allege that the 56 huge turbines and rotating blades of the Lake Winds Energy Park are creating "flickering lights, noise and vibrations," causing them to lose sleep, and suffer from headaches, dizziness and other physical maladies. The suit, filed April 1 in Mason County Circuit Court, seeks monetary damage in excess of \$25,000 and a court order for Consumers to "cease and desist" their activities and "abate the intrusions." The company says the project meets state permit requirements, but it has nevertheless been working to address these concerns.

BALD EAGLETS: Young bald eagles have reportedly hatched along the north shore of Lake Ontario for the first time in decades—further evidence of a welcome comeback that has occurred since the insecticide DDT was banned more than 40 years ago.

BATTLE OVER GUNS: The anti-gun forces are regrouping after a stinging defeat in the Democrat-controlled U.S. Senate of a bipartisan proposal to expand background checks for gun purchases. The amendment—which failed by a vote of 54 to 46 on April 17—would have expanded checks to cover all firearms sales at gun shows and over the Internet, but would have exempted sales between friends and acquaintances outside of commercial venues. This was one of three pillars to the Obama Administration's gun control agenda, which many have criticized as an assault on Second Amendment rights. The Senate was also expected to reject proposals to ban military-style semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips, so the legislation was shelved by Majority Leader Harry Reid. Still, it's not over, Reid said.

FRACKING APPLICATION: Yet another application to drill a well and use the controversial method of hydraulic fracturing to reach Michigan's energy resources has been filed with the state Department of Environmental Quality—this time in Muskegon County's Ravenna Township. The Michigan branch of Houston-based Rosetta Resources filed the application for a well to be located a short distance northeast of the village of Ravenna, causing more outcry from conservationists.

SAND DUNE DEVELOPMENT: Dozens of permit applications have been filed by developers since last year's changes to Michigan's Critical Dunes Act, including one that would allow an access road across the White River Township Barrier Dunes Sanctuary in Muskegon County. The proposal—which could set a precedent—has generated much vocal opposition among citizens and local government officials.

Proposed law could thwart referendum

State wolf hunting debate continues

A Michigan senate committee has approved a bill that reportedly would allow the state's Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to authorize the hunting of wolves—even if voters decide to reject the idea.

In what opponents see as a preemptive strike against a possible 2014 ballot initiative that would outlaw the practice, the Senate Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes Committee voted to advance legislation that would give the NRC power to designate wildlife as game animals and manage the state's wolves through controlled hunts.

Currently, the power to designate game animals for hunting rests solely with the state Legislature. The new law would allow the NRC's political appointees to also designate which animals could be hunted, except for livestock and domestic animals.

In addition, under the proposed legislation, the NRC could allow hunters to shoot mourning doves, despite such hunts being ended in 2006 by statewide referendum, according to the bill's sponsor, Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba). The bill contains a \$1 million appropriation, which apparently means it cannot be overturned by a future citizen's referendum.

Opponents of wolf hunting say this is a deliberate attempt to nullify their referendum before it even gets on the ballot. The group Keep Michigan Wolves Protected has launched a campaign and is collecting petition signatures. At last report, they had submitted

around 250,000 signatures. If at least 161,305 signatures are found to be valid, the previously passed wolf management law will be suspended until a statewide vote can be held in November 2014.

Meanwhile, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in April recommended to the NRC that controlled hunts be held this fall in the Upper Peninsula to help manage the wolf population.

Hunters would be allowed to kill up to 47 wolves this fall in parts of Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Luce, Mackinac, Ontonagon and Gogebic counties. The level of proposed harvest and location of wolf management units are linked to the level of nuisance complaints and depredation events.

Under the proposal, the 2013 season would run from Nov. 1 through Dec. 31, or whenever the desired unit harvest is met—whichever comes first. There were two options suggested for distributing the wolf licenses. One is a lottery system allowing 1,200 licenses and the second option would allow licenses to be sold over the counter in advance of the season. Any current legal hunting device would be allowed, including firearms, crossbows and bow and arrow. Foothold traps could also be used, but only on private land if checked daily.

In a related matter, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs has urged conservationists to support

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Anglers Return

Traffic is picking up at Gates Au Sable Lodge near Grayling as dedicated fly fishermen return to the pristine "Holy Waters" of the Au Sable River for the 2013 trout season. The lodge has long been a meeting place for anglers and conservationists who want to protect the river and other natural resources for this and future generations. Each September for several years, dozens of people have gathered for the annual river clean-up—just one of several important conservation activities promoted by the Anglers of the Au Sable organization.

Anti-poaching patrol

Volunteers are sought to help protect Michigan sturgeon from poaching as the fish briefly leave Black Lake in Cheboygan County for spawning sites in the Black River.

Hundreds of volunteers stand guard along the Black River from mid-April through early June to report any suspicious activity and deter the unlawful take of this prized fish.

The species is threatened in Michigan and rare throughout the United States.

Those interested in volunteering for these "poaching patrols" should contact Ann Feldhauser at (906) 201-2484, or register online at: sturgeonfortomorrow.org/guarding-program.php

Michigan Environmental Hall of Fame

Gov. Milliken and others honored

Former Michigan Gov. William G. Milliken and four other honorees have been selected for the Michigan Environmental Hall of Fame.

The 2013 awards will be presented during a 7 p.m. ceremony May 9 at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids.

In addition to Milliken—widely known as Michigan's "conservation governor"—the honor goes to Howard Tanner (former director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources), Fred Wilder, (former president of the Muskegon Conservation Club), Huron Pines (a Gaylord-based nonprofit conservation organization serving an 11-county region) and the Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service.

All were selected for their activities in support of Michigan conservation.

The Michigan Environmental Hall of Fame is sponsored by the Muskegon Environmental Research and Education Society, which encourages the continuation of environmental research and education for young people, as well as developing opportunities for the public to participate in environmental education.

In 1997, the organization acquired the Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve, which now does environmental education for approximately 5,000 students each year. The Environmental Hall of Fame awards were launched in 2012.



Lessons From the Sugar Bush

(Tom Springer photos)

Alternative school student Austin Owens (left) skims ice from a pail of maple sap that froze the night before during this spring's maple sugaring activity at Russ Forest in southern Michigan. Meanwhile, two other students (right) carry sap to the sugar house at the Volinia Outcomes School in Cass County. To protect the Michigan State University owned forest, no power tools, or vehicles, are used in the sugar bush.

From tree to table, a sweet path to success

The maples of Russ Forest must have felt unloved and forgotten. For 55 years, they'd waited faithfully, demure in their cloaks of silvery gray. All the while their sweetness went unrealized—not unlike a shy country girl who never gets asked to the prom.

The invitation finally arrived in 2000. That's when Sandy Wiseman looked out with new eyes from the little school next door.

Wiseman needed a hands-on project for her economics class at Volinia Outcomes School. When she asked the experts, they suggested a stationery store. This, in Volinia, Michigan, a crossroads of maybe a 100 people nine miles from Marcellus (pop. 1,191).

"Well that's boring," Wiseman said. "There must be something these kids can do here."

That something was the neglected maples. As a U.P. native, Wiseman knew what a sugar bush looked like. And behold: there was a fine one right outside her classroom window.

"I called Michigan State University (which owns Russ Forest) and they said they'd planted 700 maple trees in 1946 for a sugaring operation," Wiseman recalled. "But no one had ever tapped them. So we agreed to lease them for a \$1 per year."

From the start, the school board said "Volinia Maple" would have to pay for itself. So the entrepreneurial Wiseman secured a \$17,000 grant from the Edward Lowe Foundation to buy the sugaring equipment. Northrop Logging in Marcellus supplied the sugar house lumber and two local carpenters volunteered to build it.

Thus began the unlikely saga of Volinia Maple. It's the only student-run maple sugaring operation in Michigan and maybe anywhere. Students tap the trees, haul the sap, boil it into syrup and

The Wild Nearby
By Tom Springer



each year sell all that they produce. On the last Saturday in March, they hold a pancake breakfast with guided tours and horse-drawn wagon rides through the sugar bush. Some years they draw 1,000 visitors.

All this at an alternative school, a place designed for students who haven't succeeded elsewhere.

"We get kids who are headed down the wrong path and this can totally turn them around," said Don Price, Volinia principal, who took over the maple project when Wiseman retired. "It actually makes them better students. They've got to keep their grades up, or they can't do this."

With most youth activities there's a surfeit of coaches, clipboards and rule-bound scrutiny. But Price manages with a light touch. He lets two motivated 17-year-olds, Tim Wegner and Austin Owens, oversee production.

When I visited on the last Friday in March, the season was still going due to the late spring. They'd made 90 gallons of syrup with more on the way. As Wegner and Owens skimmed brown foam from the boiling sap, maple-perfumed steam corkscrewed up and away through the roof's open peak. The evaporator's fuel oil-fired burner rumbled along with a rocketry vengeance.

Minutes later, like quail flushed from a fence row, seven or eight students rushed over from the school. A few started to horse around by the equipment, but sugar boss Wegner would have none of it.

"You guys need to get out there and empty sap buckets," he said

firmly.

It was sunny, in the mid-20s, but the sap pails were clogged with discs of ice an inch thick. How to get it off? With your bare hands. While immersed in a sub-freezing ice bath. Until they stung with an angry, arctic fire. But no rubber gloves for Volinia kids, thank you; they say it slows down the process.

From February onward, they'll make thousands of such trips to the 700 trees. They dump the pails into 50-gallon plastic barrels, which are then pulled—they weigh 200-300 lbs. apiece—by a two-wheeled handcart to the sugar house. If it weren't for their saggy jeans, you'd swear the Volinia kids were Amish.

All told, Volinia offers lessons that no textbook can teach.

"Last year, I didn't know anything about maple syrup—except that it tasted good," said Wegner, over the evaporator's frothy roar. "Now, in one day we cook down about 300 gallons of sap.

"There, it just hit 217 degrees," he said, pointing to a red LED sensor. "It's pretty much automated, but you'll burn a batch of syrup if you don't watch it."

The old sugar houses offered warmth from open wood fires that heated the evaporators. This one is ice-cave cold, with a bare concrete floor that would make a penguin's feet go numb. I can't imagine how frigid it must be in the pre-dawn darkness.

But the crew's other half can.

"I get up at 4 a.m. to be here by 5," says Owens, a lanky redhead, who lives with his grandfather. "But we're lucky. Who else gets to make syrup every day?"

Our 60th Year: Looking Back to May 12, 1954

**— Excerpts from *The North Woods Call* —
A dream cuts the wide sky
over blue Michigan waters**

EDITOR'S NOTE: We're not sure whether this euphoric piece by North Woods Call founder Marguerite Gahagan resonates with today's conservationists—who might prefer that the Upper Peninsula was never opened up to the easy access and "progress" described.

The brown earth gave at the weight of the shovel. It crumbled, it slid, it gave way beneath human muscle—sliding, easing, opening.

It gave but a shovel full. Yet it gave a ton—tens of tons—to a century of man-desired progress. A link bridging the past to the future. A link [between] down below and the Upper Peninsula.

The dirt slid from the shovel. It slid and unearthed a picture, the image dreamed of years in the past. The picture of brave men, of men of courage, of men who bent steel to their will, who twisted iron and hammered spikes, who made the glowing forge grow red hot to bend the white hot metal into spans as tangible as spider webs.

The shovel brought the dream into focus. It brought the bridge into reality. It dug into the earth and threw the earth into the air. It threw the bridge into the air—high, high into the air—above the blue of the water, above the blue of the Mackinac Straits.

The crowd roared. The crowd sang its song of victory, of achievement, of victory over the disbelievers. [A] song of the future, of the unquenchable spirit of the north woods.

Bands played, bands marched—forty bands from little schools and little hamlets ... Floats passed by ... depicting the old north country ... the dreams, the achievements, the history and the strength of the north woods.

On a platform were men and women who had centralized the strength of the visionaries. There was the governor of the State of Michigan, young enough to carry on the vision of men of long ago—young enough and in love enough with the north woods to stump the state, talk [to people], to sell the bridge to the Upper and Lower peninsulas.

There were the strings of cars clogging the highways, the street dance where civic pride overflowed in laughter, the flaming sky rockets criss-crossing the deep blue of the sky, bursting into stars that told in more than written words of a state's achievement, history and progress.

It was the dedication, the groundbreaking, the symbol of progress, of 20th Century achievement, of battles in the Capitol, the House, the corridors, the cities and the townships. It was the voice of victory...

It was but a shovelful of earth. In it was the vision on blueprint. In it was the bridge.

Over the water it would float—in the sky, in the clouds, in the morning mist, in the moon-drenched blue of night—stretching to the precious heritage of man [which is] the woods, the trout streams, the rushing falls, the untouched, the wild, the peace of the north country.

It stretched to the last commodity of civilization. It stretched to the wilderness. It beckoned to the primeval in man; the unfenced, the open horizon, the unconquered, the spirit of the country—of America.

The space of earth was small, but it symbolized much. Magnificence, freedom, the unfettered, the bounties of a lavish nature, the peace of the north country. It symbolized the strength of an ideal, of strong men willing to fight for an ideal, of men who sacrificed that the many might benefit.

And so the bridge was begun under a Michigan sky, with Michigan voices raised in praise, with Michigan sons and daughters building the groundwork for all to enjoy in the years ahead—in the many years ahead.

Help compile *The North Woods Call* history

If you have stories to share about *The North Woods Call*, or photos and background information about the newspaper's role in Michigan conservation history, please contact us at:

editor@mynorthwoodscall.com

Just who were Maggie and Shep?

Help us put together a thorough profile of these two legendary publishers of *The North Woods Call* for an upcoming history book and "reader" focusing on the newspaper and its role in Michigan conservation. Send personal stories to:

5411 East DE Avenue
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004

Or contact us at:
editor@mynorthwoodscall.com

Michigan wolf management debate continues

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the state's "Scientific Wildlife Management" package (Senate Bills 288 & 289, and House Bills 4552 & 4553). The legislation will establish a right to hunt, fish and trap, allow the NRC to designate game species and issue fisheries orders, provide \$1 million in conservation funding for fish and game man-

agement and research, and provide free licenses to active-duty members of the military.

It is reportedly an effort to stop anti-hunters—led by the Washington, D.C.-based Humane Society of the United States—from being able to "buy their way onto Michigan's ballot and take away any more hunting rights."

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Conservationists challenge “anti-biodiversity legislation”

A Traverse City-based environmental group has challenged the Michigan Senate’s passage of Senate Bill 78—the so-called “anti-biodiversity” legislation sponsored by Sen. Tom Casperson (R-Escanaba).

In a letter to the House Natural Resources Committee, FLOW (For the Love of Water), a public trust policy center, said the proposed legislation violates numerous constitutional and legislative laws and their judicial interpretations. Among them: Michigan’s 1963 Constitution, the Michigan Environmental Protection Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR’s) own legislative grant of authority under the 1917 Organic Act.

“Collectively, these sources of legal authority and judicial cases invoking the public trust doctrine place a mandatory duty on the legislature and the implementing agencies like the DNR to protect the air, water and other natural resources of the state from pollution, impairment and destruction,” said Jim Olson, a Traverse City environmental attorney who is also chairman and president of the FLOW Board of Directors.

In the letter addressed to Rep. Andrea LaFontaine (R-Richmond)—chairwoman of the House Natural Resources Committee, which is now considering the bill—Olson asked that the committee oppose the legislation.

The proposed bill would remove “biological diversity” from the list of state forest management goals and prohibits the DNR from managing an area of land specifically to promote biological diversity.

“The effect is staggering,” Olson said. “It will essentially eviscerate the Michigan Endangered Species Act and violate the DNR’s statutory duties pursuant to its originating act—the Michigan Constitution—the Michigan Environmental Protection Act’s public trust requirements and Michigan case law.”

Under the state Constitution, Olson said, all state agencies—including the Natural Resources Commission, DNR and Department of Environmental Quality—have a duty to protect the state’s natural resources. Thus, the legislature also has a mandatory duty to enact legislation to protect Michigan’s natural resources, he said.

“In effect, the Constitution and Michigan case law have imposed a ‘self-executing’ duty on the legislature to pass laws that protect air, water, and natural resources—not the contrary,” Olson told LaFontaine. “Accordingly, Senate Bill 78 flies in the face of this mandatory and clearly articulated constitutional provision.”

The legislature did carry out this duty in 1970, Olson said, when it passed the Michigan Environmental Protec-

tion Act, which provided citizens with a legal right to protect the environment from public or private degradation.

Measuring biodiversity enables the DNR and other natural resource agencies to assess the environmental health and quality of an ecosystem, according to Olson, and to “understand the effects of conservation in the management of natural resources of the state, and the potential effects, or impacts of proposed actions, or conduct, on state lands.”

Without this rigorous scientific tool, he said, the DNR and other agencies “will be empty handed and unable to satisfy their duty to protect 4.6 million acres of state public trust resources from likely pollution, impairment and destruction.”

Curiously, the DNR itself has said it remains “neutral” on the matter and doesn’t believe the bill prohibits managing state lands for biodiversity.

Still, Olson told LaFontaine in the aforementioned letter that the DNR has legal responsibilities to ensure it manages the state lands with enhancement and restoration management tools. Under current laws, he said, the DNR’s responsibilities are enforceable by the courts.

The proposed bill, according to Olson, would only encourage violations of these longstanding and vital obligations and duties to our natural ecosystems.

Fatal Beaver Attack

Here’s some news from far outside Michigan that you don’t hear every day. At first it sounded like some kind of belated April Fool’s joke, but apparently it’s true—an Outdoor Life-style experience with tragic consequences. A man was attacked and killed April 11 by a beaver in eastern Europe’s Republic of Belarus. Sky News reported the man was on a fishing trip with two friends at Lake Shestakov when they spotted the animal on the side of the road. The beaver attacked the man as he approached to take a photograph. The London Daily Telegraph said the man wanted to pose next to the animal, but the beaver would have none of it. The aggravated rodent reportedly sank his sharp teeth into the man’s thigh, severing a main artery. Despite his friends’ attempts to stop the bleeding, the man bled to death. Beaver attacks are rare, wildlife biologists say—mostly from rabid animals.



Anglers push for increased fees

The Anglers of the Au Sable organization is pushing for a new fishing license fee package that would increase costs, but raise several million dollars annually to help implement the Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ new fisheries strategic plan.

Members and other citizens are being asked to contact state representatives to express their support for an across-the-board fishing license fee of at least \$25 for Michigan residents and \$75 for out-of-state anglers. The fee level was proposed by Gov. Rick Snyder, but instead a watered-down version was recently approved by the House Appropriations Natural Resources Subcommittee.

Unfortunately, according to Anglers of the Au Sable, the subcommittee ignored all of the recommendations made previously by the group, while stripping \$18 million in general funds from the DNR budget, and eliminating funding for 25 new conservation officers, as well as for an invasive species specialist and a new fisheries research vessel.

They have asked that—at minimum—the governor’s original plan be restored, because it better supports fisheries, and has wide support from the fishing and conservation communities. The fees outlined by the governor would be the first fee increases since the mid-1990s and are in line with what other states charge for in-state licenses.

“The subcommittee eliminated most of the improvements the governor called for, while shifting more of the DNR budget to the backs of license holders, with very little general fund support,” the Anglers group said. Snyder’s plan, while imperfect, was a good start, they said. The plan approved by the House subcommittee is “a very bad alternative,” they said.

The \$25 flat fee proposed by the governor is actually a decrease for trout fishermen from \$28 annually, which the Anglers organization calls “a tax cut we didn’t request and don’t want.” They are instead advocating a higher all-species fee of \$40 for in-state anglers.

Ballot initiative to ban fracking under way in Michigan

A citizen-led ballot initiative to ban horizontal hydraulic fracturing—known as “fracking”—in Michigan kicked off in April with a goal of collecting at least 258,088 valid signatures to get the issue on the 2014 ballot.

Several regional kickoff events were held around the state to enlist volunteers, distribute petitions and hand out literature. Initial training also was held to show citizens how to circulate the petitions and organize their communities.

“In Michigan we have the constitutional power to write our own laws through a ballot initiative and put them before the voters,” said LuAnne Kozma, campaign director and treasurer at the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan, which is organizing the drive. “Other states threatened by fracking, such as New York and Pennsylvania, do not have this option.”

Hydraulic fracturing is a controversial operation that pumps massive amounts of water, sand and chemical additives into a well and down the casing (tubing) under high pressure. As the mixture is forced out through perforations in the well casing into the surrounding rock, the pressure causes the rock to fracture. These fractures are propped open with pumped sand, which enables gas and/or oil to flow from tight, or low permeability, rock to the well.

At least 52 fracking wells have been permitted in Michigan so far and applications have been filed for more. Opponents say that toxic chemicals—many of them known carcinogens, sand and water are used in the process—permanently destroying millions of gallons of

water by turning them into frack wastes.

“Drilling and fracking create a tremendous amount of solid, liquid and gaseous wastes, polluting the land, water and air,” Kosma said. Wastes and pollution are integral to the process—not an accident or possibility, but a surety.”

“Only a ban can protect us from the significant harms of fracking,” said Peggy Case, president of Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation and a member of the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan.

In addition to banning the practice of fracking itself, the group’s proposal would ban frack wastes, and eliminate language in the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act that favors the oil and gas industry fostering “maximum production” of oil and gas over the protection of human health and water.

Opponents say that—in fracking operations—drill cuttings and muds are brought to landfills, or solidified on site. Some wastes stay inside the frack well, transforming it into its own toxic waste dump, while others are carried away to deep injection wells, they said.

For example, some frack wastes generated in Kalkaska County have reportedly been taken to an injection well in Grand Traverse County. There are more than 1,000 such injection wells in the state, and more are being proposed and approved.

The Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan says that the industry is using more groundwater per well here than in any other state. Higher amounts of water mean that Michigan is

also creating much more frack waste.

“It is a dire situation, but there is something we can do,” said Kozma. “As a grassroots movement of people—building signature by signature, circulator by circulator—we are the largest on-the-ground force in the state working to ban fracking. Volunteers are devoted to making change—getting onto public sidewalks, in parks, at farmers’ markets and other public gatherings to raise awareness face-to-face, voter-to-voter, while collecting signatures for a ban on fracking.”

As things are currently, Michigan’s entire Lower Peninsula is threatened by fracking, according to opponents. Devon Energy, they said, is fracking the A-1 carbonate layers in Crawford, Ogemaw and Roscommon counties, while Encana is drilling the Utica-Collingwood shale in state forests and on private land, and plans to drill and frack 500 to 1,700 sites.

Citizens in Barry County have filed suit against the Michigan Department of Natural Resources over the sale of leases for such activity in the Barry State Game Area and the Allegan State Forest.

In addition, densely populated areas such as Ann Arbor, Oakland County and the Grand Rapids region—communities not historically affected by oil and gas drilling within their borders—are now facing the threat.

For more information about the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan, or to get involved in the petition drive, visit the group’s website at www.LetsBanFracking.org, or e-mail Kozma at luanne@letsbanfracking.org.

Opinion

Conservation Quote

"A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to leave alone."

— Henry David Thoreau

To "frack" or not to "frack"

While we aren't opposed to oil and gas exploration, and generally support the careful use of fossil fuels—at least until we can come up with safe, effective and affordable alternatives to power the engine of our economy—we don't like what we see and hear when it comes to horizontal hydraulic fracturing.

"Fracking," as the controversial process is known, requires the use of massive amounts of water, sand and chemical additives to pressurize permeable underground rock formations and force the flow of oil and gas from reserves that were previously difficult—if not impossible—to tap.

There is reportedly much waste generated by this process, which is routinely disposed via deep-well injection and other methods that many say pose serious threats to the health of people and the environment. (The whole idea of deep-well injection of toxic materials seems to be a Faustian bargain that succeeding generations may live to regret).

The oil and gas industry, of course, claims otherwise and insists that the fracking and related waste disposal activities are well-regulated and safe.

It's troubling to us that hydraulic fracturing continues to be used and even expanded in various locations around Michigan when the overall impact of the practice is not sufficiently known. And it's equally flabbergasting that state officials charged with protecting our natural resources would routinely approve leases on land targeted for this type of exploration.

Much more needs to be known about the practice and its overall impact before any reliable decisions can be comfortably made about such things.

Fortunately, citizen advocates are rising up across the state to challenge this foolishness and some are circulating petitions to get a potential fracking ban placed on the 2014 ballot. We are compelled to support these efforts if for no other reason than a petition drive will help focus light on the debate and educate voters as to what is at stake for all of us.

There's nothing wrong with the wise use of natural resources, but all who would do so need to proceed in the public interest and refrain from activities that can damage to the environment.

Proper stewardship is key and we need to hold individuals, business, industry and government accountable when they are doing things that endanger the health and well-being of people.

Upgrading the bottle deposit law

When Michigan's new beverage container law was implemented in the late 1970s, many merchants and other opponents were complaining about the "hardships" placed on both businesses and consumers.

The law, approved by voters in the 1976 general election, outlawed non-returnable beverage containers and required a deposit on every can and bottle.

At the time, numerous stores and customers said the returns were costly, filthy, unsanitary and inconvenient, while supporters of the law touted its environmental benefits.

Despite this initial mixed reaction, the change-over seems to be working nearly 35 years later and we see far fewer discarded bottles and cans than we used to. Unfortunately, the law applied primarily to beer and soft drink containers—little else.

Since the 1970s, there has been a virtual explosion of various other types of take-out beverages—packaged in all manner of discardable bottles and cans—both glass and plastic—that inevitably end up along roadways, in lakes and streams, deep inside landfills and at assorted other inappropriate locations. Consequently, there is a need to upgrade the original beverage container law.

A new grassroots organization is stepping into the breach by starting a petition drive to get the issue placed on the 2014 general election ballot. The group, known as Expand Michigan's Bottle Bill, is spearheading the state-wide effort to add sealed drink containers such as water, juice, sports drinks, energy drinks and alcoholic beverages to the law. Members are seeking to collect more than 250,000 legally valid signatures on petitions currently being circulated.

Given the continued blight that such discarded containers inflict upon the landscape, the growing wisdom of recycling and the ongoing costs associated with trash disposal—for people and the environment—we think this is a good idea.

It has already been proven that these containers can and will be returned without too much problem. Consumers are used to paying deposits and returning bottles and cans, and businesses are already set up to handle the activity.

Let's plug the gap in the existing law and make it less desirable to toss such containers out of the car window, or deposit them in landfills.

Simple living: The gospel according to Henry

One of the first books that many student conservationists read is "Walden" by 19th Century American writer Henry David Thoreau.

Published in 1854 and often coupled with the author's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," the book details Thoreau's experiences over a period of two years in a tiny cabin he built on the shore of Walden Pond outside Concord, Massachusetts. It is simultaneously a personal declaration of independence, social experiment, satire, voyage of spiritual discovery and manual for self-reliance.

By immersing himself in nature, Thoreau hoped to gain a more objective understanding of society through personal introspection, simple living and self-sufficiency.

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately," he wrote, "to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Thoreau, who once visited Mackinac Island, emphasized the importance of solitude, contemplation and closeness to nature in transcending what he saw as the often "desperate" existence that most people live.

I, too, was captivated as a young man by Thoreau's advice to "simplify, simplify, simplify" and have tried to exercise that philosophy during much of my life—sometimes successfully and oftentimes not. I have even supplemented Thoreau's thoughts with teachings from "Freedom of Simplicity," a fine book by Christian writer Richard Foster.

Generally, I have preferred walking, camping, bicycling and canoeing to other more costly and less environmentally friendly activities. And I have typically tried to live below my means, stay out of debt and resist the temptation of too many possessions.

Again, I haven't always succeeded in this effort. But neither did Thoreau. During his time in the woods he reportedly often walked back into town for dinners with friends and certain other luxuries that society had to offer.

Still, I can say without hesitation that I have felt the least des-

North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



A replica of Thoreau's minimalist cabin as seen today. This structure is located near Walden Pond, though not on the original site.

perate and the most joyful during those times when my life has had the fewest trappings. Even today I am fascinated by the so-called "minimalist" movement toward simple living and smaller houses, though I don't know if I'll ever become that Spartan in my own existence. Maybe so.

It seems to me that simplicity should always be a central tenant of the conservation movement. It already is, of course, for some who recognize the environmental, social and spiritual benefits of such a lifestyle. But many who call themselves "conservationists" and "environmentalists," seem to want to cling to the high life while complaining about corporate excess, environmental degradation, the ravages of fossil fuels and other things that go along with conspicuous consumption.

How many people do we know in this modern age, for example, who have willfully given up family road trips, airline travel, large houses, heated swimming pools, computers, televisions, electric appliances and the plethora of other energy eating technologies that define modern life?

Not many, it seems. We desire all the conveniences without the often Faustian consequences. But

everything involves some kind of trade-off.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to visit Walden Pond on at least two occasions and contemplate Thoreau's experiment in simple living. The world has changed dramatically since those days and the sprawl of the Greater Boston area is quickly enveloping the once-pristine rural area.

The pond itself remains preserved and managed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but the surrounding area would be largely unrecognizable to 19th Century Concordites.

Most people today mock the notion of simplicity, and the overwhelming trend is toward greater complexity in our lives, our laws and our aspirations.

Maybe it's time that we revisit "Walden" and reconsider the voracious monster of a culture that we have created over the last 159 years since it was written.

What we are today and what we will become tomorrow depend on wise individual and collective decision making. Will we continue on the wide path that leads the mass of men toward quiet desperation, or choose to take the narrow path to better living—one simple step at a time?

The assault on Michigan forests

Recent and current legislation in the Michigan House and Senate has led many conservationists to believe that there is an on-going and intentional assault on Michigan forests.

With ample reason, it appears to us that commercial interests are being favored over good stewardship.

We've already covered at length the so-called "anti-biodiversity" bill that has conservationists seeing red. Now, as of this writing, the state House had already passed House Bill 4325—requiring the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Natural Resources to "jointly promote forestry and the development of the forest products industry." Meanwhile, Senate Bill 56—if approved—would expand tax breaks for owners of forest property.

Add to this the pressures of strip mining, and oil and gas exploration (especially "fracking"), and there seems to be either a carelessly implemented, or carefully orchestrated, plan to deliver our natural resources to special interests.

It's time to slow down a bit and think critically about the consequences of these actions. Sure, it's important to stimulate the economy, but at what cost?

Do we want to return to a time where resource abuse was the order of the day and negate many decades of dedicated work by conservation-minded citizens who—in the words of author Dave Dempsey—returned Michigan from ruin to recovery?

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A Newshound Publication

Reader Comment**Keep fighting in the legendary Call tradition**

Dear Mike VanBuren:

We appreciate receiving *The North Woods Call* and wish you much success in publishing *The Call* into the future.

Thank God for people like Dr. John W. Richter and Anne Zukowski on their viewpoints regarding biodiversity matters and hydraulic fracturing (Late March edition: Vol. 60, No 8).

We need multitudes to speak on these very important issues in Michigan, so as not to destroy the very things that our professional people in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the United States Forest Service worked [on] for years to bring Michigan back from ruin to recovery.

We are now faced with some legislators that want Michigan to go back to ruins. We cannot afford for that to take place for the sake of those not yet born.

When plants and animals disappear, people will follow—if greed continues to prevail.

I began reading *The North*

Woods Call in 1965, when Marguerite Gahagan first visited the DNR district headquarters in Mio. She came into my office to meet me and talk about the Michigan State Park System. I was the district parks supervisor at the time. After ten years, [I] moved my office to the regional headquarters in Roscommon and was promoted to assistant parks supervisor.

After Maggie sold *The North Woods Call* to Glen Sheppard and retired, Glen would stop by at the district office and later at the regional office. He was also interested in learning what was news in the state parks and recreation areas. They were both conservation-minded, to say the least, and good people.

There was a difference in Marguerite's and Glen's interests. Maggie was more down-to-earth and Glen shined in controversial issues on a broad scale, so to speak.

On a Monday morning in the late 1960s, Maggie came into my office and it [had] snowed about

an inch on the weekend. I told her I had some good news for a change. I told her about my success picking morel mushrooms Saturday in the snow. It was a picking of my lifetime. It made headlines in her paper.

The last time I visited with Glen Sheppard was when he was our guest speaker at the DNR retirees luncheon in Traverse City, and he and his wife sat at our table.

William Kusey Sr.
Mio, Michigan

Thanks for the note. Great to hear from you. We appreciate your thoughts on current environmental issues facing Michigan. You're also the first to respond to our request for information and stories about the two former publishers of The North Woods Call. Hopefully, we will get many more from those who have known them so we can put together a solid history book about the publication.

—Mike

Viewpoint**Frack you: Do the math—and shudder**

By Mike Delp

Imagine a perfectly lovely June day on a trout stream. The day is full of light and clouds, and you are standing in a river.

What I'm about to ask you to imagine will sound like it's out of an apocalyptic movie, and you'd half expect Tom Cruise to be fly fishing. But he isn't. It's me.

I'm fishing near Kalkaska and I've stopped long enough on the river bank to consider the outright environmental carnage that is commonly called "fracking." This carnage imperils the wildlife and the wild land along the river I'm fishing, and—perhaps more importantly—the river itself.

The average fracking well uses 22 million gallons of water, and each well takes up five or six acres of land—sometimes 10. Simply put, if I looked up into the air and saw a clear-cut piece of land six acres square coming down on me from the sky, it would look as if two average-sized Walmarts were descending to earth.

Or think of it this way. If the average football field is 58,000 square feet and the average fracking well takes up 261,360 square feet, imagine five football fields plopping down out of the sky and taking with them all the trees on which they land. Multiply that nightmare times 300 to a thousand wells intended for northern Michigan and you start to understand that this will eventually look like Armageddon.

And what about that 22 million gallons of water? The Encana Energy website says the company puts chemicals into "some" of the 22 million. That language "some"—which is 12 percent—amounts to 1,100,000 gallons of toxic water, which is undrinkable, polluted and dangerous to anything alive. It's part and parcel of the total 22 million gallons, so it

is all polluted, and worse. Once used in fracking, this water is not usable. It's gone.

That toxic water would fill over 24,000 average bathtubs and, if you got into one of them, your skin would most likely burn, if not fall off. Half the 22 million gallons stays in the ground and half is taken away in trucks to be injected elsewhere in another well.

Now, imagine 12 more wells near each other on the same stretch of river. Beyond this, each well is fracked two or three times, so if you do the math, we're talking 36 fracks times 22 million gallons. Total: 792 million gallons of ruined water, which has been mixed with 39 million gallons of chemicals.

All of this fracking takes place under enormous pressure and there are literally millions of gallons of water, sand and toxic chemicals exploding inside an underground range of approximately two miles, cracking fissures in rock that holds natural gas.

If you could see this, it would look like a mushroom cloud inside the earth and you know what that means. Earthquakes have come about because of this violence underground and there you are above ground in your tub, watching your skin slip off your body, while the tectonic plates under your house slide towards Georgia.

There's plenty more devastation which accompanies this monster in the woods: miles of roads, clear-cut pipelines 75 feet wide, an apocalypse of sorts filled with industrial pumps and treatment facilities ripping up what was once a forest, more miles of pipelines, diesel fumes and burned-off methane in the sky.

From the air, these places look like refineries surrounded by what seems to be the work of a madman with too much pipeline to

toss around. Think "Road Warrior" in the woods of Kalkaska County and you have only a small view of what is going on.

Multiply this times hundreds of wells dotting Michigan and you get the idea that this is not something out of an alien invasion movie. We are being invaded by toxic water, underground explosions on a huge scale, and the chewing, sucking and draining of our collectively owned land and water.

This is how the oil mafia, in collusion with the State of Michigan and huge energy corporations, views our land. It's available for the price of a gas lease, so that fracking becomes the modus operandi of the contemporary version of lumber barons, who looked at the forests of Michigan as standing money rooted in the ground.

Fracking is no different. While it is hard to see underground, above ground what you see are literally launch pads for gigantic underground plumes of deadly chemicals. But you know this: that those thousands of acres and square feet cleared and cut and drilled and pumped exist on the landscape as seething scars. If you see them from above—in aerial photos and videos—they ooze and belch, while down below their roots inject their toxic blood directly into the cerulean heart that is pure Michigan water.

Mike Delp is a writer and editor living at Interlochen, Michigan, and is co-editor of the "Made in Michigan" book series from Wayne State University Press. His most recent book is a collection of short stories, "As If We Were Prey," also from Wayne State University Press. An avid fly fisherman, outdoorsman and poet, Delp is active with Anglers of the AuSable.

Reader Comment**U.S. guns need to be regulated**

The Call recently published a press release from the National Rifle Association, opposing new gun controls. But there are many reasons for the conservationist and hunting communities to support changes in the current laws regarding firearms.

The Second Amendment says that the right to bear arms shall not be "infringed," because "a well-regulated militia" is necessary for security. Huge arguments center around what "militia" means and what "infringed" means, but there has never been any question about "well-regulated." No state or federal government—no court—has ever said that citizens can own whatever they like. As a matter of fact and of history, weapon ownership has always been regulated.

The question now is: Are firearms "well-regulated?" Do we think that the current laws about firearm possession and use are perfect, or do we think there is room for improvement? In a country where more than 31,000 people die every year from gunshot wounds and every two or three months another insane person guns down a dozen or so innocent citizens, it's impossible to believe that we can't do better.

Many people do not realize just how much damage firearms do. In 2011, the last complete U.S. Center for Disease Control record, motor vehicle traffic deaths were 33,687, and firearm deaths were 31,672. Guns kill nearly as many people as automobiles, but automobiles are highly regulated, while guns are not. To use an automobile, you have to pass a test of competency. The car itself has many mandated safety features, and all transactions involving automobiles are recorded. Nothing as stringent concerning guns is even mentioned in Congress.

Without going so far as to treat guns as carefully as we guard the right to use an automobile, how can we improve the current laws?

Well, what is the existing federal law (the Brady Act)? In 1998, the Act was amended to add a background check requirement for some (not all) gun purchases. Licensed firearms dealers are required to send the potential purchaser's name to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). This criminal records database is administered by the FBI. If no notice is returned within three days, they are authorized to proceed with the sale. The law is actually relatively easy to circumvent, through "straw purchases," when a person purchases a gun through a surrogate. Straw purchases are technically illegal under a 1968 law, but gifts from one person to another are not, generating a very large loophole.

Another loophole is that the law applies only to licensed dealers. Non-licensed dealers can still sell firearms without making background checks. This exemption is known as the "gun show loophole." Private sales between individuals are entirely unregulated.

How can we change things? One part of the problem is the mass killings by the mentally unbalanced. Unfortunately, we can't reliably predetermine who the insane killers are. There are 312 million Americans, of whom about 10 are crazy enough to actually massacre total strangers. There really isn't any way to reliably detect that tiny fraction. What we can do is limit the damage that they do by keeping assault weapons out of circulation.

While these massacres are certainly horrible, the bigger problem is the 31,900 other deaths by homicide and suicide. How can we limit access to firearms so that the criminal and the suicidal can't get them? There are three obvious steps we can take.

As a minimum, background checks should be required for any transfer of gun ownership. The "gun show loophole" needs to be closed.

The assault weapon is the favorite weapon of the insane killer, but the hunter and target shooter have no need for high-capacity cartridges. Banning their sale would simply and effectively limit the possible death toll from the next killer.

Finally, to keep firearms away from those who would use them to harm humans (including themselves), we need strict and enforced laws about how a weapon is stored, to prevent their theft and use for crime or suicide.

It is a mistake for the hunting community to oppose improvements in the federal gun control laws. Reform is necessary—certainly no one thinks that the way we deal with the problem now is the best we can do and none of the changes being considered in Congress will negatively affect hunting.

As a community where firearms are normal and mostly well handled, the hunting community can play an important and positive role in the gun debate. There is no way that 32,000 dead Americans every year is acceptable. We can do better.

Robert Johnson
Ann Arbor, Michigan

An end-run around state voters?

While we are not necessarily opposed to wolf hunting in Michigan, we are against political maneuvering aimed at neutering the will of state voters.

It seems like such a cynical round-about is under way with the proposed bill to empower the Michigan Natural Resources Commission to allow such hunts regardless of whether an anticipated state-wide referendum says otherwise (See story on Page 1).

While the average citizen is not an expert in wildlife management, the will of the people should still be respected.

—The North Woods Call

Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman



Just fishin' on the Jagst River

Like many Michigan kids, I grew up with a fishing rod glued to one hand.

There's something pretty special about lofting a bait or lure into a clean, spring-fed lake just as the sun's rays are beginning to dapple the shallows. My grandparents' dock on Clear Lake (near West Branch) was the scene of many such pleasant summer mornings.

Grandpa always reminded us youngsters to handle fish gently, to crimp down the sharp barb of each hook with needle-nosed pliers, and not to keep more than two fish per meal. He was an early supporter of sustainable harvest, and taught his grandkids not to waste what they caught.

As years passed, my tackle and techniques became sophisticated. Fishing destinations ranged from the Grand River in Lansing to Lake Michigan in the U.P. to the inlets and breakwaters of the New Jersey coast. One major aspect of this great outdoor sport had yet to be learned, however.

While serving as a young soldier in an army missile unit in southwestern Germany, the day finally came. On a bright Saturday morning, one of our NCOs proposed that several of us should try our luck on the nearby Jagst River. Fly fishing only. We three enlisted men jumped at his offer, though I was the only one who didn't possess the requisite equipment.

Sergeant Todd rummaged through the trunk of his car and quickly produced a new Fenwick rod and serviceable Pflueger single-action fly reel, spooled and ready to go.

"Hang on to these," he ordered with a hint of a smile. "You can use some of my flies when we get to the river." I didn't realize until later that he meant all the gear was to be mine, permanently and free of charge.

Fishing licenses and landowner permits in hand, we arrived at the Jagst after a bumpy trip over a long two-track. None of us wore waders that day, though I'm sure our good sergeant owned a couple of pairs.

We stepped into the fifty-foot wide, fast-flowing current wearing old clothes and tennis shoes. The water was clear and cool—a fine offset to the hot summer sun. We were surrounded by green fields and swatches of dark pine forest. There was not a building in sight, except for a medieval stone watchtower on a far distant hill.

The other guys offered a few pointers about casting to their only rookie, and discussed the benefits of double-tapered fly lines, optimum leader lengths, and "matching the hatch." Then I was left alone on a beautiful, secluded stretch of water which would flow eventually to the North Sea.

After an hour of trial-and-error, I got the hang of tossing a tiny green grasshopper fly fairly close to its intended target, a low-hanging willow branch. The first fish hit hard, using the river's current to pull away. It felt like a monster. When landed, my catch appeared to be some kind of shad, about a foot in length.

Sergeant Todd had been watching from the bank.

"Alos," he called out, using the German pronunciation. (Rhymes with "halos"). "Good eating," he added.

Unfortunately, none of us had stringers, and our only cooler was filled to capacity with iced-down bottles of local beer.

Most of the fish we caught that day were Alos, and as far as I know, all were released with care.

Our casting arms were tired by afternoon's end. Despite this, we were able to muster enough strength to consume every bottle's-worth of beer in the cooler, along with homemade slabs of dark German bread and salty white cheese. Not a shabby way to celebrate the beginning of one's fly fishing career.

None of us are now sure how, or at what time, we arrived back at our barracks that night in the small town of Heilbronn. Our thoughts were a bit fuzzy for some reason. Even so, the four of us—each hailing from a different state, managed to enjoy many more trips together to the Jagst and other fishing destinations over the next two years.

Way before wetting a fly line in the revered Au Sable or the picturesque Betsie, I'd had the privilege of being properly schooled by a small group of good-spirited, conservation-minded folks. Such generosity and respect for the outdoors is worth remembering, and, hopefully, sharing with others.

Combatting oak wilt disease

There's no time like the present to prevent oak wilt from being transmitted from diseased to healthy red oak trees.

Oak wilt is a serious disease that is typically transmitted between April 15 and July 15, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Red oaks often die within a few weeks after becoming infected, officials said. White oaks are more resistant, so the disease progresses

more slowly in them.

It spreads as beetles move spores from fungal fruiting structures on the trees killed last year by oak wilt to wounds on healthy oaks. If a live oak tree is wounded during this critical period, owners should cover the wound immediately with either a tree-wound paint, or a latex paint to help keep the beetles away.

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



Hymas Woods Nature Preserve

The new 149-acre Hymas Woods Preserve near Alanson, Michigan, is located in the Cheboygan River Watershed. The land—near Pickeral and Crooked Lakes—was donated to the Little Traverse Conservancy by Scott & June Hymas and features wetlands, a cedar bog, a maple forest, aspen groves, conifer-mixed woodlands and open meadows.

(Little Traverse Conservancy photo)

Introducing the American woodcock

One of the most rewarding aspects of being naturalists is to introduce children and the public to nature that they may not be aware of in their own backyards and neighborhoods.

Spring is one of the most exciting times to get outdoors, with most of us anxious to be there. This makes it easy to attract families to explore with us. Spring flowers, calling frogs, or returning birds are a few of the greatest and easiest phenomena to experience.

The nocturnal flight and mating dance of the American woodcock is an incredible show. The woodcock is a small shore bird that has short legs—unlike most other shorebirds. It also does not feed at the shoreline of rivers or lakes. It feeds in the moist woodlands and marshes upon insects and earthworms. With its long beak, it probes the soft earth. The tip of the bill is extremely sensitive, flexible, and pliable, and it acts much like a pincer.

Because the head, for a great percentage of time, is down feeding on the ground, the eyes seem to have migrated to the upper sides of its head when feeding, so it can see nearly as well behind it as forward.

In most of the northern states, this little bird is hunted as a favorite game bird. It provides a challenge to shoot—as it is usually found in dense thickets—and flies extremely erratically when it takes off.

In our part of the state, southwest Michigan, the male woodcock returns in late February or early March, weather permitting. The male begins to set up breeding territories on arrival and can be seen in numerous spots around the countryside. He selects a spot, called a "peenting" ground, in a meadow, marsh or brushy field. This area needs to be somewhat open. As dusk approaches, the male flies into the area and begins the nightly ritual. First, it will start "dancing" around in a circle, swinging its bill back and forth and giving a nasal call sounding like "bszzzt." Because of this dancing around, the "bszzzt" sounds like it is coming from different places in the meadow, or sounds like there is more than one woodcock. He may do this for a fairly long time.

As daylight leaves and you can no longer easily distinguish col-

ors, he will begin his flight in a low circle. His circle gets higher and higher, until he gets several hundred feet into the air and hovers there, making strange sounds using his modified wing feathers. We liken this sound to what we may call "tweeting." He will then start a descent, zig-zagging back and forth. At the end of each zig and zag, a flaring of his feathers makes a type of "wheet" or twittering sound. This happens above the open area where he started his ritual, until he gets about 30 or 40 feet above the ground, then he drops down and begins the "bszzzt" all over again.

He does this all spring and into early summer. For the first month, the female woodcocks, who are the whole reason for this dance, haven't even returned.

When the woodcock is in the air, he is oblivious to what is happening on the ground. Because of this you can creep up close to where he is doing his dance. If you start out quietly and only move when the bird is in the air—freezing on the spot in a crouch when he comes down—you can get quite close to observe his odd behavior.

A bonus that most people are unaware of is the sound that the woodcock makes just before it does the "bszzzt." The bird takes a gulp of air, it seems, and you can hear this "gulp" if you are close enough. This distance is usually quite close, about six to ten feet.

When taking groups out to see and hear the woodcock, we explain what is going to happen and how we have to be quiet and not move when the bird is on the ground. Of course, everyone wants to be able to hear the "gulp." It is very hard to hear and the easiest way I can explain it to people is to listen for the "bszzzt" and then listen (or remember) backward to recognize the "gulp" sound. I know this is hard to explain, but it works.

What is most disconcerting is when people show up not properly dressed for the night temperatures and dampness. Luckily, we have a couple of areas that hold "peenting" spots with one being

close to our nature center building. One fairly cool evening, we had started the woodcock walk. We had explained that the male was hoping to attract a female with which to mate. The woodcock wasn't being exactly helpful in performing. He would linger for an abnormal time between flights. We could tell one particularly chilly lady was becoming impatient, as she very firmly stated "if he doesn't find a mate soon, I'll go out and mate with him!"

The American woodcock has breeding records for every county in Michigan. Fortunately, Michigan is in the central part of its US range and has a healthy population. The woodcock breeds in successional stages of reforestation. The best habitat is fairly dense shrubs and young trees in mixed hardwoods and conifers.

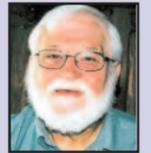
There seems to be quite a variety of places to nest. I have seen them in beech-maple forests and mature oak forests. Traditionally, in the north, dense alders and aspen thickets provide the best breeding and feeding grounds. Alders typically are in moist soils where the birds like to feed. Nests are on the flat ground with little building. Four eggs are the norm and chicks—being precocial—leave the nest in short time with the mother.

Parenting is done by the female, which will feign injury—much like a Killdeer—when approaching the chicks, or nest.

It is estimated about 250,000 woodcock are harvested each year by hunters.

Get out and experience this wonderful game bird.

Richard Schinkel is a retired naturalist, educator and businessman living in Berrien Springs, Michigan. A graduate of Lake Michigan College and Western Michigan University (WMU), he taught both junior high and high school, and has been an adjunct faculty member at Lake Michigan College, WMU and Michigan State University, as well as head naturalist at the Sarett Nature Center at Benton Harbor.



A Naturalist's Musings

By Richard Schinkel

Conservation Officer Logs (3/18/13 through 3/31/13)

Trespassing, dead birds, meth, a speeding train & one AR-15 investigated

DISTRICT 1

CO Brian Bacon followed up on a trespass complaint from deer season when new information was received. CO Bacon identified the suspect and conducted an interview. The suspect stated he had been waiting for an officer to stop by, and confessed to shooting the deer and not paying attention to the private property. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Brian Bacon came across a vehicle parked along a two track in Dickinson County. Contact was made a short distance from the vehicle, and it was discovered that the two subjects were cutting firewood without a permit. CO Bacon also discovered a loaded and uncased rifle on the seat of the truck as well. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 2

CO Mike Hammill was on routine patrol after dark when he observed a vehicle driving without headlights. A traffic stop was initiated and the CO found the subject was driving while license suspended. This was the subject's fourth arrest for driving while license suspended, and in addition there was no insurance or current registration on the vehicle. The subject also had two outstanding warrants for his arrest and he was lodged in the Luce County Jail.

COs Mike Hammill, Kevin Postma and Kyle Publiski conducted a surveillance patrol on a local lake in Mackinac County. A pair of anglers were doing quite well on bluegills. The pair left the lake for a period of time and then returned to continue fishing. With a little leg work the COs figured out that they had hidden bags full of bluegill in a snow bank down the road. Upon contact the two were uncooperative and wouldn't admit to the over-limits. Once they realized that the COs knew a little more than they anticipated they confessed to their illegal activity, and tickets were issued.

DISTRICT 3

CO Steve Speigl responded to a suspicious situation where an angler noticed several dead waterfowl in the Elk Rapids Harbor. Upon investigation and assistance from the DNR Wildlife Division,

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.

it was determined that the birds had most likely died of botulism in the fall, froze under the ice and resurfaced after the ice melted.

CO Andrea Erratt responded to a complaint with Charlevoix County animal control regarding a pet raccoon that bit a person on the arm and leg. Animal control handled the human-animal bite issue, while CO Erratt determined the raccoon was taken from the wild when young. A ticket was issued for possessing captive wildlife without a license.

CO Jon Sklba photographed a subject fishing next to the "Closed to Fishing" sign at the Ocqueoc River weir, and then issued a ticket for the violation.

DISTRICT 4

While conducting a patrol on snowmobiles, COs Rebecca Hopkins and Justin Vanderlinde observed a mudder jeep being operated on a Benzie County snowmobile trail. The jeep operator failed to stop at a stop sign on a portion of the snowmobile trail which happened to be a seasonal county road. The COs conducted a traffic stop on the jeep that had no vehicle registration. The operator was under the influence of marijuana, driving without a valid operator's license which was suspended, and wanted on two outstanding arrest warrants. The operator was lodged in the county jail on several charges.

CO Angela Greenway was patrolling closed sections of trout streams when she located three subjects with fishing equipment walking along a closed stream. One of the subjects, a fishing guide, attempted to convince the CO that the section of river they were on was recently opened to fishing. In addition to possessing fishing gear along a closed trout stream, all three subjects were trespassing on private property. The private land manager was contacted and denied having any knowledge of the identity of the subjects. Enforcement action was taken for the recreational trespass violations.

DISTRICT 5

CO Mike Hearn assisted at

the scene of a snowmobile personal injury accident in Kalkaska County. The snowmobile operator failed to negotiate a curve and hit a tree. The subject was airlifted to the hospital.

While patrolling the Au Gres River in Iosco County, COs Mark Papineau and Brian Olsen observed several subjects actively fishing a closed portion of the stream. The subjects were targeting steelhead which were gradually starting to make their way into the rivers to spawn. In addition to fishing a closed section of stream, the subjects were also fishing illegally within 100 feet of the lamprey weir. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 6

CO Josh Wright received a Report-All-Poaching (RAP) complaint from a person who found a fox den on their property that was dug out with a shovel and a dead fox close by. CO Wright followed tracks from the den to another piece of property where they ended and from there vehicle tracks led to a house. The CO talked to the homeowner and found that they had a friend come over and told them their dog got stuck in the fox den. CO Wright tracked the dog owner down and found out that he was training his new terrier to go in to dens and kill animals. The dog owner knew that the dog was after a fox, he did not have a hunting license and did not know whose property he was on. Enforcement action was taken for taking a fox out of season and trespassing.

CO Josh Wright could see a large amount of smoke coming from the Tuscola County shoreline. When he arrived at the location of the fire on state land, he discovered that the shoreline was on fire, a Bobcat with a brush hog was mowing the marsh and a few people were sitting on ORVs tending the fire. None of the individuals had permits or permission from the DNR or DEQ to do any work on the state land. They told the CO they were doing it so they could see the water from their homes again. Several violations were addressed and enforced

along with the fire department being dispatched to put out the fire that was quickly getting out of control.

On November 17, 2013, Sgt. Ron Kimmerly arrested a subject who was operating a tractor, drinking a beer and holding an AR-15 in his right hand. The subject was intoxicated, failed to give the Sgt. the firearm when ordered, and then resisted arrest. He was taken into custody and charged for resisting and obstructing a police officer, three counts of possessing a firearm while intoxicated, possessing an uncased firearm in a motor vehicle, and possessing a firearm while committing a felony. The defendant took a plea bargain and was recently sentenced. Along with jail time served, the defendant was ordered to pay \$2,225 in fines, must attend anger management counseling, was placed on an alcohol tether for 60 days, was placed on probation for two years, cannot possess a firearm for two years and must forfeit his AR-15 and surrender all other firearms.

DISTRICT 7

CO Mike Mshar responded to a RAP complaint regarding a subject shooting a turkey from his back deck in Ottawa County. Contact was made with the suspect and a full confession was obtained for killing the turkey. The subject stated that he had to kill it because the turkeys were tearing up his yard. CO Mshar pointed out a large deer feeder in the back yard with corn underneath it and asked what it was for. The suspect advised it was only for the squirrels and deer. The turkey and shotgun were seized and the subject was charged with taking a turkey during closed season, and discharge of a firearm in a safety zone.

CO Chris Holmes watched three subjects trespassing and walking down posted Amtrak railroad tracks. The CO exited his vehicle to make contact with the subjects and could hear the Amtrak train blowing its horn heading in their direction. CO Holmes contacted the subjects and removed them from the tracks approximately 45 seconds before the train passed their location at 70 mph. Enforcement action was taken.

While on patrol CO Chris Holmes observed a female trying to jump out of a moving vehicle. CO Holmes also observed that the two adult occupants were verbally fighting. CO Holmes stopped the

vehicle and found the driver's license to be suspended, and in possession of methamphetamine and a "one pot" methamphetamine lab. The female occupant was high on methamphetamine. A clandestine lab clean up team from the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department arrived on scene, the lab was secured and charges will be sought for methamphetamine charges.

DISTRICT 8

CO Kyle Bader stopped at a residence to check on a fire that was producing a large amount of black smoke. The resident was building the fire to burn material from a trailer he was tearing down. Luckily for him, he hadn't started burning the trailer. Unluckily for him, he had a warrant out of Indiana and they were willing to extradite. He was lodged in the Coldwater jail.

CO Dan Bigger completed an investigation into a subject shooting three deer and purchasing his licenses afterwards. The subject thought by purchasing the licenses, he would be able to keep the deer. An interview with the subject indicated that he hadn't thought he would get a chance to shoot one deer, let alone three. A warrant was authorized.

DISTRICT 9

COs Todd Szyska and Kris Kiel responded to a complaint in St. Clair County of dumped deer carcasses. The complainant was worried about ground water contamination and that his small son had acquired a pair of deer legs and was using them to make deer prints in the mud. The deer parts were dragged over to his property from neighboring property by his dog. The COs contacted the suspect and he stated that he had let several friends place their deer carcasses on his land. The complainant had been using them for coyote bait and they were left in the hole of an old barn foundation. In lieu of receiving a ticket for improper burial of animals, the suspect agreed to dispose of the carcasses properly.

CO Kris Kiel checked the Spillway Dam and observed an angler casting and retrieving a large crank-bait. The subject said he was fishing for northern pike and that his brother said that northern pike season was open. The CO informed him otherwise and provided a fishing guide. The angler was also fishing without a license. Enforcement action was taken.

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Leave wildlife in the wild

Spring has sprung, and fields and forests are teeming with new life.

In addition to the glorious displays of wildflowers, wild animals are giving birth and hatching the next generation. These are sights to be enjoyed, but it's important that we keep our distance.

"These are magical moments to witness, but sometimes the story has a different ending when people take baby wild animals out of the wild," said Erin Victory, a Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist.

Victory said people should resist the urge to "help" seemingly abandoned fawns, or other baby animals, this spring.

"Some people truly are trying to be helpful, while others think wild animals would make good pets," she said. "In most cases, neither of these situations ends well for the wildlife.

Species that are most problematic are white-tailed deer and raccoons, according to Victory.

"Deer seem so vulnerable and helpless," she said, "but really they stay still because that is a mechanism to let them be undetected. Raccoons seem cute and cuddly, but they grow up to be mischievous and aggressive. It's best to just leave them alone."

It is not uncommon for deer to leave fawns unattended for up to

eight hours at a time, which minimizes the scent of the mother and allows the fawn to go unnoticed by nearby predators, according to the DNR.

"While fawns may seem abandoned, they almost certainly are not," Victory said.

Most mammals have a keen sense of smell and, if humans touch them, their parents will abandon them. Other wildlife, such as birds, should not be handled, either. Adult birds will continue to care for hatchlings that have fallen from their nests. Although most birds do not have a strong sense of smell, the adults may not be able to locate them if people have moved them.

It is illegal to possess a live wild animal in Michigan. Many baby animals will die if removed from their natural environment, and some have diseases or parasites that can be passed on to humans or pets. Some "rescued" animals that do survive become used to people and are unable to revert to life in the wild. Additional problems may arise as animals mature and develop adult animal behaviors, such as aggressiveness.

Trained and licensed wildlife rehabilitators may be able to help if a deer or other animal is truly orphaned.

—Michigan DNR



This young fawn hidden in the tall grass has not been abandoned and should be left alone. (DNR Photo)

Final Shot



Hitting the Trails

Outdoor lovers of all stripes are taking to a variety of Michigan biking, hiking and horseback trails as better weather and the warmth of spring open the north country to more comfortable exploration. Here, a couple of bicycles wait along the Lake Huron Shore between Rogers City and P.H. Hoefft State Park while their riders walk the beach and enjoy the scenery.

Becoming an outdoor woman

Women who want to improve their outdoor skills can register now for the 16th annual Becoming and Outdoors Woman program.

Sponsored by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the program will be held at the Big Bay Health Camp, located about 30 miles north of Marquette in the Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Instruction in more than two dozen types of outdoor activities will be offered, including kayaking, wilderness first aid, survival, fly fishing, geo-caching, shooting sports, boating and outdoor cooking.

The \$180 registration fee includes all food and lodging, as well as most equipment and supplies. Participants will be housed in a universally-accessible dorm-style facility with numerous amenities, including a pool, tennis courts, hiking and biking trails, and easy access to Lake Superior. There will be special evening programs, hikes, group bonfires and much more.

A limited number of scholarships are available to help low-income participants with the cost of registration.

For more information, contact Sharon Pitz at (906) 228-6561, or pitzs@michigan.gov/bow.

High water safety for river anglers

Anglers are cautioned to use proper "river etiquette" while steelheading this spring.

Many of the state's rivers are experiencing high water due to significant recent rainfall and spring run-off, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which means high and fast-moving water.

A slow, "no wake" speed is appropriate river etiquette, conservation officers say, so you don't push water over banks onto private property, or swamp other boats.

"Using caution helps everyone," they say.

Sound off on The North Woods Call!

Please take the time to respond to this brief survey by June 1, 2013. Be specific and use additional paper, if needed. You can also send an e-mail to editor@mynorthwoodscall.com, or fill out the survey at www.mynorthwoodscall.com. Your thoughts and ideas are important to us as we consider the future of this publication. Thank you.

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