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 to 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 (Continued on Page 2)
Lessons From the Sugar Bush
Alternative school student Austin Owens (left) skims ice from a pile of maple sap that froze the night before during this spring's maple sugaring activity at Rust 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 Rust 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.

But with 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 Marquette (pop. 3,191).

"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 Rust Forest) and they said they'd planted 700 maple trees in 1946 for a sugaring project," Wiseman recalled. "But no one had ever tapped any of it.

When I visited on the last Friday in May, the season was still going due to the late spring. They'd made 90 gallons of syrup—about 500-100 lbs. a piece—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 penquin'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 maple syrup every day?"

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—a tens of tons—to a century of man's desire.

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—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 unbreakable 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 the vision of men of long ago—young enough and in love enough with the north woods to stomp the state, talk [to people], to sell the bridge to the Upper and Lower penin- sula.

There were the strings of cars clogging the highways, the street dance where civic pride overflown 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 groundwork, 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 ... but it was a shovelful of earth. In it was the vision on blueprint. It was the bridge.

Owens, wearing the sweater he wore for the last 50 years, said, "You guys need to get out there and empty sap buckets," he said firmly.

"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 maple syrup every day?"

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.

But the unlikely saga of Volinia Maple didn't stop there. 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 empty sap buckets,

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

Our 60th Year: Looking Back to May 12, 1954
For updates, t-shirts & caps, visit our website at:
www.mynorthwoodscall.com

The Wild Nearby
By Tom Springer
The North Woods Call
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. Gary G. universality and certainty. In a letter to the House Natural Resources Committee, FLOW, (For the Love of Water), a public trust center, said the proposed legislation violates numerous constitutional safeguards and veers off course from judicial interpretations. Among them: Michigan’s 1963 Constitution, the Michigan Environmental Protection Act and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)’s statutory 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 to act in the interest of the public, to conserve and protect the natural resources of the state from pollution, impairment, and destruction,” said Jim Olson, a Traverse City environmental attorney who was also chairman and president of the FLOW Board of Directors.

“Certainly, the committee is well aware of the many concerns that have been raised about the harmful effects of hydraulic fracturing and the potential harms of fracking,” said Peggy Case, a conservation and member of the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan, which is now considering the bill—Olson asked that the committee oppose the legislation.

The proposed bill would require “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 legislation did carry out this duty in 1970, Olson said, when it passed the Michigan Environmental Protection 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 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 activities, on such resources.”

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.”

“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 officer. They have asked that—at minimum—the governor’s original proposal be backed, with little general fund 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. Snyder, but instead a watered-down version was recently approved by the House Appropriations Natural Resources Subcommittee.

“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.”

“Certainly, the DNR itself has it remains “neutral” on the question of whether 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 appropriate management tools. Under current laws, he said, the DNR’s responsibilities are enforceable by the courts.

“Evidently, the proposed bill, as written by 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 everyday. At first it sounded like some kind of belated April Fool’s joke, but apparently it’s true—an Out-

door Life-style experience with tragic consequences. A man was attacked and killed April 11 by a beaver in eastern Europe’s pub-

lic of Belarus. Sky News reported the man was on a fishing trip with two friends at Lake Sheskator 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 aggressive rodent reportedly sunk its sharp teeth into the man’s thigh, severing a main artery. Despite his friends’ attempts to stop the bleeding, the man died to. Beaver

attacks are rare, wildlife biologists say—mostly from rabid animals.

Ballot initiative to ban fracking under way in Michigan

A citizen-led ballot initiative to ban hor-

izontal hydraulic fracturing—known as “frack-

ing”—in Michigan kicked off in April with a goal of collecting at least 258,088 valid signa-

tures 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 al-

ready included kick-off events, according to LuAnne Kozma, campaign director and treas-

urer at the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan, which is organizing the drive.

“Like most citizens, I have been一时的激怒。— but apparently it’s true—an Out-

door Life-style experience with tragic consequences. A man was attacked and killed April 11 by a beaver in eastern Europe’s pub-

lic of Belarus. Sky News reported the man was on a fishing trip with two friends at Lake Sheskator 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 aggressive rodent reportedly sunk its sharp teeth into the man’s thigh, severing a main artery. Despite his friends’ attempts to stop the bleeding, the man died to. Beaver

attacks are rare, wildlife biologists say—mostly from rabid animals.

a 78,000 species fee of at least $25 for Michigan residents and $75 for out-of-state anglers. The fee level was proposed by Gov. 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 officer. They have asked that—at minimum—the governor’s original proposal be backed, with little general fund 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. 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 officer. They have asked that—at minimum—the governor’s original proposal be backed, with little general fund 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. 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 officer. They have asked that—at minimum—the governor’s original proposal be backed, with little general fund 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. 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 officer. They have asked that—at minimum—the governor’s original proposal be backed, with little general fund 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. Snyder, but instead a watered-down version was recently approved by the House Appropriations Natural Resources Subcommittee.
simple living: the gospel according to henry

One of the first books that many student environmentalists 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 Disobedi- ence,” 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 spir- itual discovery and manual for self reliance.

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

For Thoreau 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 meant to live each day with prayer and dailies that went down to the roots of things he can afford to leave alone.” — Henry David Thoreau

A replica of Thoreau’s minimalist cabin as seen today. This structure is located near Walden Pond, though not on the original site. (Photo by Mike VandenBuren)

To “frack” or not to “frack”

While we aren’t opposed to oil and gas exploration, and gener- ally 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 put serious threats to the health of people and the environment. (The whole idea of deep-well injection is not impossible—to tap.

It has already been proven that these containers can and will be used and even expanded in various locations around Michigan when the overall impact of the practice is not sufficiently known. And it’s even 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 it’s over- going and intentional assault on Michigan forests. The oil and gas industry, of course, claims otherwise and in- sist 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 even 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 it’s over- going and intentional assault on Michigan forests. The oil and gas industry, of course, claims otherwise and in- sist 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 even flabbergasting that state officials charged with protecting our natural resources would routinely approve leases on land targeted for this type of exploration.

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.

There’s something of the kind 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 imple- mented in the late 1970’s, many merchants and other opponents were complaining about the “hurdles” placed on both busi- nesses and consumers.

The law, approved by voters in the 1976 general election, out- lawed non-returnable beverage containers and required a deposit on each 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.

In 1996, the bottle law became even more stringent, 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 1970’s, 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 in- evitably end up along roadways, in lakes and streams, deep in- side 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 gen- eral election ballot. The group, known as Expand Michigan’s Bot- tle Bill, is spearheading the state-wide effort to add sealed drink containers to the list of returnables: juice, milk, soda, tea, water, milk, soda, tea, water, alcoholics and alcohoic 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 in- flict upon the landscape, the growing wisdom of recycling and the ongoing costs associated with trash disposal—for people and the environment alike—it seems timely and urgent to do so.

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 desire- able to toss such containers out of the car window, or deposit them in landfills.

The assault on Michigan forests

Recent and current legislation in the Michigan House and Sen- ate may harm and even undo 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 served at the expense of good stewardship.

We’ve already covered at length the so-called “anti-biodiver- sity” bill that has conservationists seeing red. Now, as of this writ- ing, the state House had already passed House Bill 4325—requiring the Department of Agriculture and Rural Develop- ment and the Department of Natural Resources to “jointly pro- mote forestry and the development of the forest products industry.” Meanwhile, Senate Bill 56—If approved—would ex- pect state tax breaks for owners of forest property.

Add to this the pressures of strip mining, and oil and gas ex- ploration (especially “fracking”), and there seems to be either a carelessly implemented, or carefully orchestrated, plan to deliver natur- al resources to the war chest for special interests.

It’s time to slow down a bit and think critically about the con-sequences of these actions. Sure, it’s important to stimulate the economy, but one wonders about the cost that?

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 David Dempsey—returned Michigan from ruin to recovery?

The North Woods Call

Michigan’s Conservation Sentinel
Since 1935
Published 22 times a year by: Newshound Productions LLC
5417 E. 12 Mile Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004
Telephone (269) 342-8724
E-mail: editor@mynorthwoodscall.com
Website: mynorthwoodscall.com
Online subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Print subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Address changes: Please send $2 to cover costs.
Editor & Publisher: Mike VandenBuren
Newshound Publishing

The North Woods Call

Michigan’s Conservation Sentinel
Since 1935
Published 22 times a year by: Newshound Productions LLC
5417 E. 12 Mile Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004
Telephone (269) 342-8724
E-mail: editor@mynorthwoodscall.com
Website: mynorthwoodscall.com
Online subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Print subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Address changes: Please send $2 to cover costs.
Editor & Publisher: Mike VandenBuren
Newshound Publishing

The assault on Michigan forests

Recent and current legislation in the Michigan House and Sen- ate may harm and even undo 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 served at the expense of good stewardship.

We’ve already covered at length the so-called “anti-biodiver- sity” bill that has conservationists seeing red. Now, as of this writ- ing, the state House had already passed House Bill 4325—requiring the Department of Agriculture and Rural Develop- ment and the Department of Natural Resources to “jointly pro- mote forestry and the development of the forest products industry.” Meanwhile, Senate Bill 56—if approved—would ex- pect state tax breaks for owners of forest property.

Add to this the pressures of strip mining, and oil and gas ex- ploration (especially “fracking”), and there seems to be either a carelessly implemented, or carefully orchestrated, plan to deliver natur- al resources to the war chest for special interests.

It’s time to slow down a bit and think critically about the con-sequences of these actions. Sure, it’s important to stimulate the economy, but one wonders about the cost that?

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 David Dempsey—returned Michigan from ruin to recovery?

The assault on Michigan forests

Recent and current legislation in the Michigan House and Sen- ate may harm and even undo 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 served at the expense of good stewardship.

We’ve already covered at length the so-called “anti-biodiver- sity” bill that has conservationists seeing red. Now, as of this writ- ing, the state House had already passed House Bill 4325—requiring the Department of Agriculture and Rural Develop- ment and the Department of Natural Resources to “jointly pro- mote forestry and the development of the forest products industry.” Meanwhile, Senate Bill 56—if approved—would ex- pect state tax breaks for owners of forest property.

Add to this the pressures of strip mining, and oil and gas ex- ploration (especially “fracking”), and there seems to be either a carelessly implemented, or carefully orchestrated, plan to deliver natur- al resources to the war chest for special interests.

It’s time to slow down a bit and think critically about the con-sequences of these actions. Sure, it’s important to stimulate the economy, but one wonders about the cost that?

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 David Dempsey—returned Michigan from ruin to recovery?

The North Woods Call

Michigan’s Conservation Sentinel
Since 1935
Published 22 times a year by: Newshound Productions LLC
5417 E. 12 Mile Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004
Telephone (269) 342-8724
E-mail: editor@mynorthwoodscall.com
Website: mynorthwoodscall.com
Online subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Print subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Address changes: Please send $2 to cover costs.
Editor & Publisher: Mike VandenBuren
Newshound Publishing

The North Woods Call

Michigan’s Conservation Sentinel
Since 1935
Published 22 times a year by: Newshound Productions LLC
5417 E. 12 Mile Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004
Telephone (269) 342-8724
E-mail: editor@mynorthwoodscall.com
Website: mynorthwoodscall.com
Online subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Print subscription: $35 per year; and $60 for two years.
Address changes: Please send $2 to cover costs.
Editor & Publisher: Mike VandenBuren
Newshound Publishing
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 gun control, and had 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 the security of a free state.”

But the language is quite clear—this is 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 history, weapon ownership is severely restricted.

The question now is: Are arms “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? If you believe the 1998 Brady Act was a mistake, then you have to be “infringed,” because “a well-regulated militia” is necessary for the security of a free state.

Many people do not realize just how much damage firearms do. In 2011, the last complete U.S. Center for Disease Control report, motor vehicle traffic deaths were 33,687, and firearm deaths were 31,839. Guns kill nearly as many people as automobiles, but automobiles are highly regulated, whereas 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 stridently concerning guns is even mentioned in Congress.

Without going so far as to treat guns as carefully as we would the right to use an automobile, how can we improve the current laws? What is being done is that the existing laws under the Brady Act of 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 backgrounds data base 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. Someone can buy a “stamped” gun, then when a person purchases a gun through a surrogacy, straw purchases are technically illegal under a 1968 law, but gifts from one person to another, 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.”

We can change things. One part of the problem is the mass killings by the mentally unbalanced. Unfortunately, we can’t reliably determine who the insane killers are. There is 312 million Americans, of whom about 10 are crazy enough to actually massacre total strangers. Really there 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.

When these mass murders are certainly horrible, the bigger problem is the 31,000 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 is no clear answer to this problem.

We can change things. One part of the problem is the mass killings by the mentally unbalanced. Unfortunately, we can’t reliably determine who the insane killers are. There is 312 million Americans, of whom about 10 are crazy enough to actually massacre total strangers. Really there 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.

When these mass murders are certainly horrible, the bigger problem is the 31,000 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 is no clear answer to this problem.

We can change things. One part of the problem is the mass killings by the mentally unbalanced. Unfortunately, we can’t reliably determine who the insane killers are. There is 312 million Americans, of whom about 10 are crazy enough to actually massacre total strangers. Really there 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.

When these mass murders are certainly horrible, the bigger problem is the 31,000 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 is no clear answer to this problem.

We can change things. One part of the problem is the mass killings by the mentally unbalanced. Unfortunately, we can’t reliably determine who the insane killers are. There is 312 million Americans, of whom about 10 are crazy enough to actually massacre total strangers. Really there 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.

When these mass murders are certainly horrible, the bigger problem is the 31,000 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 is no clear answer to this problem.
Combatting oak wilt disease

There’s no time like the present to take steps to combat this disease, which is typically transmitted between April 15 and July 15, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Red oaks die often 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/foreles-the

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 so much of our environment abuzz with activity. This makes it easy to attract families to explore with us. Spring flowers, calling frogs, or returning birds are some of the easiest phenomena to experience.

The natural flight and mating dances of the American woodcock is an incredible show. The woodcock is a small shore bird that has short legs—unlike most other shorebirds. It is also distantly related to the shorelakes or rivers. It feeds in the moist woods 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 front of it.

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, south-western 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 “peeping” ground, in a meadow, marsh or brushy field. This area needs to be some what open. As dusk approaches, the male flies into the area and begins to peep for a while. It first will start “dancing around” in a circle, swinging its bill back and forth and giving a nasal call that is extremely difficult to recognize the “buzz!” Because of this dancing around, the “buzz!” sounds like it is coming from different places in the trees; depending on where you are, there may be more than one woodcock. He may do this for a fairly long time. As daylight leaves and you can no longer easily distinguish col ours, 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 how sers, there, making strange sounds using his modified wing feathers. When he begins this, you may call may call “twitching.” 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 “whet” or whir ting 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 “buzz!” 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 find out exactly where he is and move 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 “buzz.” 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 and the easiest way I can explain it to people is to listen for the “buzz!” and then listen (or remember) back to back to recognize the “gulp” sound. I know this is hard to explain, but it works.

What is most disappointing is when people show up not properly dressed for the night temperatures and dampness. Luckily, we have a couple of areas that hold “peeping” spots with one being close to our nature center building. One fairly cool evening, we had started the woodcock walk. We hadexplained that the male was hoping to attract a female with which to mate. The wood cock wasn’t being exactly helpful in performing. He would linger for an abnormal time between flights. We could tell on that occasion that the male was extremely nervous and seemed to be expressing that fact with a nervous “buzz.”

The American woodcock has breeding records for every county in Michigan. Fortunately, Michi gan is in the central part of its US range and has a healthy population. The woodcock breeds in successful stages of restor ation. 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 feed. I have seen them in beech-maple forests and on the periphery of the hardwoods. The meadows and marshes 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 or no obstruction. Our eggs are 1.8 inches long and chicks—being precocial—leave the nest in short time with the mother.

Parenting is done by the female, which will feed 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 nat uralist, educator and business man 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 Michi gan State University, as well as head naturalist at the Sauret Na ture Center at Benton Harbor.
**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 enthusiasts. The telephone call was received. CO Bacon identified the suspect and conducted an interview. The suspect stated he had been hunting for deer while a truck stopped 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 Steve Hammill was on routine patrol after dark when he observed a vehicle driving without headlights. A traffic stop was initiated and the occupant of 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 Pottinga and Kyle Pulinski 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 cooperative and wouldn't admit to the over-limits. Then they realized that the COs knew a little about deer hunting and provided a fishing guide.

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 fishing along a closed trout stream, all three subjects were trespassing on private property. The private land manager was contacted and denied any knowledge of the identity of the subjects. Enforcement action was taken for the recreational trespass violations.

**DISTRICT 3**

CO Steve Spiegel 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, 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 was 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 at a future date.

**DISTRICT 4**

While conducting a patrol on snowmobiles, COs Rebecca Hopkins and Justin Vanderlind 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 vehicle and found it had no vehicle registration. The operator was under the influence of marijuana, driving without a valid operator’s license which was sus- pended, and wanted on two out-standing 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 fishing along a closed trout stream, all three subjects were trespassing on private property. The private land manager was contacted and denied 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 per- sonal injury accident in Kalkaska County. The snowmobile opera- tor failed to negotiate a turn and hit a tree. The subject was air-lifted to the hospital.

While patrolling the Au Gres River in Bay County, COs Mark Papineau and Brian Ohlen observed several subjects actively fishing a closed portion of the stream. The subjects were targeting steelhead which were gradually starting to make their way upstream to spawn. In addition to fishing a closed sec- tion of the stream, the subjects were also fishing illegally within 100 feet of a posted property way. En- forcement action was taken.

**DISTRICT 6**

CO Josh Wright received a Report-All-Poaching (RAP) com- plaint 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 up and formed several dead fox tracks led to a house. The CO talked with the occupant of the house, and found that they had a friend come out 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.

**DISTRICT 7**

CO Mike Mshar responded to a RAP complaint regarding a sub- ject shooting a turkey from his back deck in Ottawa County. Contact was made with the suspect and a full confession was ob- tained for killing the turkey. The suspect stated he shot the turkey 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 shot- gun were seized and the subject was charged with taking a turkey during closed season, and dis- possession of a firearm in a safety zone.

**DISTRICT 8**

CO Chris Holmes watched three subjects trespassing and being heavily armed while moving up road tracks. The CO exited his ve- hicle to make contact with the subjects and asked them to stop and exit the vehicle. The subjects were drug dealing and were under the influence of methamphetamine and possession of a firearm.

While on patrol CO Chris Holmes observed a vehicle driving at a high rate 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 li- cense to be suspended, and in pos- session 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 9**

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 tending down. Luckily for him, he hadn’t started burning the trailer. Upon entry for the fire, he had a warrant out of Indiana and they were will- ing to extradition. He was lodged in the Coldwater jail.

COs Todd Szszyka and Kris Kindberg responded to a residence in St. Clair County of dump deer carcasses. The complainant was worried about ground water con- tamination 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 dropped over his property from neighboring property by his dog. The COs contacted the sus- pect and he agreed to dispose of the carcasses properly.

**DISTRICT 10**

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 the angler told the subject that northern pike season was open. The CO informed him otherwise and the angler was stopped. The angler was also fishing without a license. Enforcement action was taken.

**20% Off Spring Sale!**

Caps & T-Shirts $12 each, plus $3 shipping

Order online and view sizes/colors at: www.mynorthwoodscall.com

Or send a check or money order to:

**The North Woods Call**

4111 East DE Avenue

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004

**Marketplace of the North**

**Classified Ads**

**VIDEO** — From Nebraska Reporter to Nashville Rebels: The Story of Tompall & the Glaser Brothers. A 90-minute oral history (DVD) about this pioneering trio that changed the Nashville recording industry. $19.95 each, plus shipping & handling. For more information, see the Newshound Productions page at www.mynorthwoods.call.com.

**VIDEOSTORY** — Buck Lake Ranch: Nashville of the North: A 78-minute documentary (DVD) and 133-page souvenir book about historic music park near Angola, Indiana. $19.95 each; $35 for both, plus shipping & handling. For more information, see the Newshound Productions page at mynorthwoods.call.com.
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.

“Those 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

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, geocaching, 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.

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 bicyclists wait along the Lake Huron Shore between Rogers City and P.H. Hoeft State Park while their riders walk the beach and enjoy the scenery.

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.

THE NORTH WOODS CALL

Published periodically by Newshound Productions LLC, 5411 East DE Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004. First-class postage paid at Kalamazoo, Michigan, and additional mailing offices. Online subscriptions $35 per year and $60 per two years. Print subscriptions $55 per year and $95 for two years. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The North Woods Call, 5411 East DE Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49004.

MDOT Code: 8021-0068

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@mynorthwoods- scall.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.

What do you like about The North Woods Call?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

What don’t you like about The North Woods Call?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Do you plan to renew when your subscription expires? ___ Yes ___ No ___ Maybe

Name (optional): _________________________________________________________________

The perfect gift for any occasion:

Give The North Woods Call to that special person on your list

Electronic subscriptions: $35 per year, or $60 for two years

Print subscriptions: $55 per year, or $95 for two years

Details at www.mynorthwoods.call.com