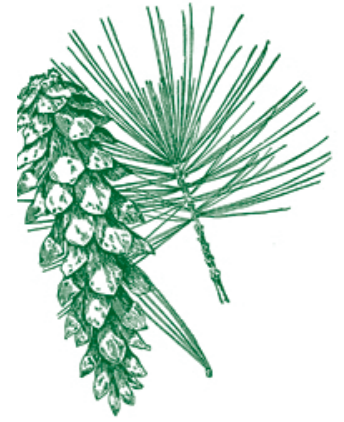




Seasons Greetings



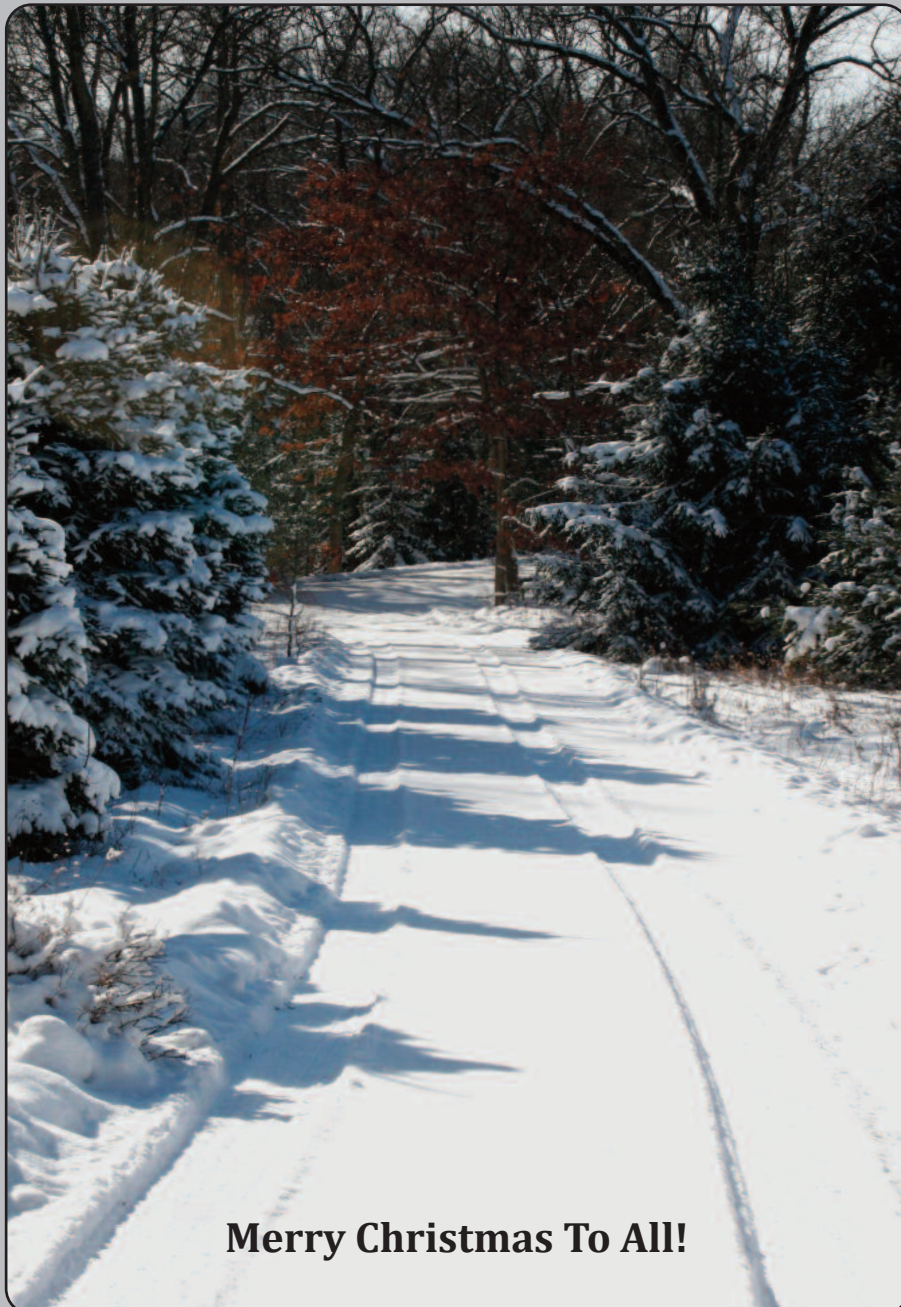
"The newspaper for people who love the north"

Late December 2013
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Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953



Merry Christmas To All!

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**“For unto us
a child is born...”**



**Have A Blessed
Christmas
2013!**



North Woods Notes

WOLF TALLY: As of this writing, 20 wolves had been killed in the controversial Upper Peninsula wolf hunt. That’s about half of the seasonal limit. Noting that as many as 43 animals had been slated for harvest during the hunt—which runs through the end of this month—one observer wryly said, “It looks like the wolves may win this one.”

EAGLES & WINDMILLS: In a decision that highlights the clash between two cherished environmental goals—producing green energy and preserving protected wildlife—federal officials recently announced that some wind power companies will be allowed to kill or injure bald and golden eagles for up to 30 years without penalty. Go figure.

FISH STOCKING TOTALS: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources’ Fisheries Division stocked eight different species totaling more than 1,050,000 fish that weighed more than 12.5 tons. The fish—brook trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, steelhead, Atlantic salmon, lake sturgeon, walleye and muskellunge—were stocked at 111 different locations throughout the state and will enhance angling opportunities.

2013 FIREARM DEER SEASON: Challenging weather conditions, antler point restrictions and lower deer numbers in some areas have likely led to fewer deer being taken during the firearm season this year, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Based on preliminary estimates, deer-check station activity declined in all regions of the state—particularly in the Upper and southern Lower peninsulas—when compared to 2012, they said.

RECREATION PASSPORT GRANTS: Nineteen communities across the state will share \$761,600 in Recreation Passport grants for park improvements. The money is derived from the sale of the Michigan Recreation Passport. A full list of recipients, grant amounts and project descriptions are available at www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants.

LAND & WATER CONSERVATION GRANTS: Ten community parks and recreation facilities across Michigan will share \$695,500 in Land and Water Conservation Fund grants. The federal program, administered in Michigan by the Department of Natural Resources, supports cities, counties and townships in their efforts to provide better public outdoor recreation opportunities for their residents. A full list of recipients, grant amounts and project descriptions can be seen at www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants.

HURON PINES ANNUAL MEETING: The Gaylord-based Huron Pines organization will hold its annual meeting from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Feb. 1, 2014, at Treetops Resort, 2962 Wilkinson Road, Gaylord. Aislinn Gauchay, manager of Great Lakes and Sustainability at Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, will give the keynote address and there will be special remarks by Michigan Department of Natural Resources Director Keith Creagh. For more information, visit www.huronpines.org.

FREE FISHING WEEKEND: Michigan’s 2014 Winter Free Fishing Weekend will be held Saturday, Feb. 15 and Sunday, Feb. 16. All fishing license fees will be waived for two days with residents and out-of-state visitors allowed to enjoy fishing on both inland and Great Lakes waters for all species of fish during their respective open seasons. All regulations will still apply, however.

OSPREY EDUCATION: Department of Natural Resources osprey experts are available to speak to classes and groups, detailing the biology, life cycle, decline, reintroduction and research of the osprey in southern Michigan. The bird’s comeback in the region is a significant conservation story, they said, which should be shared. To schedule an education program for your school or organization, contact Holly Vaughn at (248) 359-9062, or Julie Oakes at (248) 328-8113.

MICHIGAN TRAILS SUMMIT: A statewide trails summit will be held from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Jan. 21 at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme, during which the Department of Natural Resources will share an overview of Michigan’s comprehensive trails plan, provide an opportunity for attendees to have conversations about the best ways to manage trail priorities for multiple user groups and lay out action steps for the next five years. For more information, visit www.mrapconference.com.

(Continued on Page 2)

It’s time again for *The Call’s* winter break

The new year is fast approaching and it’s time once again for *The North Woods Call* gang to take its traditional winter break.

That means that the next edition is slated for late January 2014.

There’s no travel or general recreation on our agenda during this short sabbatical—just attempts to deal with the aftermath of a terminal illness that struck the editor’s mother and to assess the financial health of the newspaper.

Many subscribers have generously renewed their annual commitment and a good number of you have extended your subscriptions to two years. For that

we are grateful.

Yet we are still lagging behind where we need to be in terms of increasing our readership base and attracting advertisers. Unfortunately, this has been a problem for many years—even during the legendary Glen Sheppard years—as fewer people seem interested in reading newspapers and even fewer seem to want to pay for that privilege.

And it doesn’t help that the current editor seems—like Shep—to be much more interested in reporting and storytelling than in accounting and marketing.

Still, we are trudging along, thanks to the loyalty
(Continued on Page 2)

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Au Sable “Holy Waters” escapes new threat

Just when conservationists thought they might be able to breathe a little easier, the Au Sable River was once again under threat of new oil and gas drilling.

Fortunately—after meeting with Anglers of the Au Sable President Bruce Pregler and First Vice President Tom Baird, and receiving hundreds of e-mail messages from concerned citizens—Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Keith Creagh decided there would be no oil and gas exploration along the revered “Holy Waters” corridor anytime soon.

The outcry began in late October, when the DNR auctioned nearly 2,800 acres in and near the Au Sable’s sacred Holy Waters area for potential oil and gas development. Most, if not all, of these leases were purchased by Encana, the Canadian company which is using massive amounts of water for deep hydraulic fracturing in the Manistee River basin, according to information released in early December by the Anglers of the Au Sable group.

The Holy Waters corridor includes part of the Au Sable River east of Grayling to Thendara Road, between North Down River Road and East M-72.

In an announcement at the Dec. 12 Natural Resources Commission meeting, Creagh reversed the DNR’s initial plan to allow development on several parcels in the corridor, changing them to “non-

development” status. In addition, Creagh said he would not enter the leases as originally auctioned and will further tighten the leases to specifically prohibit any reclassification for the full five-year lease period. Any such reclassification—if requested by lease holders—would reportedly require public notice and a new auction.

Creagh also pledged to assign a DNR task force, with stakeholder input, to identify “special places” akin to the Holy Waters, where mineral leases and future oil and gas development will be off-limits in the future.

“Michigan has special places that deserve careful attention and thoughtful protection” Creagh said. “The Au Sable River is one of those places. A non-development lease lets us protect an area’s valuable surface features. This, in turn, protects Michigan citizens against the loss of revenue if public-owned minerals are removed without a lease in place.”

“This is a huge win for Anglers of the Au Sable,” Pregler said. “Only through intense, yet rational, public input from hundreds of Anglers members and our friends in the conservation community were we able to convince the DNR to make this change.”

“Keith really listened to us,” said Baird. “It took guts to make this change and vision to pledge to identify other special places where these kinds of controversies would be avoided in the future.”

A number of the previously proposed leases could potentially have allowed surface wells, pumping stations and pipelines, the Anglers group said in a Dec. 2 memo to members. Many of those parcels are in the Rayburn Tract, “a wonderful piece of state land” that was once private and slated for development. Only the efforts of dedicated conservationists prevented condominiums on the parcel, they said, and allowed it to become public land accessible to all.

Anglers of the Au Sable had previously urged the DNR not to lease these lands, but the agency reportedly did so anyway. The organization had met with Creagh as late as Nov. 25 to request that he not authorize the new Holy Water leases. During the meeting, Creagh asked for letters from the Anglers membership supporting the group’s position. At the height of the controversy, Creagh said, he was receiving e-mail messages every four minutes.

As with other such leases around the state, the DNR said it would be able “to protect the valuable surface features” of the area. The Anglers organization, however, has had little faith in that assurance.

“We don’t buy it,” the group said in the Dec. 2 memo. “You either think it’s a good idea to have oil and gas development along the Au Sable River, or you don’t.”

(Continued on Page 3)



The pristine Au Sable River flows free and clear through Crawford County near Grayling.



The Upper Peninsula is replete with old farmsteads that remind us of its settler past. (Jan Corey Arnett photo)

My Upper Peninsula: Beauty, but disturbing changes

By Jan Corey Arnett

When a long-ago boss referred to the Upper Peninsula as “The Appalachia of Michigan,” I cringed. As a native “Yooper,” the inferences were offensive. In the worst sense, we were allegedly uneducated, impoverished, unemployed and isolated.

When I left the U.P. to attend college in the Lower Peninsula, it was a complete shock when fellow students would ask where I was from and I would proudly say “The U.P.”—only to be met with, “What does U.P. mean?” I am not talking about immigrant students from other countries, unless of course you consider Michigan’s lower east side another country.

But that’s another topic.

Questions were asked in seriousness and in jest — “Is it true you only get around up there in the winter on snowmobile? You still pretty much have one-room schoolhouses, right?”

Perhaps I should not be too hard on suburbanites from the ’70s, considering that a recent map produced by someone in our nation’s Capitol, (presumably well-educated), “forgot” to include the Upper Peninsula.

I love the U.P. My parents were dairy farmers in Menominee County, then the dairy capital of the state and still home to some of the state’s largest and best dairy herds. And, before you ask, cows in the U.P. are milked in modern computerized parlors, not individually by milkmaids hunkered on three-legged stools.

Be careful, however, if you question a Yooper these days about his or her education or level of sophistication, because unconsidered in the high rate of unemployment is the fact that an increasing number of residents have chosen to live in the U.P. to escape other parts of the state or country in their retirement. They might not take kindly to assumptions about their intellect or level of ambition.

I can handle the joking. What riles and grieves me

is the callous manner in which a multitude of companies, some of which are owned by other countries, are devouring and destroying the beauty of my U.P. and poisoning her water.

I am not denying that we need the various ores that are mined there. But I am convinced that reclamation of what exists (i.e. metals in computers, dismantled structures, appliances, cell phones, and the like) is far preferable and more sensible than the decimation of what remains in its pure form.

The U.P.’s greatest treasures are not minerals beneath the ground, but the rivers, lakes, forests, fields, and wildlife above it. It is water that gives us life, yet too many of us are willing to compromise it to produce things we can often live better without.

The very suggestion that oil be shipped on or under any of the Great Lakes should have been denied without debate long ago. Fracking is a curse word. Each time I cross the extraordinary Mackinac Bridge and admire the exquisitely beautiful water below, a sickening dread comes over me having nothing to do with the fear or heights, and everything to do with a fear of the loss of that life-giving water to recklessness from many sources both industrial and individual.

As a writer, I have sought solitude beside a small lake in the U.P.’s Mackinaw County, but have had to adjust to the sound of explosives from a limestone quarry nearby and the rumbling of massive equipment. To my dismay, another quarry is now under “consideration” just miles away.

The U.P. is changing. My hope is that the savvy of its own reputable institutions of higher education, the influx of influential people with disposable incomes, and the fierce determination that characterizes native Yoopers, will ensure that my U.P. is both respected and protected in the years ahead.

Jan Corey Arnett of Battle Creek is an author and native of Michigan’s western Upper Peninsula.

Winter break

(Continued from Page 1)

of many and the unique historical position *The North Woods Call* holds in Michigan conservation journalism. It is our goal to continue publishing in the foreseeable future, although available resources and time to devote to growing the business side of the equation continue to elude us.

The past two months have been a prime example of that as the editor has struggled to help care for his ailing mother and still find the time necessary for the writing, layout, bookkeeping, publishing and distribution of *The Call*. It has been a major challenge for a virtually one-and-a-half-person operation and we have been running behind schedule for weeks.

Hopefully better things will come during the new year.

For now, though, we wish you a blessed Christmas and a prosperous new year. And we look forward to serving you after the break.

Our 61st Year: Looking Back to Dec. 23, 1970

It is a merry Christmas in the north woods

As conservationists relax Christmas evening to savor the wonder of the day, among their blessings they should count the fact that the north woods has survived another year and prospects are even better for the coming year.

Christmas 1970 is much more joyful for the natural wonders of the north country than was Christmas 1969. Back then, a year ago, things indeed looked bleak.

Oil drillers, literally, had the run of the publicly-owned forests. Consumers Power Co. lessees were expected to begin building cabins along undeveloped, splendidly wild, stretches of the Au Sable and Manistee. The DNR was still ignoring the over-canoeing of our top-quality trout streams. Michigan citizens were hamstrung by laws that made it impossible for them to seek legal protection for the environment. People who talked about population control were still heretic monsters.

The oil drillers are still in our forests, but they are nervous and the DNR brass who gave them free rein have admitted their mistakes. The department has adopted new oil leasing and drilling guidelines, which—if they are closely watched by citizens—will prevent future drilling in natural areas.

There is still a chance that the wild areas previously leased can be saved. The Natural Resources Commission has confessed that it was a tragic blunder to have leased these lands by declaring a total drilling moratorium from Gaylord north. This moratorium, ordered on the grounds that the environment was threatened, may hold up. If it doesn’t, citizens now have the Environmental Protection Act, which gives them the authority to sue the state to stop future drilling.

Passage of the Environmental Protection Act may prove to be the greatest victory ever won by conservationists.

* * *

On Christmas Day 1969, Au Sable and Manistee river lovers, and all who sensed the magic of a wild river, were confident that Consumers Power Co. would lease 25 new cabin sites along unmolested stretches of these rivers. The company had turned a deaf ear to the pleas of nature lovers. But the battle was only starting. Hundreds, then thousands, expressed their outrage.

The feeble hope of passing a wild rivers bill suddenly caught a spark of this anger, then it burned into a bright torch.

* * *

As with the oil drillers, the battle to save Consumers’ undeveloped stream frontage and to implement the natural rivers law is not finished. Consumers could still, legally, lease the land. The DNR has the natural rivers law bogged down in a committee, which may turn a few hours work into weeks and months of bureaucratic stumbling.

After ignoring the tidal wave of canoes on Michigan’s finest trout streams for 15 years, the DNR this year was bludgeoned into admitting there is a critical problem. A citizens’ committee—under the DNR’s direction—is now working on the issue at Grayling. It has been charged with finding a solution by spring. ... Just getting the department to publicly admit that over-use is destroying the rivers and that it has a responsibility to reverse the trend is progress.

* * *

This Christmas, thousands of young couples have accepted population control as a matter of survival. They are determined to limit their families to no more than two children, as an essential sacrifice if life is going to have any quality for future generations. Not enough people recognize and understand the population crisis. But the number is growing, hopefully faster than the population.

* * *

Of course, much of the north woods has been lost in the last year. More cabins, roads, parks, power lines, impoundments, etc. have been built in the forests. More will be built. But there is also increasing acceptance of land-use zoning, which can preserve some quiet, beautiful spots in the northland.

There is much we could fester and fret over this Christmas. New expressways are eagerly sought by north country businessmen and highway builders. Litter mounts by the ton.

But more important on Christmas Day 1970, we can look back on a year of progress—knowing that Christmas 1971 can be an even happier one for those of us who love the north woods, if we remain as diligent and determined as we have been since Christmas 1969.

Merry Christmas to the rabbits, the squirrels, the birds, the mice, the butterflies, the mayflies, the deer, the eagles, the bears, the bobcats, the elk and every other critter that lives in our north woods, from all of you who have fought and prayed this year for their home.

Thank you.



North Woods Notes

(Continued from Page 1)

NRC MEETINGS: The 2014 schedule of Michigan Natural Resources Commission meetings should be out soon, although not in time for this printing. For more information about the meetings, starting times and agendas, visit the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) website at michigan.gov/dnr.

EASTERN U.P. ADVISORY COUNCIL: Applications are being taken for open positions on the Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizen’s Advisory Council through January 10. The Council includes about 20 members living within Alger, Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac and Schoolcraft counties, and advises the Department of Natural Resources on regional programs and policies.

NO SPILLS CONFERENCE: The Northern Michigan Waterways Hazardous Material Spill Planning Committee is hosting its 2014 No Spills Conference January 6-8 in Traverse City. The conference brings together emergency response and environmental professionals, and focuses on education and prevention of hazardous spills in the Great Lakes. For more information, visit www.no-spills.org.

BELLE ISLE SUPPORT: More than 40 organizations—including businesses, nonprofit groups and governmental entities have pledged to help revitalize the historic island park in the Detroit River, which has recently been designated Michigan’s 102nd state park.



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www.mynorthwoodscall.com

Anglers of the Au Sable report assesses health of river

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following executive summary excerpt from a recent report by Anglers of the Au Sable offers an overview of how the river has changed since the Michigan Department of Natural Resources published its Au Sable River assessment in 2001. The report, written by noted Michigan environmental writer Jeff Alexander, was published in the Fall 2013 edition of *Riverwatch*, the quarterly newsletter of the Anglers of the Au Sable.

The Au Sable River is considered one of the best trout streams east of the Rocky Mountains. It is also unique: The river has the most stable flow of any river in the United States, primarily because it sits atop a rare geological feature which was deposited by glaciers that carved the Great Lakes thousands of years ago.

The Au Sable's watershed—a complex web of rivers, lakes and streams that drains 1,932 square miles of land—sits atop a massive bed of sand and gravel that is hundreds of feet thick in some areas. That sand and gravel act like a giant sponge and a filter, soaking up precipitation, filtering it and then slowly feeding the river and its tributaries a constant flow of cold, clean water through stream-side springs.

The Au Sable gets 85 percent of its water from underground springs, which is why the river's water level doesn't fluctuate very much. Water levels may vary more in rivers that get most of their water from rain and melting snow draining off the surface of the landscape.

Stable flows of cold, clean water provide ideal conditions for trout and other coldwater fish species in the Au Sable. In its natural condition, the river was a haven for one of Michigan's most spectacular fish: The Arctic grayling.

But logging in the late 1800s, which denuded the landscape and turned the Au Sable into a conveyor belt for logs that were headed to sawmills, caused widespread erosion that sent excessive amounts of sand into the river,



The Au Sable River near Grayling on a summer day when habitat improvement projects were under way.

where it smothered rocky stretches of river bottom where trout thrive. Logging drove Arctic grayling from the Au Sable and left much of the river system with the human equivalent of clogged arteries.

The construction of 109 dams in the Au Sable's main branch and its tributaries from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s fractured the river's ecosystem into a series of smaller, somewhat dysfunctional ecosystems. Ever since, government agencies, conservation groups, property owners and businesses have been working to stitch together the torn fabric of the Au Sable's sprawling ecosystem. It is a daunting and costly endeavor.

But just as stocking trout in the river in the late 1800s created a valuable new fishery, more modern river restoration work is producing results. The Au Sable River in 2013 was quantifiably healthier than in 2001.

* * *

Steve Sendek, a retired fisheries biologist for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources who studied and worked on the Au Sable for three decades, said the river is in great shape. But he added that conservation groups and government agencies charged with protecting the Au Sable must remain vigilant to prevent water quality and the trout fishery from

backsliding.

"The Au Sable is a crown jewel, but you've got to keep polishing it," Sendek said. "I'd say we're about 80 percent of the way toward making this river perfect."

What would it take to reach that lofty, likely impossible, goal? More trout, larger trout, more fish habitat, less sand in the river and fewer dams and other barriers that disrupt the river ecosystem would get the river closer to its natural state, according to Sendek.

Keeping the Au Sable on the road to a full ecological recovery is a never-ending challenge. Despite tremendous improvement over the past century, the river still faces several significant issues. Consider:

- Unnaturally warm water discharges from Mio Dam still give the lower Au Sable a fever every summer, which hurts the trout population downstream.

- A loophole in Michigan's Natural Rivers Act, which was supposed to prohibit most construction along the river's banks, has resulted in several cabins being razed and replaced with dramatically larger homes.

- Excessive sand remains a chronic problem in many areas of the river and its tributaries.

- Expanded drilling for deep shale gas using fracking technology has stoked fears of excessive water withdrawals from the

aquifers that feed headwater streams in the Upper Au Sable and Manistee rivers. Canada-based Encana Co. has drilled several deep shale wells near the upper Manistee River. The company recently drilled the first deep shale gas well ever in the Au Sable River watershed—in Crawford County's Beaver Creek Township.

- A proposal to restore commercial fish production at the long-dormant Grayling Fish Hatchery has raised fears of potential fish disease and water pollution downstream.

- A study of 64 Michigan rivers found that the Au Sable ranks among 12 rivers showing signs of pollution from leaking septic tanks.

- A resurgent beaver population is causing problems in the upper reaches of the river. Beaver dams disrupt headwater streams that flow into the Au Sable, block fish passage, cause unnatural warming of water temperatures and erosion that sends tons of harmful sand washing downstream.

- Invasive plants, such as purple loosestrife, remain a significant threat in parts of the watershed.

Which of these existing and potential new threats pose the greatest threat to the river is open to debate.

Many of the anglers, scientists

and government officials interviewed for this report said major problems that affected the river in the past would continue to pose challenges in the future. Those include: Excess sand; the loss of trees and woody debris along the river's edge, which provide fish habitat and cool water temperatures; and dams and poorly designed road-stream crossings that fracture the river's ecosystem into a series of smaller, ecologically disconnected units.

Which of the more recent developments—fracking for deep shale oil and natural gas, the proposed expansion of the Grayling Fish Hatchery, or mansions crowding the river—pose the greatest future threat to the Au Sable?

It depends on who you ask.

Sendek said he worries most about the Grayling Hatchery unleashing a disease that threatens the river's entire trout fishery.

Josh Greenberg, owner of the Gates Lodge, believes the massive water withdrawals associated with fracking pose the greatest threat to the river's health.

"I don't want the hatchery, but I'm one thousand times more concerned about fracking than I am about the hatchery," he said.

Karen Harrison, a member of the Anglers of the Au Sable Board of Directors, said her top three concerns are: The proliferation of docks and large houses along areas of the river that were supposed to be protected by the Natural Rivers Act; fracking-related water withdrawals; and invasive species, particularly non-native plants such as purple loosestrife.

Bruce Pregler, president of Anglers of the Au Sable, said he worries about politicians sacrificing Michigan's best natural resources under the guise of jobs.

"It is my hope, through the efforts of Anglers, we can educate our leaders and show them that this 'exploit the resource and then move on mentality' does not work anymore," Pregler said. "It is time to get our politicians behind the economic approach to conservation—protecting our waters and woods is good for Michigan and the economy."

Au Sable "Holy Waters" corridor escapes latest threat—for now, at least

(Continued from Page 1)

We emphatically do not."

The Anglers were joined in the effort to cancel the auction of the Holy Waters parcels by the Michigan Environmental Council, Michigan League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, Au Sable Big Water Preservation Association, North Branch Foundation, Au Sable Watershed Restoration Committee, Michigan Trout Unlimited and its Mason-Griffith and Headwaters chapters, the Great Lakes Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers, Grayling Township, local realtors and business owners, the Au Sable Property Owners Association and others.

"Today's decision affirms that there are special places in our state that should be fully protected from the dangers that are inherent in oil and gas extraction," said Chris Kolb, president of the Michigan Environmental Council. "This is a world-renown fly-fishing stream with a natural beauty that is spellbinding. We applaud DNR Director Creagh for recognizing its value in this decision."

"In practice, these leases are a significant change of DNR policy," Baird said before Creagh reversed the decision. "In the past, the DNR has refrained from offering such leases in or next to the prized Au Sable River corridor. The Anglers' Board of Directors believes the DNR should never have put a "development" designation on any parcel near the river

corridor, nor leased such parcels for oil and gas development. We fear the DNR is saying the Au Sable corridor is 'open for business' to oil and gas developers.

"The only industry which really stands to benefit from these leases is oil and gas. Their potential gain comes at the risk of too many others."

Except for the leases impacting the Holy Waters corridor, Creagh approved the overall results of the Oct. 28 oil and gas lease auction. Funds generated from oil and gas leasing on state-managed lands pays for recreational improvements and land acquisition for Michigan residents, DNR officials said. A significant portion of the Au Sable corridor—the Rayburn Tract—was acquired by the DNR with \$1.2 million in funds from oil and gas lease development on public property, they said.

Of the 23 leases eligible for approval on this tract of land, 14 were already classified as nondevelopment. The remaining nine leases—which are affected by Creagh's decision—were initially proposed to allow for restricted development, according to the DNR, along with additional restrictions, such as limited surface disturbance and a quarter-mile buffer zone for protection of Kirtland's warbler habitat management.

"Anglers of the Au Sable appreciate the willingness of Director Creagh to take special steps to protect this special

place," said Pregler. "The Holy Waters section of the Au Sable is a vital part of Michigan's cultural heritage, as well as the epicenter of angling activities that have been the economic life blood of the region for generations and—if protected—will continue to be an economic driver long after oil and gas drillers have returned to their homes.

According to Baird, the DNR was likely to collect less than \$100,000 for the Holy Water leases, based on recent auction trends, and the state would eventually have collected a royalty equal to one-sixth the value of production.

Statewide, oil and gas wells reportedly average about \$3,000 each in annual royalties to the state.

Sport fishing in Michigan pumps an estimated \$2 billion annually into the state's economy, much of that in the Grayling area. In addition, riverfront property owners in Crawford County have a combined property market value of \$275 million and pay more than \$3.3 million in annual property taxes—nearly a quarter of all property taxes paid in the county—said the Lansing-based Public Sector Consultants Inc. in a recent study conducted for Anglers of the Au Sable.

"We appreciate that the DNR strives to achieve both goals—protecting public resources while facilitating energy production responsibly," said Frank Mortl, president of the Michigan Oil and Gas Association.

Opinion

Quote Box

"The best remedy for when we are afraid, lonely or unhappy is to go somewhere where we can be quiet, alone with nature and God. Because only then do we feel that all is as it should be and that God wishes to see us happy, amidst the simple beauty of nature."
— Anne Frank

Close call for the "Holy Waters"

What's going on in Michigan, anyway?

While we accept that a certain level of oil and gas development is necessary—even desirable—to help fuel our economy and improve lives, we don't understand the apparent rush to lease natural lands long protected under the public trust from such activity.

The October 28 auction of oil and gas leases on property near the Au Sable River's sacred "Holy Waters" section is a case in point.

Even though similar battles have been fought previously, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has appeared determined to allow drilling—even hydraulic fracturing—in such areas. Does that make good sense? Does the industry really need access to protected natural areas adjacent to precious water resources to carry out its work?

We think not.

Fortunately, outcries from Anglers of the Au Sable—a 700-plus member conservation group—along with other organizations—caused DNR Director Keith Creagh to nix leases on the parcels in question. That was the right thing to do and we applaud the director for that action.

Yet we wonder why it always seems to take ever-vigilant citizen action to prevent public servants and government agencies from selling our natural resources to the highest bidder? Is this what "scientific management" by the "experts" is all about? If so, maybe we should pay closer attention to the "will of the people" and less to the professional bureaucrats in Lansing.

As we have said previously, we support the wise and careful use of fossil fuels, which—currently, at least—power the engine of our economy. But we also support the protection of those natural areas that have been selected and managed over the years for recreational uses and the public benefit.

In these areas, if nowhere else, blatant exploration and development should be tempered.

Amazon's drone delivery notion

So now the chief executive officer of Amazon.com says the company is looking at unmanned drones as possible delivery systems for the millions of products they sell each year.

While that might be technically feasible and good for the company's bottom line, it seems like a silly and unworkable idea to us. And it doesn't show much respect for the natural world.

Imagine a whirring legion of GPS-guided crafts flitting here and there across the earth's urban and rural landscapes, landing and taking off from random locations in a scheme that would put sprinting Federal Express and United Parcel Service drivers to shame.

What happens when the remote-controlled devices hit power lines and trees, or collide with flocks of birds and the growing number of electricity generating windmills? And what's to stop an aggravated Billy Bob-type from loading his shotgun and blasting one of the contraptions out of the sky like some kind of technologically advanced clay pigeon?

In our view, there's already enough clutter in the world's skies with passenger planes, satellites and the like. We don't need any more just to feed the voracious appetites of consumers and business conglomerates. And we don't want these proposed drones crashing into our homes and automobiles, which is sure to happen on occasion when something goes wrong at the remote controls.

Compared to the serenity of the natural environment, which humans seem to be trying to wipe out on a daily basis, some things we label "progress" are just plain disturbing, and continue to gum up a planet that could be much more beautiful if we would respect our place in it and live within more practical boundaries.

Amazon.com might be better off to hire an army of department store Santa Clauses and outfit them with flying sleighs. At least the spirit of consumerism would retain some kind of magical joy sure to gladden the hearts of children (and future online shoppers) everywhere.

Yes, Virginia, there is a business plan.

Giving and receiving

This is the season when many of us are making decisions about which causes and organizations—conservation-related and otherwise—will receive our end-of-the-year donations.

Despite the struggling U.S. economy, we encourage you to continue charitable giving to the extent that you can afford.

But be sure to select those nonprofit activities that are light on administrative costs and heavy on end-user benefit.

Targeted donations to the right organizations can help assure that we all receive much more than we give.

Requiem for Mom: A gentle spirit flies away

Back in August of 1999, I was part of a small writer's group studying creative nonfiction during a conference at Goucher College in Baltimore.

It was the second time I had been to the gathering and that year my study group was led by acclaimed nature writer and conservationist Terry Tempest Williams. Eight years earlier, Williams had published a fine nonfiction work called *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*.

The book interweaves memoir and natural history, explores Williams' complicated relationship to Mormonism and recounts her mother's diagnosis with ovarian cancer—along with the concurrent flooding of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, a place special to the author since childhood.

A profoundly moving piece of work, the book's widely anthologized epilogue, "The Clan of One-Breasted Women," explores whether a high incidence of cancer in her family might be due to living downwind during the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's above-ground nuclear testing in the 1950s and 1960s.

As a record of loss, healing grace and the search for a human place in nature's design, *Refuge* has become somewhat of a classic essay on mortality and grieving.

Sadly, I am grieving myself today, having come to know the heart-wrenching pain of losing my mother 14 days before Christmas. She's now on a migratory path of her own, thanks to complications of age, dementia and biological infection that took her down sooner than we expected, and stole her ability to walk, talk, eat and—ultimately—live.

About a week before she drew her last breath at the Rose Arbor Hospice Care Residence in Kalamazoo, she was an in-patient at a local hospital and only slightly better able to communicate than she was at the end. A woman of lifelong quiet faith, she said through nods and facial expressions that she was ready to transition into the presence of God and claim the promises of eternal life.

I believe she was.

It seems she knew she was dying long before I and other family members caught on. We

Happy Holidays—and thanks

At this special time of year, we want to thank all of you who have supported *The North Woods Call* with your subscriptions, advertising and good will.

We are grateful for your continued patronage and very much appreciate all our readers from coast to coast—especially those who know, as we do, that *The Call* should really be headquartered somewhere in the far north woods.

While we are not yet in a position to make that happen, we nonetheless remain committed to accurately reflecting the lives and concerns of those who reside in the region we cover.

We particularly admire—and are somewhat envious of—those who are "living the dream" in the rural northern Lower and Upper peninsulas, which we first came to love during the days of our youth. Some of you are in the woods and fields nearly every day, keeping watch over our natural areas and holding those charged with managing those resources accountable for their policies and actions.

That is one of the greatest gifts you can give to your fellow citizens and we laud you for your conservation commitment.

May each and every one of you have a blessed holiday season filled with the bountiful joys of family, friends and nature. Deck the halls with boughs of holly, but don't forget the true meaning of Christmas and carry that spirit forward into yet another new year.

North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



Irene VanBuren: 1927-2013

thought she was merely ill and that prayers, encouragement and modern medicine could somehow resurrect her in a form similar to the person we previously knew and loved. But God had other plans for her.

Looking back, the telltale signs of impending death were there even before she left home for the final time more than three weeks earlier. She had lost interest in food and would soon reject water and other fluids. She slept almost continually and efforts to communicate with us became fewer and farther between.

She saw things that we couldn't see and had no way to adequately describe them—images and celestial beings of various sizes in the high corners of the rooms; mysterious threads on the table, floors and walls; and sometimes people from her distant past beckoning her to come forth. At times she attempted to rise and follow those calls—only to be stopped in her tracks by a concerned care giver asking where she was going, or by malfunctioning legs that would routinely collapse and fall.

Like any good mother, she never stopped listening to me, even when she couldn't verbally respond to questions or statements. Instead, she briefly opened her eyes, raised her eyebrows, made a face, or simply smiled.

The day before she died, I saw a hawk perched on a pole outside her room. I wondered whether it was some kind of a sign. Early the next afternoon, a similar raptor—perhaps the same one—flew

repeatedly into the window and tarried for a while in the bushes outside.

A mere hour-and-a-half later—as a layer of newly fallen lake-effect snow cloaked the ground in pure white—my mother awoke, opened her eyes and tried in vain to say something to those of us gathered at her bedside.

I think it was simply, "I love you."

Then it was over. Like someone had flipped a power switch. No struggle or after effects. Just complete stillness.

Suddenly, in the blink of an eye, I was searching for my own refuge—a haven from the disrupting loss of her gentle spirit, from the frustration that we couldn't save her and from the haunting fear that somehow we hadn't been effective medical advocates when she needed us most.

The family did the best it could, but to no avail. Now all we can do, I suppose, is cling to her memory and to each other, and trust in the promise that we will one day be reunited.

Looking back nearly 15 years to Goucher College, I remember the simple and poetic inscription Terry Tempest Williams wrote in my personal copy of *Refuge*:

"For you, Mike.

In the name of shared days in search of stories.

Refuge.

In the land.

In each other.

Blessings."

My mother's life was a constant blessing to me and many others. Her love never failed and her faith in God never wavered.

In the days following her death, I have come across many things that I wanted to tell her. But we're no longer connected in that way.

Yet I think she sees me from her exalted position on high and continues to bless me with her prayers.

I cherish that thought and will think of her each time I see freshly fallen snow, or a soaring hawk against a bright blue sky.

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Letters to the Editor**Support U.P. wolves—in managed numbers**

I just returned from the Upper Peninsula. I was hunting wolves. I have also hunted wolves in Ontario.

I am totally dismayed at the emotions that are displayed in print concerning the wolf and the management of these animals.

Why would any educated, rational, lover of wildlife confuse the issue of managing a certain wildlife species? It angers me to no end to read commentary about how the wolf hunt should be abolished.

This sentiment must be based on mistrust of science and of the trained biologists who are payed to monitor and balance certain species here in Michigan.

Who in the world would use the phrase "extirpate, or exterminate when speaking of the goal of wildlife officials? This is the language that propagandizes the discussion of wolf management.

Do these same people do their own electric work on their home,

or work on their own car? Or do they leave this type of work to someone who is trained in that field and they trust? Should wildlife management be any different? Really?

At no time in my following the Michigan wolf debate have I ever been led to believe that the intent is to eradicate the wolf from the Upper Peninsula. If that were so, I would rally against that.

I believe the management plans for the wolf in Michigan are based on the total carrying capacities of their environment and the balance necessary to insure the actual future of that species.

Wolves eat deer. They eat moose, rabbits, mice and any other mammal that presents itself. They kill dogs and cats, too. Look at the FACTS!

I am a hunter. I am a bird watcher. I fish. I care about nature and conservation, and support groups that promote sound management of wildlife. I look at the

facts.

If you are someone that hunts and signed the petition to stop the wolf hunt, you, my friend, are a hypocrite. This movement is backed by the Humane Society of the United States. That's right. Fact: They want to stop all hunting and some types of fishing!

The way I see it, if a person—whether [he or she hunts] or not—enjoys the wildlife of the great state of Michigan, they owe the hunter, for [hunters] are directly supporting the science of managing the wildlife we ALL enjoy, whether we harvest or not!

Hunter money supports non-game species, as well as the game managed to hunt.

In closing, let me say I want the wolf to continue to howl in the Upper Peninsula—in managed numbers.

Mark Karaba
Marshall, Michigan

**Big Torch Lake Catch**

The summer of 2013 was a good season for many Michigan anglers, as evidenced by this huge brown trout caught at 8:25 a.m. June 29 by Nick Leto of Reston. The fish—which weighed 19.5 pounds and was 34 inches long—earned Leto a Master Angler Award from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

I'm getting off your clown train

In my opinion, you have gone too far on the Affordable Care Act. Apparently, you watch Fox News and are in the same bubble as they are.

You're entitled to your own opinion, but not your made-up facts.

I'm not going to contribute to your cause anymore, so cancel my subscription and send me a refund. Don't send me a renewal notice, either. I am getting off your clown train.

You are NO Glen Sheppard.

Rich Hansen
Lakeview, Michigan

Sorry, Rich, but you must watch Fox News more than we do.

More importantly than where we get our news, however, is what kind of gobbledygook we are willing to believe and defend.

It's curious why so many left-minded people are intolerant of other viewpoints and prefer personal disparagement to debate in a free marketplace of ideas.

Who says we have to accept wanton deception and general incompetence in our leaders as standard operating procedure in a representative government?

To challenge such corruption and ineptitude is the sacred duty of all free citizens.

—Mike

**Thanks to all of you
who have renewed your
subscriptions during the
past few months.**

Don't drill near Au Sable River

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following letter was written by a North Woods Call reader to Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Keith Creagh and members of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission during the recent fight to protect the Au Sable Holy Waters corridor from oil and gas drilling.

I am writing to express my dismay that the DNR auctioned mineral leases on parcels near the main stream of the Au Sable River near a segment known as the Holy Waters.

The most important value of these lands is not in the potential fossil fuels under the surface. The DNR should be focusing on protecting the forests, wetlands, wildlife, fisheries, and waters on the surface and the groundwater connected to the surface waters.

The Au Sable River is precious. Five generations of my family have been coming to the cabin built by my grandfather on the North Branch. We do not want the area to be despoiled by energy development.

It seems to me to be a mistake to allow energy development, especially hydraulic fracturing, so close to such an important and sensitive area. I support development of natural gas, but I think it should be prohibited from highly significant and sensitive areas such as the Au Sable River watershed.

I strongly urge you to remove these areas from consideration for energy development.

Sincerely,
Jay Copeland
Grayling, Michigan

Jay, thanks for sharing this letter and your thoughts about a very important issue. In answer to a question you posed to us about why this issue was not covered in The North Woods Call sooner, when the land lease auction was conducted back in October, we can only plead temporary ignorance. While we did report the sale itself, we were not able for a variety of reasons to examine the specific locations of each parcel that was on the auction block. In a small operation like ours, subject to personal crises and the myriad challenges of covering numerous conservation matters across the state, we rely on readers and others to help keep us informed about issues that are most important to them. In this particular case, we were not alerted to the latest threat posed to the Au Sable's "Holy Waters" until early December.

—Mike

Big fan of The North Woods Call

I have been a big fan of *The North Woods Call* for many, many years. Shep always did a terrific job of sharing and highlighting the many land conservation projects of the Little Traverse Conservancy (www.landtrust.org). I will be sure to send you some of our recent press releases.

Ty Ratliff
Land Protection Specialist
Little Traverse Conservancy
Harbor Springs, Michigan

Saving the landscape—for selfish reasons

EDITOR'S NOTE: While we normally would not reprint an organization's fund-raising letter, we were intrigued by the following description of land preservation and the reasons it gets done.

Several months ago, I was struggling with the idea of how we can explain our work to people who aren't familiar with our organization. I'm always trying to find the right words to describe the rivers, streams, forests and animals that live in these places.

How can I say just the right thing to help someone understand how vitally important it is to protect all of this? What makes someone care about preserving another person's land, water and wildlife?

I finally realized that it really isn't about the fish, or the deer, or the trees, or the streams—it's really about each of us.

We believe we are protecting watersheds for fish, birds, reptiles and insects, and we are—but really we are protecting it for us, for our visual pleasure, for a place to canoe, or kayak, to fish or hunt, or just to walk along the water's edge.

We are enriched by the smell of

cedars, the flight of a dragonfly, the splash of a frog. The creatures that live in these places wouldn't understand one way or the other if they existed, or were extinguished, but we understand how it enhances the enjoyment of our lives.

And we also know what it means to be in a place where these living things have been removed, paved over, or built upon. We know there can always be more offices, roads, stores and parking lots, but there will never be more rivers, more soil, [and] more woods.

Most people wouldn't associate the word "selfish" with anything positive, but I think it's a great thing when it comes to the environment.

Please, be selfish in your desire to see beautiful things, to walk in the woods, to revel in hundreds of acres of land that won't ever be divided into 20-acre lots. Be selfish in your need to enjoy long stretches of undisturbed riverbank and undeveloped wetlands where you can watch migrating birds. Take pleasure in the natural world and all she affords you. Selfishly protect these things for yourself by helping us to conserve the rare and

wild places you love in northeast Michigan.

The number of expansive and substantial tracts of land held in private ownership is declining. Headwaters Land Conservancy has saved a lot of these lands and resources, thanks to our generous supporters and dedicated volunteers. This is the perfect time of year to appreciate the spectacular northern Michigan landscape. Please help us build on the success of the 328 acres and 4,186 feet of waterfront we [preserved] in 2013 ... We reached an exciting milestone this year: We completed our 80th land preservation project!

You can help protect land and resources that provide a multitude of benefits to our communities. Your dollars protect watersheds close to home, providing safe drinking water. Your support means children will have a place to experience the outdoors.

People protect their land, because they love their land. They want to share it with the future...

Laura Justin
Executive Director
Headwaters Land Conservancy
Gaylord, Michigan

Michigan Owls Part I:**Great horned, screech and barred owl calls**

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Oops, we messed up and ran Part II of Richard's owl trilogy last time, so we're backtracking slightly and running what was supposed to be Part I in this edition.*

Nothing is more exciting than to be sitting in a blind at dawn or dusk, waiting for that all elusive buck, or the first raft of mallards.

Or maybe you're hunting over a bait pile, waiting for that monster black bear. These times of darkness are special.

Dawn and dusk are transition times from the daytime creatures to those that prefer the night. One of the most exciting is to hear the calls of the owls as they begin to search for prey.

The three most common owls we have here in Michigan are the great horned owl, the eastern screech owl, and the barred owl. Of these, the screech owl is the smallest (about eight inches tall) and most abundant.

Both the great horned owl and screech owl have "ear tufts," feathers that appear to be ears extending above the head, but they are not real ears. The barred owl lacks the ear tufts. All our owls hunt by sound and sight, but sound is their primary method to locate prey.

Screech owls are found across the Lower Peninsula, but are most common in the southern Lower Peninsula. Its habitat is that of mixed fields and mixed forested areas—even suburbia where numerous mature trees exist with some open park areas. They nest in tree cavities and take well to roost boxes. They mainly feed on insects, but change to mice and small birds during winter months.

The call of the screech owl is an erie quavering trill and long whinny. This owl can easily be called into sight range by playing a tape of its call, or you can learn to do the whistle by mouth, which is relatively easy. It will even answer during the daytime, but won't approach you as it might during the nighttime.

The great horned owl is found across the state, but is most prevalent in the Lower Peninsula. It probably is the heaviest of our

The Natural World

By Richard Schinkel



owls and stands at just under a foot. It is commonly called the "hoot owl," because it gives a "hoot" call. The first "who" is longer, while the next two are quick and shorter and often followed by a longer "who." It can be heard for over a half mile and often further when the air is calm.

We start hearing these calls in the fall as the great horned owl begins to set up its nesting territory, being a very early nester. The nest is usually an abandoned hawk nest, or one from a previous year, and eggs are often laid in February and early March.

When you hear the calls in the fall, you will often hear repeats, one in a deeper tone than the other. These are the male and female talking back and forth. The female has the deeper tone and is the larger of the two. They prefer mixed habitats in some extensive woodlots, but will adapt to some farmland areas. Often nests are near human habitation.

Great horned owls—sometimes called the tiger owl—seem to be the fiercest of our owls and will capture an array of small rodents, along with rabbits, skunks and opossum. Often when we smell skunk at night, it actually is that a great horned owl has killed a skunk.

During mid-summer through the fall, you may also hear what I call a hoarse scream, along with the hoots. This would be the young that are hungry and want the parents to feed them. Because the young seem to be so dependent on the adults for so long into the season, a good number do not make it through the first winter. Often, as naturalists, we get calls saying someone hears a cougar or bobcat call, which turns out to be that of a young great horned or barred owl.

The smaller (about 21 inches) barred owl is found more uniformly across Michigan, although it's not nearly as abundant. This owl prefers mature forests of

hardwoods or conifers, as well as river bottoms. They like to nest in tree cavities and, if you're lucky, can be lured to a large roost box with an entrance hole on the side. They like river bottoms, because they feed on some aquatic species such as frogs, snakes and crayfish. Because of this, they do hunt often during some daylight hours.

Nesting begins in March. Hatches and fledging occur during May and June. This owl's call is quite recognizable, being a series of hoots that the old timers say it sounds like "who cooks, who cooks for you all." They also will give a single "hooahh."

When an encounter occurs with another barred owl, often the exchange results in a whole bunch of calls that I liken to a bunch of chimps "caterwauling." The barred owl is probably the easiest to bring into a call, either by tape or mouth. If you try it by mouth, listen to a tape, practice a deep baritone type of "who" and give the "who cooks for you all" sound. Often it doesn't hurt to just do a few single "whoos" to start.

Even during the daytime, you may get a response, but be patient. It may take as long as fifteen minutes or longer for them to come within sight.

As a naturalist, I would estimate at least 50 percent successful audio response in correct habitat and another 25 percent of the birds coming within sight of the caller. We even have had as many as five owls come at the same time.

If you are going to call screech owls and barred owls, call the screech owl first. The great horned and barred owls eat screech owls and they will not respond, but a barred owl may respond to the screech owl call.

Enjoy the nighttime hours—whether hunting, skiing or just star gazing—and maybe you'll be lucky enough to hear one of our many owls.

Let's retain conservation AND demand credibility of leaders

Hi Mike,

Just a note from the North Country assuring you that when The Call arrives it's read from front to back.

There sure seems to be a trend that leads to mistrust in the direction our present conservation system has us headed—and it's very obvious that, if something is saved, an exploiter will figure out a way to make monetary and political gains on our resources.

Believe me, we must retain our conservation system, but we must demand credibility in our leaders.

There is no compromise in pure water. It is either pure, or polluted.

The state cannot accommodate every "special interest." It must manage for the resource and with the vision of how Ma Nature planned.

[We] appreciated John Gunnell's letter on a different type of deer hunting.

Your northern friends,
Doug & Judy Mummert
Gaylord, Michigan

Outdoor Rhythms

By Doug Freeman

**Ode to back-breaking snow jobs and the frigid joy of winter**

A little shoveling probably wouldn't hurt me, I reasoned. Six fresh inches had covered the land during our hours of sleep. Rather than making a quick phone call to nephew John (who owns and operates an excellent snow plowing rig and does our clearing for free), I decided to set off on my own. No need to pull our already overworked relative away from his family on a Saturday morning.

Global warming, a.k.a. "climate change" has not adversely affected this part of the world yet. I don't doubt that the North Pole region is less icy than in previous centuries, but I can't understand why none of that warming seems to have made it down this far.

Not even winter yet, and the temperature is hovering at nineteen degrees, with a bitter wind from the northwest at a steady twenty miles-per-hour. It's been like this for a week, with no forecast of improvement.

Oh, well. As a native Michigander, I've tackled more than a few snow removal jobs. I reluctantly decline to use a snow blower, partly because of the large carbon footprint, but also due to the sticker price attached to the kind of unit I'd need out here in the rural heartland of northern Muskegon County.

I first cleared two sets of tire trenches for the entire length of the driveway. In the event of my sudden incapacitation, my dear wife would still be able to pull her car out to the main road, should she wish to buzz into town to buy orange juice or something.

Then the real fun started. Cross-shoveling the snow from garage to roadway, taking care not to miss much, and without scooping up the surface gravel. Good thing I'm an expert at this.

In no time, I'd worked up a up a decent sweat. Hat and parka were soon hanging on a convenient fence post. I definitely wasn't feeling cold anymore.

In about an hour, our driveway was open. I stood back to do some brow mopping and to blow my nose into a soiled blue bandana, all the while admiring my handiwork. Enough. Barn chores were the next order of business. Critters must be fed.

One small issue: Throwing snow around can be exhilarating, but the repeated extension of arm and back muscles can also lead to problems. As I trekked toward the barn, I noticed a pronounced leftward tilt to my upper body. ("Leftward, of course," my more conservative friends would say with measured exasperation).

With head and eyes forced slightly downward due to stiffness and pain, I was easily able to spot the fox tracks by the barn door. These little canines visit every winter when the streams freeze over, seeking fresh water from our heated pan. Sometimes I've seen one waiting patiently for the barn cats to finish their meals so he (she) could enjoy the scraps. Foxes in this area tend toward politeness, I guess. This one had come by about dawn, I judged by the clarity of the paw prints.

More snow had to be moved to keep the back doors usable. I shoveled a drift away from the mulberry tree behind the barn and spread birdseed in places not frequented by the cats. A pair of mourning doves and a few chunky sparrows showed up immediately. Everyone's gotta eat.

The familiar call of a Canada goose caught my attention as I trudged along a circuitous route back up to the house. Thirty or 40 of the big birds were hunkered down in my neighbor's cut-over cornfield. None were feeding, though there were plenty of scattered kernels to be had. They were just sitting quietly, their faces pointed into the harsh wind and a fresh blast of horizontal snow.

Yet another of nature's mysteries. I'd have time to ponder those geese in a storm, as well as our barn-visiting foxes, over a mug of hot tea in the kitchen. There's so much more to learn, to understand.

And maybe—in a day or two—my back will stop hurting.

The active magic of the cedar waxwing

I have been paying a lot of attention to the trees above the water the last few years and the birds that appear at the time I anticipate the trout to become active.

I am referring to the venerable cedar waxwing in particular.

My fondness for birds has been with me for about the same length of time as trout fishing. I was very much interested in identifying as many birds as I could and got pretty good at being able to do so, even by their calls.

So, to me, much of the time my trout fishing has become a dual purpose hobby, because the trout stream is always a haven for insect eating birds, such as the waxwing.

The area where I live in and spend most of my fishing time has been hit hard with the emerald ash borer and therefore the standing

bare limbs afford the waxwings a perfect perch with a clear view of the air above the water.

I have gotten used to looking to the trees as I approach certain familiar waters these days and, at times, I become caught up in the amazing agility of these mid-size birds. They will leave the perch and dive or swoop to catch one single insect, and then return to their perch—although I have seen them take several bugs in a single flight before returning to a non-specific branch.

In addition to the cedar waxwing, the trout stream is also a haven for both the yellow warbler and the yellow-throated warbler. Though very colorful and a joy to watch, neither of these

smaller birds put on a show with their aerial acrobatics like the waxwing.

Being on a trout stream has provided me with many wildlife encounters in my lifetime—from bears, elk, beaver, otter, eagles and more. But, during the last few years, I am drawn to the tops of bare limbs as my barometer for the insect activity and the anticipation of active fish. If the mayflies are present, but the trout are not, the waxwings will be there to put on a show that will take the sting out of a fishless day on the water.

Mark Karaba of Marshall, Michigan, is an outdoorsman, writer and naturalist.

Guest Column By Mark Karaba

Conservation Officer Logs (10/28/13 through 11/10/13)

Crow feed, firewood thief, turkey fines, untagged deer and missing angler

DISTRICT 1 (Marquette)

CO Ryan Aho located a deer carcass that was surrounded by crows. The carcass was a buck with the head cut off. CO Aho located an illegal tree stand nearby with illegal bait. He followed an illegal ORV trail back to a camp with several hunters. One of the hunters claimed to have shot the buck several nights earlier. The hunter located the buck the following morning, but coyotes had chewed on the carcass. The hunter cut off the head and left the remainder of the animal for the crows. CO Aho found numerous other violations when he checked the remaining hunters' tree stands. Several tickets were issued along with numerous verbal warnings.

While on patrol, CO Jason Wicklund located two illegal blinds on public land. Later in the day, CO Wicklund returned to check for activity at the blinds. While walking into the blinds, three hunters were contacted returning from baiting the illegal blinds. A check of the bait piles found both to be way over the limit. The hunters stated they would not be returning for a week and wanted to make sure there was enough bait to last the week. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 2 (Newberry)

CO Kevin Postma responded to a complaint of a deer being dragged out of a field by a man and a woman. CO Postma was able to contact the suspect via license plate information provided by the complainant. The suspect advised that he and his girlfriend were out looking for a spot to hunt when they noticed a dead deer lying in a field. They decided that it would be a shame to see the deer go to waste and decided to go get it. CO Postma expressed his skepticism about the story and a report was sent to the prosecutor, who also agreed that they were trespassing and shot the deer. Warrants were issued.

Shortly after dark, COs Jeffrey Panich and Brett Gustafson were on patrol in a remote area of eastern Mackinac County. A vehicle approached and the two occupants, who had been out cutting firewood, stopped to talk to the COs. A file check revealed that one of the subjects had a warrant, with full extradition, out of the State of Minnesota. The subject was lodged in the Mackinac County jail.

DISTRICT 3 (Gaylord)

CO Jon Sklba responded to a complaint of a subject trapping on private land and found that the complainant had taken the traps. However, the traps were not tagged. CO Sklba knew of a trapper who was working that area and contacted him. The trapper stated that he had permission, and CO Sklba confirmed that with the landowner. The CO checked where the traps had been set and discovered that they were within 15 feet of water (required to be at least 50 feet). The traps were given back to the trapper, along with a ticket for the violations.

CO Kelly Ross contacted an

angler who had retained a foul hooked fish; and while dealing with that angler observed an intoxicated subject fall into the river attempting to net a fish. The angler then proceeded to head back to his vehicle. CO Ross contacted the Alpena City Police Department who stopped the subject as he was leaving the parking lot and arrested him for the alcohol violation. The angler was also ticketed for retaining foul hooked fish.

DISTRICT 4 (Cadillac)

CO Rich Stowe reports that the District Court Judge for Grand Traverse County recently sentenced a subject that he submitted for an arrest warrant for taking a wild turkey out of season while his hunting privileges were revoked. The subject was assessed \$1,000 fines and costs, \$1,000 reimbursement for the turkey, 45 days in the county jail and had his hunting privileges further revoked until the year 2020.

Sgt. Mike Bomay received a complaint of a subject hunting state land who had shot a deer and tracked it onto private property past multiple no trespassing signs. The landowner of the private property had advised the subject several times to stay out. On this occasion the subject tracked his deer right under one of the hunters from the private property. Upon being contacted by the Sergeant, the subject couldn't understand what the landowners were so upset about. Enforcement action was taken and the deer was delivered to a family in need.

CO Angela Greenway was on patrol when she observed a pickup truck driving down a rural road with three subjects in the truck's bed. Upon noticing the CO following them, all three subjects ducked down and attempted to hide. The vehicle was stopped and CO Greenway determined that the subjects were attempting to zip up a case containing a bow. Upon further inspection of the vehicle, a second uncased bow was located in the back seat. Enforcement action was taken.

CO Troy VanGelderren received a complaint of three subjects running through yards shooting at geese on Silver Lake. CO VanGelderren responded to the area and found that the subjects were gone. CO VanGelderren continued to patrol the area and located a vehicle on the other side of town matching the description of the shooters. CO VanGelderren interviewed the subjects, who admitted to being dropped off by Grandpa to shoot the geese. The subjects thought that all the residences on the lake were unoccupied. Safety zone and trespass issues were addressed.

DISTRICT 5 (Roscommon)

CO Mike Hearn received a complaint of a subject who was dropping standing timber and harvesting fuelwood without a permit. CO Hearn responded to the area and located two standing oaks that were dropped. The CO was able to follow an ORV trail from the fresh cutting back to a residence where a subject was



currently splitting a pile of firewood. During the interview, the subject initially stated the wood came from his property, but later confessed to dropping the standing timber and harvesting without a permit. Warrants are being sought for the violation.

CO Mike Hearn received a complaint of an antlered deer hanging behind a residence without a tag. Upon arrival, contact was made with the homeowner. CO Hearn located the deer and confirmed it was untagged and had the area surrounding the wound cut away. During CO Hearn's initial interviews with the subject, he indicated he had not purchased a license and shot the deer with a bow. Further investigation determined the deer was shot with shotgun after shooting hours two nights prior. The gun and 10 point buck were seized, and warrants are being sought for the violations.

DISTRICT 6 (Bay City)

COs Phil Hudson and Nick Atkin assisted local deputies with locating and recovering the body of a missing angler on the Rifle River. With the use of kayaks and canoes, officers battled high, fast and dirty water, and located the missing angler's body about two miles downstream from where he was reported missing. It's unknown if the angler was swept into the river by the high fast rushing water, or died from other causes.

A subject called the RAP hotline and reported that he had just shot a deer in his yard with a firearm because the deer was injured. When CO Bob Hobkirk arrived at the residence, the man stated that he had since learned that he may have done something illegal by shooting the deer. He explained that the deer was lying in his yard, unable to move and crying like a baby. Upon inspection, the deer had injuries to its rear quarters. CO Hobkirk explained to the man that he should have made a phone call prior to shooting the deer.

COs Quincy Gowenlock and Dan Lee were checking duck hunters in the Shiawassee River State Game Area (SGA) when they saw a hunter throw what appeared to be a duck into the corn behind them. When the COs checked the group they were in possession of their limit of hen mallards. The COs left the group and circled back around to check the corn behind them, where they found a hen mallard, still warm. When asked about the bird, the party could not settle on which far-fetched story to stick with.

Tickets were issued to all three in the hunting party for possession of an overlimit of ducks.

CO Dan Lee received several calls about 40 minutes after duck hunting hours had ended to let him know that a group of hunters in the Shiawassee River SGA were shooting late. The CO, with the help of CO Ivan Perez, contacted the group at their residence. The hunters swear they heard the staff at the check station say that hunting hours ended at 6:44, not 6:24. CO Perez explained that they were heard shooting at 6:55, which would have been late either way. Enforcement action will be taken.

CO Jeremy Payne was checking a camper on state land and noted a strong smell of marijuana when the owner came out to talk to the CO. A search was conducted and two large baggies of marijuana were found. The camper also did not have his camp registered. Enforcement action was taken.

DISTRICT 7 (Plainwell)

CO Gary Raak responded to a littering complaint in the Barry SGA where a subject was spotted dumping carpet. The complainant was able to supply CO Raak with a license plate number which resulted in the location of the subject. A confession was obtained and the subject was ticketed for littering.

CO Mike Mshar responded to a trespass complaint in progress, and was able to locate the subjects. They claimed that they thought they were on commercial forest land, because the landowner's name where they were illegally hunting was the same as that listed in the guidebook they were looking at. CO Mshar advised that this was a different landowner and that the commercial forest land was on the other side of the county. Enforcement action was taken per the landowner's request.

DISTRICT 8 (Rose Lake)

CO Derek Miller assisted the MSP and local deputies on a call of a suicidal/homicidal subject in the woods with stolen shotguns. The officers arrived on scene and began evacuating houses in the area, along with seasonal homes in the woods where the subject was known to be hiding. A short time later, the subject came out and surrendered to officers with-

out incident. The subject did state that he shot at a subject in the woods and threw his guns into a wooded area before surrendering to officers. The search continued well into the night, and were able to conclude that nobody had been injured.

CO Kyle Bader received information from a MSP trooper that a subject was seen going into the woods with a long gun. The subject was contacted on the way out carrying a crossbow. No firearm was located, but the subject's hands were covered in blood and hair. He said he had cut himself with a hunting knife. After a few questions, he showed CO Bader where the untagged six point buck that had been shot with a bow and arrow was in the woods. The CO assisted the senior hunter drag out and load his deer, and then issued a ticket for failure to immediately validate and attach a kill tag.

CO Kyle Bader stopped a vehicle that was shining at about 11:45 p.m. The subject thought he could shine until November 15th. He was informed that even if it wasn't November, he was still out past 11 p.m. The subject then said, "You remember me don't you, you gave me a break last year when you stopped me for shining and I had my bow in the truck." This year a ticket was issued for the violation.

DISTRICT 9 (Southfield)

CO Kris Kiel reports that a case where a subject shot a Canada goose during the closed season has been adjudicated. The subject shot a Canada goose with a bow and arrow. The Canada goose flew away with the arrow and landed in the middle of a youth soccer game. The subject pleaded guilty to taking a Canada goose during the closed season and paid \$925, including \$500 reimbursement for the value of the Canada goose.

Sgt. Arthur Green, along with COs Lacelle Rabon, Mark Ennett and Mike Drexler have responded to several RAP complaints about people snagging fish along the Huron River in Flat Rock. Within a three day period, the COs issued more than 15 tickets amidst cheers from the local law abiding anglers. In one case, Sgt. Green seized 84 fish and charged the subjects with restitution for 60 pounds of fish at \$5 per pound.

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Final Shot

U.P. Artistry
 It seems that Michigan's Upper Peninsula has a colorful illustration of nature's beauty nearly everywhere you turn. This autumn shot taken at Milakokia Lake in western Mackinac County is merely one example. But these pristine natural areas are consistently threatened by development and assorted other pressures as the state's population increases and greater demands are placed on natural resources. For an editorial perspective from a native "Yooper," turn to Page 2.

—Photo by Jan Corey Arnett



Bill aimed at creating state wildlife council

A bill has passed the Michigan Senate that would provide about \$1.6 million a year for "wildlife management public education—an action critics fear is a veiled attempt to thwart wolf-hunting opponents at the ballot box.

The bill—which previously was approved by the state House and would shift a portion of Michigan license fee money paid

by hunters and anglers into the new education fund—would create a Michigan Wildlife Council that would determine how the money is to be spent.

Sen. Rebekah Warren (D-Ann Arbor) objected to the possible use of taxpayer dollars and state resources for this purpose "when we all know there will be at least one referendum on the ballot next

November related to the controversial issue of the wolf-hunting season."

"The whole idea behind this fund and the Council is to support wise scientific management of game species," countered Sen. Mike Green (R-Mayfield), "and if a referendum attacks those principles, then the use of the fund becomes even more important so that our citizens truly understand what they might be voting on."

Natural Resources Trust Fund projects recommended for 2014

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) board of trustees has recommended to the state legislature 76 recreation development projects and land acquisitions totaling \$27,677,800 to be funded in 2014.

The board this year considered a total of 142 applications seeking \$49,431,900 in funding. In a competitive process, all eligible applications were evaluated based on scoring criteria developed by the MNRTF board.

"No matter where you are in our state, you're never far from a park, trail, outdoor project or natural area that has benefited in some way from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund," said Gov. Rick Snyder. "Each of Michigan's 83 counties has seen, in ways small and large, the economic and quality-of-life boosts that come from better and broader access to quality public outdoor recreation, courtesy of Trust Fund-supported projects."

The Trust Fund board recommends funding to both state and local agencies for development projects and land acquisitions that will further access to public outdoor recreation.

In 2013, the board recommended \$19,033,200 for acquisition grants and \$8,644,600 for development grants. Twenty-three acquisition grants were awarded to local units of government for a total of \$9,183,200, while nine acquisition grants went to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for projects totaling \$9,850,000. The Trust Fund board also recommended a total of \$7,167,600 in development grants be awarded to 39 local units of government, while five DNR

projects garnered a total of \$1,477,000.

"Michigan's communities are home to unique, natural spaces and offer great potential for quality outdoor recreation opportunities—both of which play a big role in regional placemaking for our state," said DNR Director Keith Creagh. "Communities that actively engage in placemaking have strong recreation plans as part of their long-term planning processes, making it easier for them to compete for and leverage these important Trust Fund dollars. In addition, these recommendations illustrate a strategic investment in trails, furthering Michigan's reputation as the Trail State."

The MNRTF is a restricted fund that was established in 1976 to provide funding for public acquisition of lands for resource protection and outdoor recreation, as well as for public outdoor recreation development projects. It is funded through interest earned on funds from the development of minerals.

Over the past 37 years, the Trust Fund has granted nearly \$1 billion to state and local units of government to develop and improve recreation opportunities in Michigan, according to state officials.

The Trust Fund board's recommendations have now gone to the Michigan Legislature for review as part of the appropriations process. The Legislature then forwards a bill to the governor for his approval.

A list of the final recommendations made by the Trust Fund board is available at www.michigan.gov/mnrtrf.

—Michigan DNR report

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