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who love the north”**

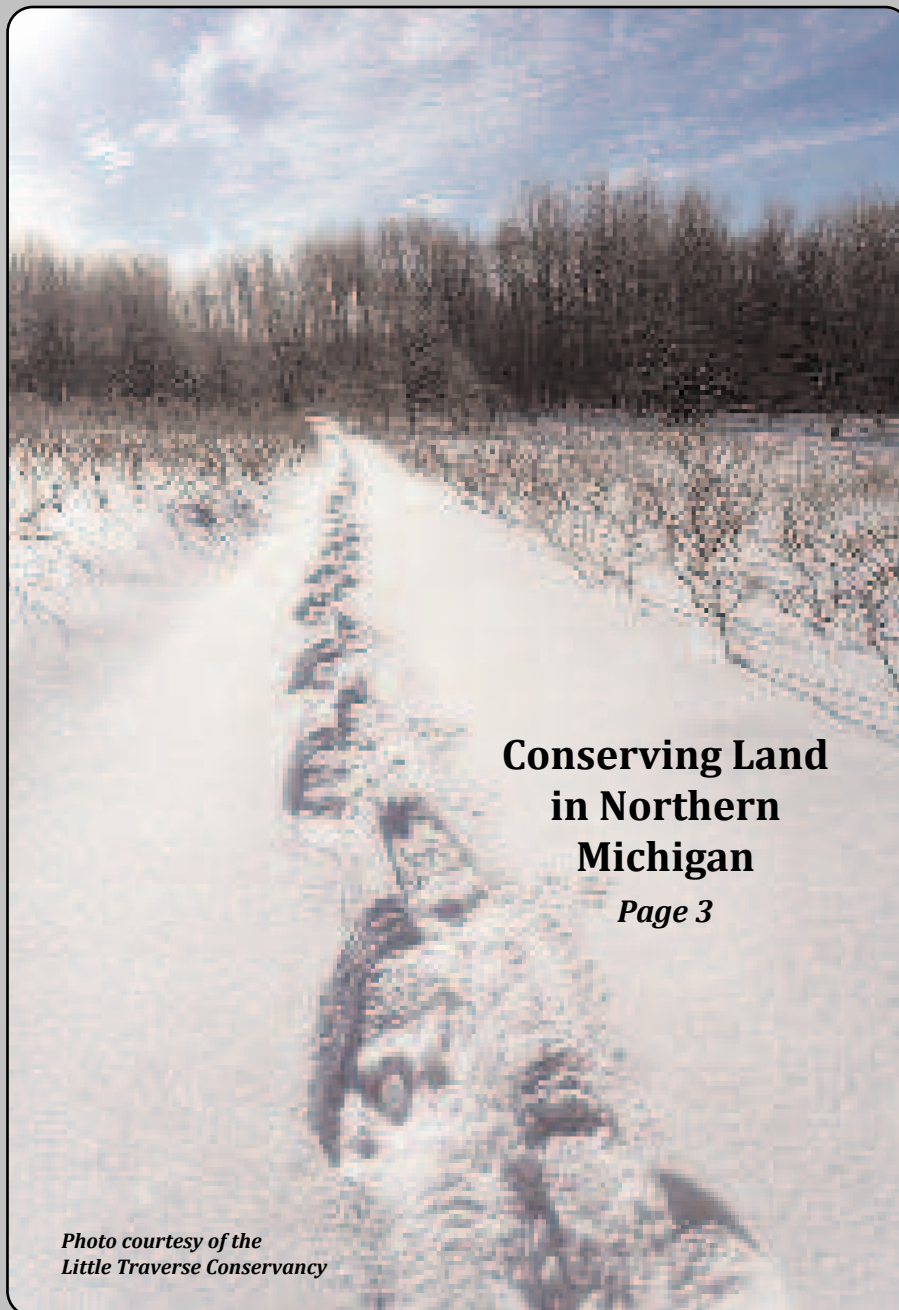


Late January 2014  
\$2.50

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*Digital Delivery*



*Michigan's Conservation Sentinel Since 1953*



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*Photo courtesy of the  
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Several cougars—also known as mountain lions, pumas, panthers, mountain cats, or catamounts—have been reported in Michigan.

## DNR apprehends alleged U.P. cougar killers

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conservation officers and Special Investigations Unit detectives have arrested two Bay County men for allegedly killing of a cougar in the Upper Peninsula.

The men, who are said to be Bay City residents, reportedly own a hunting camp in the Upper Peninsula's northeastern Schoolcraft County, where the cougar was killed sometime during mid-December.

Upon completion of the investigation, the case was expected to be turned over to the local prosecuting attorney with requests for criminal charges, said the DNR's Lt. Skip Hagy "They knew what they were killing," Hagy said.

In Michigan, the illegal killing of a cougar—clas-

sified as an endangered species—is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days in jail, and fines and restitution up to \$2,500.

According to the DNR, cougars disappeared from Michigan in the early 1900s, but several have been spotted in recent years.

Since 2008, the DNR has confirmed photos or tracks of cougars on 23 occasions in 10 Upper Peninsula counties. The animals are believed to be young individuals wandering from established populations in the Dakotas in search of new territory.

There is, however, not yet any evidence of a breeding population in the state, they said.

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### North Woods Notes

**ELK POACHING:** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking information regarding a late December elk poaching incident in Montmorency County, just north of Atlanta. A large bull elk carcass was found near Decheau Lake Road and Meaford Road on December 28. Parts had been removed from the animal. Anyone with information regarding the incident may call the DNR Law Division at the Gaylord Operations Center (989-732-3541), or the 24-hour Report All Poaching line (800-292-7800). Information may be left anonymously. Elk poaching carries fines of up to \$2,500, restitution to the state of up to \$1,500, loss of the firearm used and loss of hunting privileges for up to three years.

**STATE OF THE GREAT LAKES:** The Michigan Office of the Great Lakes has released its annual State of the Great Lakes Report. The report brings together authors from state agencies, academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to analyze the top issues affecting Michigan's Great Lakes and coastal areas. Topics include water levels, aquatic invasive species, restoration work, harbor dredging successes, and economic development and revitalization. The report is available online at [www.michigan.gov/documents](http://www.michigan.gov/documents).

**EMERALD ASH BORER:** The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has revised its emerald ash borer (EAB) quarantine to designate all six quarantined counties in the eastern Upper Peninsula (UP)—as well as Houghton and Keweenaw counties—as the same quarantine level (Level II). MDARD, however, is asking travelers and residents to continue to not move firewood to help prevent the artificial spread of other exotic and devastating insects and diseases such as Asian longhorned beetle, thousand cankers disease of black walnut, hemlock woolly adelgid, oak wilt and beech bark disease. The ban on moving firewood north across the Mackinac Bridge remains in effect.

**HUNTER SAFETY INSTRUCTOR HONORED:** Larry Martin of Ovid, Michigan, was named 2013 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year by the DNR. Martin, 78, has been teaching hunter education since he graduated from Michigan State University in 1963.

**VISIONS OF THE VALLEY:** The Friends of the Jordan River Valley (FOJV) 2014 calendar arrived in *The North Woods Call* mailbox earlier this month and it's a fine one. The calendar features photographs taken during the organization's 9th annual photo contest. The theme this year was "Rhythm of the River" and more than \$1,200 in prizes was awarded to the winners. All 126 photographs submitted to the contest—including the winning ones—can be viewed on the FOJV website at [www.friendsofthejordan.org](http://www.friendsofthejordan.org).

**JORDAN FRIENDS:** If you want to know what Friends of the Jordan River Watershed is all about, try attending one of the organization's meetings on the third Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. in the Jordan River Watershed Center in East Jordan, or visit their website at [www.friendsofthejordan.org](http://www.friendsofthejordan.org).

**CLEAR LAKE PARK RENOVATION:** Clear Lake State Park in Montmorency County will undergo construction to upgrade the electrical system in the campground during the first half of 2014, which means that campground operations and opening schedules will be delayed. As of now, the campground is slated to open the weekend before July 4. Camp reservations will be available when the campground does open.

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### Frigid Port

—North Woods Call photo

There's not much action this time of year at the Straits State Harbor in Mackinaw City. The harbor—a redevelopment of land once used for ferries traveling to and from Michigan's Upper Peninsula—was built using Michigan materials and sustainable design principles, such as natural lighting and ventilation. Eight wind turbines provide a portion of the power needed to operate the Harbormaster's Building in the summer and the dock-protecting bubbler system in the winter. Amenities include restrooms, showers, laundry, electricity, water, a pump-out, gasoline, diesel, boat launch, fishing pier, dog run, grills, picnic shelters, rubbish receptacles and recycle bins. The harbor master is on duty from May 1 to Oct. 31. The SS Chief Wawatam, a coal-fired train ferry and icebreaker with its home port in St. Ignace, operated here between 1911 and 1984.

## Thirty-one recruits join latest CO academy

Thirty-one potential new conservation officers were expected Jan. 12 in Lansing to attend the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) conservation officer training academy.

This is the first conservation officer training academy since 2007 and it will be led by the DNR's Law Enforcement Division training section.

The recruits will complete a 22-week training academy that includes 14 weeks of basic police training and eight weeks of more specialized conservation officer training. Six of the recruits are military veterans, nine are previous law enforcement officers, and two were conservation officers in other states.

DNR conservation officers serve a distinct role in Michigan's law enforcement community. They are certified police officers with the authority to enforce Michigan's criminal laws. As conservation of-

ficers, they also have unique training in a wide variety of other areas related to the protection of Michigan's citizens and natural resources.

Increased funding for more conservation officers was a priority for the DNR in 2014. Currently, there are numerous areas in the state that do not have an adequate number of officers, said Gary Hagler, chief of the DNR's Law Enforcement Division.

"Increasing the number of conservation officers means we can make more contact in the field with our customers, providing public education opportunities and creating a safer environment for residents and visitors enjoying Michigan's great outdoors," Hagler said. "It also means we can provide an increased law enforcement and protection presence across the state, including rural areas that sometimes have limited law enforcement resources."

Recruitment for the next class of conservation officers is ongoing, said Lt. Creig Grey, training supervisor for the DNR's Law Enforcement Division. The DNR plans to start the next academy in October 2014.

"Men and women interested in a career as a conservation officer and who want to be eligible for the next class should get to work now taking the Michigan Civil Service exam and completing the online job application," Grey said. "To be eligible for the next academy, candidates should have their exam and application completed by late spring."

Grey said two areas of the state—the northern Lower Peninsula and the eastern Upper Peninsula—did not produce many candidates for the current recruit class, and DNR officials would like to see more candidates from those regions in future academies.

—Michigan DNR report



**Our 61st Year: Looking Back to Jan. 20, 1954**

## Pine Whispers: The Snow

By Marguerite Gahagan

The white moonlight covers the earth. High in the evening sky, the moon rides over the silent woods as it nears its fullest phase. It is bright as day with a different brightness—a quiet, peaceful, gentle brightness.

Trees are silhouetted—black against white—the sighing of the pines the only sound softly breaking the silence that seems to engulf the world.

There are tracks. How they came one can only wonder at, for nothing living is seen. Yet the small tracks are there, circling a tree, trailing up the path, coming to an inch within the door, up the porch steps, edging up on man's domain.

All night, the magic whiteness lights up the woods and the plains, picking out stumps, snow blanketed, gently covered with nothing but curving lines and never an angle. The whiteness rests thickly on pine, cedar and fir branches heavy with whiteness. It plays on tree trunks—one side white with drifting snow; the other velvet black in the shadows.

\* \* \*

Day breaks with a secret haste. It is night and then it is day—dim gray—with the brightness of the moonlight faded as a dream fades. The east is brighter and then golden—until, with an almost frightening blaze, the crimson sun moves swiftly before dazed eyes, behind the black trees, over their tops, into the heavens and a day comes.

Now the snow is different. It blazes a million small suns. The big sun brings it awake, as the moon softly put it to sleep. It glitters, sparkles, dazzles, dances. Now it is white against blue, with blue shadows where black had been at night. It is a living white against the blue of the sky on the gentle rises of the hills.

The hills themselves have a softness, a feminine grace, like rows of ballet dancers from *The Swan* on a giant stage stretched across the horizon.

Oak leaves gleam like jewels—red, topaz—as the high sun picks them out in the world of white.

Green are the fir trees, greener even than when they awake in the spring, for around them and on them is the snow, reflecting like a thousand small mirrors the brightness of the sun.

\* \* \*

All of the night's heartbeats are marked on the snow. Because life went on unceasingly.

Along the Lovells road, deer crossed to the Au Sable to drink, playing at the side, leaping, wandering from side-to-side, following one another and criss-crossing paths.

Another small animal took man's road and kept to the center until a clump of bushes at the roadside drew its attention. And then he came back using the road on his way to his own secret destination.

The fresh snow marked and retained the records. The wildlife moves at night. The snow held their memories in a private diary—deer, cat, squirrel, mouse, bird and rabbit.

\* \* \*

Even in the woods, even on the plains, the silence seemed less as the sun rose higher. The wind in the trees faded in the bright light of the sun. Until it descended into the west, the shadows again became blue, the dazzling diamonds faded, the dusk of twilight was marked by only the occasional flash of a bird's wings.

The crimson faded from the oak leaves as they nodded, lispings dryly in the evening breeze, brown and brave in woods bereft of other leaves.

Lengthening shadows faded as the sun turned the west red, yellow, purple.

The snow-banked Au Sable, its waters still rippling in the current, its log piles softened with snow adornments, its curves gentler than even in spring, turned from pink and gold to blue and purple, and then black.

Each hour the snow differs, turning the woods, the landscape, the trees, the streams into new pictures of a world untouched.

Each night, the moon brings to it a winter magic. Each dawn, the sun awakens it to a new radiance.



### Capturing Winter

—North Woods Call Photo

A lone photographer captures some rough-water scenery during a cold and blustery January day at the Straits of Mackinac. The wind often blows strong and hard across this confluence of Lakes Michigan and Huron, especially during the winter months.

### Conservationists evaluating new Asian carp study

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers early this month released a congressionally mandated report (see related story at right) that is expected to serve as the first step toward building a physical barrier to separate the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins.

Such action, conservationists say, would be the foundation for any lasting strategy to stop the movement of Asian carp and other invasive species from one watershed to the other.

“We are evaluating the report now to see how it can help move toward building a physical barrier to separate the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, and thus prevent the environmental and economic damage from invasive species like Asian carp, several Great Lakes area conservation leaders said in a joint statement.

The leaders include Joel Brammeier of the Alliance for the Great Lakes, Marc Smith of the National Wildlife Federation, Josh Mogerman of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Cheryl Kallio of Freshwater Future, Robert Hirschfeld of the Prairie Rivers Network, Darrell Gerber of Clean Water Action-Minnesota, Cheryl Nenn of Milwaukee Riverkeeper and Jack Darin of the Sierra Club.

“At least one independent study has clearly shown that separating the Great Lakes-Mississippi River system is both feasible and affordable, and we stand committed to making that vision a reality,” they said. “Actions that do not move us toward this goal are a distraction that further delays the permanent solution so desperately needed here.”

### Arrests made in Cougar slaying

(Continued from Page 1)

The DNR Wildlife Division's specially trained cougar team encourages citizens to report cougar sightings and evidence, such as scat, tracks, or cached kills, to a local DNR office, or at [www.michigan.gov/cougars](http://www.michigan.gov/cougars).

### Alternatives suggested to prevent Great Lakes nuisance species

The Great Lakes and Mississippi River Inter-basin Study Report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was submitted to Congress in early January (see related story at left).

The mandated report looks at a comprehensive range of options and technologies available to prevent inter-basin transfer of aquatic nuisance species between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River basins through aquatic pathways.

Eight alternatives are discussed, including concept-level design and cost information. They range from continuing current activities to the complete separation of the watersheds, and are examined for potential impacts to water quality, flood-risk management, natural resources and navigation.

The Corps is hosting public meetings in Chicago, Cleveland, Ann Arbor, Traverse City, St. Paul, St. Louis and Milwaukee this month to discuss contents of the report and allow for public comment.

To view the report, summary book and details about the public meetings—or to make an online comment—visit [glmris.anl.gov](http://glmris.anl.gov). Comments will be accepted until 30 days following the last public meeting, or by March 3, 2014



### North Woods Notes

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**YOUTH ADVISORS:** The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is looking for outdoor-minded young men and women as potential additions to the Natural Resources Commission Youth Conservation Council. Last year, 18 young people were selected for the Council and the current goal is to fill the full council of 25 members. During the past year, Council members have been developing several projects to encourage youth participation in outdoor activities, including a youth blog site, YouTube videos to promote outdoor activity and a youth photo contest that will have a monthly winner. Completed applications must be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2014. To learn more, visit [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr) and look under Education and Outreach.

**STATE PARK/HARBOR GIFT CARDS:** E-gift cards are now available for Michigan state parks and harbors. They can be purchased online at [www.midnrreservations.com](http://www.midnrreservations.com) and redeemed on location, as well as online or at the call center (800-44-PARKS).

### Hunters bag 23 U.P. wolves

The first Michigan wolf hunt to be held since the animal was placed on the endangered species list nearly four decades ago has ended.

The season closed December 31, with a total of 23 wolves harvested in the Upper Peninsula—just over half the number originally targeted.

A total of 1,200 people were licensed to participate in the hunt, despite protests and an ongoing controversy over the decision to allow them to take wolves with firearms, crossbows, or bows and arrows.



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**Open 24 hours****The Headlands: Michigan's international dark sky park**

Here's a great Michigan park that's open 24 hours a day—every day.

And there's no admission charge.

The Emmet County facility—made possible in part by a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant secured by Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) in Harbor Springs—boasts 600 acres and two-and-a-half miles of shoreline on the Straits of Mackinac, where more than 80 shipwrecks are located.

It also has four-and-a-half miles of trails for non-motorized use and a self-guided cell phone tour detailing points of interest.

Located at 7725 East Wilderness Park Drive near Mackinaw City, it is the largest and least disturbed forest tract in the Mackinaw City area.

A dark-sky park is protected public land that possesses exceptional starry skies and natural nocturnal habitat where light pollution is mitigated and natural darkness is valuable as an important educational, cultural, scientific and natural resource.

The designation was made in 2011 by the International Dark-Sky Association of Tucson, Arizona, as one of ten dark-sky parks in the

world. Others are located in Utah, Pennsylvania, Scotland, Hungary, Washington State, New Mexico, Ohio and Texas.

Thanks to a lack of major development over the years, The Headlands area has remained relatively intact, providing for plant and wildlife diversity.

The property is an important resting stop and staging area for raptors and neotropical birds migrating across the Straits. It also is home to the endangered Dwarf Lake Iris and is thought to be habitat for the threatened Lake Huron Tansy and Pitcher's Thistle.

Visitors to Headlands are welcome to stay out through the night for dark-sky viewing, although camping units are not permitted. You may, however, bring blankets, sleeping bags, chairs, food, beverages, etc. Temperatures are typically ten degrees colder than what you might expect.

Public dark-sky programs are scheduled year-round and take place about a mile from the entrance at the designated Dark-Sky Viewing Area, unless otherwise noted. There are signs that can be followed through the park.

The programs are intended for naked-eye

observation, but visitors may bring binoculars, or telescopes if they prefer.

The Dark-Sky Discovery Trail is a one-mile-long paved trail from the park entrance to the viewing area. It features cultural docents, indigenous artwork and regional photography that interpret humanity's relationship to the night sky over the centuries and across a variety of cultures.

Each discovery station represents one of the planets, plus Pluto, the Moon and the Sun. There are interpretive display boards with text about each planet and a sign indicating how visitors can access audio components.

Those interested can register for e-mail alerts about what to watch for in the night sky, interesting facts, and more. To register, visit [www.darksky@emmetcounty.org](http://www.darksky@emmetcounty.org).

You can also call (231) 348-1704 for general program information, or (231) 436-4051 to register for the park's guest house.

A popular destination for visitors, Headlands draws many out-of-state visitors and boosts Michigan's tourist industry, according to LTC Executive Director Tom Bailey.

**Be safe when venturing on ice**

With the early arrival of arctic temperatures this winter, ice has already formed on many of Michigan's inland lakes and rivers.

Ice fishermen and snowmobilers are being reminded that no ice is safe ice.

You can't always tell the strength of ice simply by its look, its thickness, the temperature, or whether or not it is covered with snow, according to Lt. Andrew Turner, marine safety and education supervisor in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Division.

New ice, he said, generally is much stronger than old ice; a couple of inches of new, clear ice may be strong enough to support you, though a foot of old, air-bubbled ice may not.

"Clear ice that has a bluish tint is the strongest," Turner said. "Ice formed by melted and refrozen snow appears milky, and is often very porous and weak."

Ice covered by snow always should be presumed unsafe. Snow acts like an insulating blanket and slows the freezing process. Ice under the snow will be thinner and weaker. A snowfall also can warm up and melt existing ice.

If there is slush on the ice, stay off. Slush ice is only about half as strong as clear ice and indicates the ice is no longer freezing from the bottom.

"Always presume that ice is unsafe," Turner said. "Do not venture out onto the ice unless you test the thickness and quality with a spud, needle bar, or an auger. Ice that is six or seven inches thick in one spot can be only two inches thick close by."

—Michigan DNR

**Conservatives and renewable energy**

Who says Republicans don't care about energy conservation?

Several GOP leaders have formed a group to promote renewable energy in Michigan.

The Michigan Conservative Energy Forum wants the state to reduce its dependence on coal, and increase investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency programs.

According to Larry Ward, former political director for the Michigan Republican Party and executive director of the forum, Michigan must diversify its energy supply and move toward and "all of the above" energy policy that includes wind, solar, hydro, biomass and natural gas.

Coal and nuclear power also remain part of the picture, he said.

While the new group is not affiliated with the state Republican Party, most members are expected to identify as Republicans.

"This is exactly what the Republican Party needs to be relevant for the next generation of voters, said Michael Stroud, co-chair of the Michigan Federation of College Republicans.

**Little Traverse Conservancy reports highlights for 2013**

HARBOR SPRINGS—Little Traverse Conservancy (LTC) has released a summary of its 2013 accomplishments.

The report covers activities throughout the organization's five-county service area.

During the past year, the non-profit land trust reached a milestone, surpassing 50,000 acres of land protection in its 41 years of existence. This amounts to 78 square miles, which represents about 1.8 percent of the land in the organization's service area of roughly 4,400 square miles.

The protected lands include more than 130 miles of lake, river, or stream shoreline.

"The volume of land protection is one way to measure the success of a land trust," said Executive Director Tom Bailey. "So is the number of members who support it and the amount of money that is raised each year or for a particular project. Yet protecting land in its natural state and making it available for public use and enjoyment comes with many other intangibles that can't be statistically measured."

For example, the Conservancy offers year-round education outings and community field trips. In 2013, more than 3,700 students participated in a Conservancy-led nature outing and 551 people participated in seasonal community field trips led by staff and volunteers. Almost all of these programs are offered at no charge, and funds are available to help



*Horton Creek was one of author Ernest Hemingway's favorite fishing spots when he was a boy spending his summers in Michigan. Two nature preserves have now been established along the creek, thanks to efforts by the Little Traverse Conservancy.*

—Photos courtesy of the Little Traverse Conservancy

with bus transportation costs for classrooms.

The Conservancy also reports that 15 miles of new trails were added to their nature preserve trail system. All told, the organization manages and maintains 90 miles of trails with the help of hundreds of volunteers.

Some of the organization's 2013 land protection and stewardship highlights included the following:

\* In Charlevoix County, 38 acres were purchased and added to two nature preserves that lie along Horton Creek. Several work days were held at numerous preserves, with new trails created at the Barney's Lake Preserve on

Beaver Island, as well as the Taylor-Horton Creek Preserve, the Wissner-Saworski Preserve, and the Darnton Family Preserve.

\* In Cheboygan County, the Conservancy assisted the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) in protecting 120 acres with 330 feet of frontage on the Pigeon River. LTC also collaborated with the Burt Lake Trail group to coordinate, plan and complete parking and a rerouted trail that accommodates the new Burt Lake Trail.

\* A 13-acre nature preserve in Emmet County, now known as the Hankins Glen Preserve, was donated by Robert and Mary Coykendall. The preserve includes a small creek that is a tributary to the Bear River, a major tributary to Little Traverse Bay.

\* A 200-acre addition to the Aldo Leopold Preserve on Marquette Island, Mackinac County, was purchased with a grant from the J.A. Woollam Foundation. The addition provides much desired trail access and brings the preserve size to 1,683 acres and 3.8 miles of Lake Huron frontage.

\* LTC assisted the Michigan Department of Natural Resources with acquiring a 540-acre parcel in Chippewa County. The parcel includes 1,400 feet of frontage on Ziegler Lake and is now part of

state forest holdings just west of Detour Village.

More than ever, the Conservancy is engaging volunteers to help with their work. In 2013, nearly 550 volunteers assisted the organization with a variety of tasks, ranging from office mailings to trail monitors. More than 1,500 volunteer hours were donated to LTC in 2013. Based on the national volunteer value estimation of \$22.14/hour, the value of these hours is \$33,210.

By the end of 2013, more than 3,200 people had downloaded the Conservancy's free nature preserve smart phone app. The app provides interactive maps and updated information about LTC's most user-friendly nature preserves, and is an excellent way for residents and visitors to the region to quickly get information about preserves and trails.

Since 1972, the LTC has worked with private landowners and units of local government to permanently protect ecologically significant and scenic lands from development. Since it was founded, more than 50,000 acres and 130 miles of shoreline along our region's lakes, rivers, and streams have been set aside.

—Little Traverse Conservancy



*Volunteers are essential to the ongoing work of The Little Traverse Conservancy and more than 3,700 young people participate in the organization's environmental education outing each year.*



# Opinion

## Quote Box

*"I've seen a look in dogs' eyes, a quickly vanishing look of amazed contempt, and I am convinced that basically dogs think humans are nuts."*

—John Steinbeck

## Modern environmental writing

In his introduction to the book, "American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau," editor Bill McKibben cautions that the world is in a race between physics and metaphysics.

Environmentalism, he says, can no longer confine itself to the narrow sphere it has long inhabited. "If it isn't as much about economics, sociology and pop culture as it about trees, mountains and animals," McKibben says, "it won't in the end matter."

Today's environmental writing, he says, is concerned with the collision between people and the rest of the world, and asks questions about that collision. Is it necessary? What are its effects? Might there be a better way?

Unlike traditional nature writing, McKibben says, environmental writing seeks answers, as well as consolation—embracing controversy and sometimes sounding an alarm.

Such discussions can sometimes make people—even dedicated conservationists—uncomfortable, especially if they don't like the voices they hear, or don't subscribe to the particular ideas being shared. We sometimes see this even in the pages of *The North Woods Call*, which, as many of you know, has a rich variety of passionate and opinionated readers.

That is a good thing.

Even former U.S. Vice President Al Gore—who himself has at various times been vocally intolerant of divergent viewpoints—acknowledges our national tradition of free speech and the important need to debate the rights and responsibilities of each individual and of society as a whole.

"Just as [19th Century author Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond] could not shut out his neighbors, Americans cannot shut out one another—or the rest of the world—if we are to restore the balance between the natural and the man-made," Gore said in the foreword he penned for "American Earth."

Let's hope he means it.

Such debates are regularly held in coffee shops, classrooms, gas stations, offices and on street corners—anywhere that passions surface and ideas collide. And, yes, they are also found on talk radio, television networks, cable channels, and in the pages of books, magazines and newspapers.

Those who would try to silence these discussions are doing a great disservice to the very idea of self-government. Many great movements that made positive changes to our world began as an individual idea, or as a single essay or editorial in a book or newspaper. And many real and would-be tyrants—not to mention ill-conceived laws—have been brought down by information shared freely in the light of public discourse.

That's why we need to embrace diversity of thought in all matters and see what we might learn from it.

In the words of 18th century French writer, historian and philosopher Voltaire, "Think for yourself and let others enjoy the privilege of doing so, too."

## Yet another January deep freeze

On the morning of this writing, the thermometer at *The North Woods Call* office reads 13 below zero and piles of snow line our steep driveway like giant rails on a toboggan run.

A painfully stiff back is testimony to the excessive digging the editor did yesterday to clear another ten-and-a-half inches of snow that came the previous night. And our local newspaper has an article quoting a local weather observer who says this winter could be one of the ten coldest in the past 100 years.

"It was the coldest January first since the mid-1990s," said Ray Hackman, who has been tracking the area's weather for some 60 years. December, he said, was the fourth-snowiest on record and 40 inches of snow have fallen here so far this winter.

A friend of ours says it reminds him of the winters he remembers from the 1950s and 1960s, when there always seemed to be plenty of clean, fresh snow in which kids could play. We remember those, too, and often think about the huge drifts that clogged roads and kept schools closed—sometimes for several days.

Today, a monster snowstorm is reportedly hitting the north-eastern United States, perhaps on a par with those January storms of 1967 and 1978 that we recall here in Michigan.

And more cold and snow are apparently on their way, according to The National Weather Service in Grand Rapids, which is forecasting single-digit temperatures and up to 18 inches of snow again in a few more days.

The winter weather has undoubtedly been worse from time-to-time and probably more dangerous, but what we have been getting lately is still enough to sting the skin and numb the fingers.

We're not sure exactly what this says—if anything—about the global warming debate, but in the words of an old Tom T. Hall song, "that's cold, man, that's cold."

## Tough days for scotch pines and newspapers

The scotch pines on the hill-sides surrounding my home have been dying, rotting and toppling to earth for several years now.

I guess that's part of their life cycle. They reach a certain age, then surrender to time, weather, insects and woodpeckers.

Eventually, they fall—mostly into the woods, but sometimes across the yard and driveway. That's when I am called to practice some not-so-delicate surgery with my chain saw.

We lost a few more of them during a wet and windy day last November. One tree blocked the drive and was quickly removed—with large, heavy sections of the trunk dragged to the side—while three or four others now lean precariously against their neighbors alongside our endangered barn.

I've been threatening for years to cut them all out before one or more crashes into the vulnerable structure, but I always seem to find reasons not to do it. Next spring it will have to become a priority job.

I'm beginning to wonder if newspapers have a similar life cycle, thriving for a set number of years before dying and returning to the dust from which they came.

*The North Woods Call*, for example, has a rich and vibrant history, and is now in its 61st year of publication. With the right combination of resources and marketing, it would seem that the newspaper could remain a solid niche publication for many more years.

Yet, for decades *The Call* has been slowly hemorrhaging subscribers and advertisers to the point where the business is nearly as unstable as the old scotch pines leaning over our barn.

I'm not really sure how healthy the ledgers were during Marguerite Gahagan's 16-year tenure as publisher, though I suspect she had her economic challenges.

I do know, however, that during the storied Glen Sheppard years, the subscriber base had declined by at least 77 percent from its one-time high to where it was when I first started talking to Shep back in the 1990s about taking over the publication. And by the time of his death in early 2011,

## North Woods Journal

By Mike VanBuren



Scotch pine trees pose a threat at the current world headquarters of *The North Woods Call*.

there had been an additional 27 percent drop in those figures.

Makes you wonder why anyone would want to try to resurrect the publication after Shep was gone, doesn't it?

Call it a labor of love, or just plain craziness, but that's exactly what we did—only to discover that less than 20 percent of Shep's remaining subscribers cared to stay with the publication under new ownership and a much-needed price increase.

We know some of them were already disgruntled before we even decided to reopen the newspaper, because they had not been refunded their unused subscription money when Shep died. Mary Lou Sheppard, of course, closed the operation and said she didn't have the cash reserves to give back all the money. (Don't worry, that won't happen again on our watch).

Thankfully, enough of *The Call's* most loyal subscribers signed up—for either print or electronic editions—to pay the bills and allow us to continue publishing for the past 17 months.

We're still at it, of course, but examining the numbers gives us pause. Although many of our own subscribers have renewed their commitments in the past few months—with a good number opting to turn their one-year subscriptions into two years—a significant number are apparently exercising their freedom of choice by dropping out of *The Call* com-

munity altogether.

There are probably as many reasons for this as there are former subscribers. Some, unfortunately, have passed away. Others have aged to the point where their faltering eyesight no longer allows them to read. Some may have decided that they couldn't afford a subscription this year, while others may simply feel that *The Call* is not meeting their needs.

We can't know all the possible motivations—except in those handful of cases where folks have written to tell us such things—but this trend seems to follow the long-term trajectory of *The Call* and of newspapers in general.

Many once-profitable newspapers and magazines have gone belly up in recent years, while others have been forced to cut back on business expenses, reduce their publication schedules, or convert to exclusively electronic editions.

We don't know yet what all this means for *The Call*. We still think the publication meets a vital need and—with the right combination of resources and marketing expertise—could attract a new generation of readers and advertisers.

But time will tell.

Like the scotch pines hanging precariously over the VanBuren barn, we'd like to somehow prevent these financial doldrums from crashing down on us and wiping out the business structure.

If we can just get our marketing chain saw running, maybe we can buzz these troubles away.

## Book Review

### American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau & Walden

Christmas 2013 brought some interesting new reading into our home.

"American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau" was published by The Library of America and features what editor Bill McKibben says are the essential writings that changed how we see the natural world and our place in it. It includes the most significant environmental writing of the past two centuries, he says.

And it's a riveting read. We picked up the book to browse one evening and have had a difficult time putting it down.

It starts, of course, with Thoreau and other foundational environmental writers—John Muir, John Borroughs, Theodore Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold and Rachel Carson among them—and moves through compositions by the likes of John Steinbeck, Woody Guthrie, John McPhee, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams and many more.

There are thought-provoking essays on various subjects, as well as ecologist's memoirs, intimate sketches about the habitats of endangered species, a detailed chronology of the environmental movement and an 80-page color portfolio of illustrations.

You won't want to miss this one and its lessons about the ideas and writing behind America's environmental activism.

## The North Woods Call

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Since 1953

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**Reader comment****Political commentary has no place in The Call**

Editor:

Not all of your readers are *Fox News* or *Rush Limbaugh* fans. Some of us are liberals and don't care for your political commentary.

Shep would roll over in his grave if he knew what you injected into his paper. I am sure you have heard from some of your other readers.

This is the second time you have done this. May I suggest you do it in another medium? It doesn't belong here. This is supposed to be a conservation and environmental paper that informs. Editors are allowed to have an editorial, but stay within the paper's stated purpose.

I do enjoy the paper and the fact that you kept the format and goals the same, and I would like to see it continue as such.

You will note that I live in Vermont, but I lived in Michigan for my first 66 years and I still own a fish camp near Paradise, so that is why I still take the paper. I like to stay informed about what going on in the north and this is the only publication that does that.

Well, so I will continue my subscription, but please consider my suggestion.

Gerry Bolgos  
Bennington, Vermont

Gerry,

*Thanks for writing. We're glad you enjoy the paper, despite our apparent differences of opinion.*

*We agree with you that this is supposed to be a conservation and environmental publication that informs, which is what we try to do with each edition.*

*We don't, however, see what Fox News or Rush Limbaugh have to do with The North Woods Call. We think for ourselves around here and feel compelled to call things as we see them.*

*And we couldn't disagree more that the general deceit and corruption we are seeing in the political process is irrelevant to conservation and the environment. What our leaders say and do directly impact the ability of a free people to understand civic debate and make good choices—regardless of the issues we face.*

*It is vital to our representative republic that stewards of the public trust tell the truth, and that we as citizens listen carefully to each other—even when we disagree. Only then can we identify the best solutions to local, state and national problems.*

*If we as a people are willing to accept lies and half-truths in one arena, how will we know that we*

*aren't being snookered in another?*

*Regular readers of The Call know that we have indeed heard from a handful of others who don't like our editorial stances on some of these matters.*

*After all, we publish their letters, and do not try—as many do—to silence thoughts and opinions that differ from our own.*

*Does being a liberal (or a conservative, for that matter) mean that we should never be exposed to alternative viewpoints—that we should only have to consider ideas with which we already agree?*

*We think not.*

*Partisan ideology should never trump honesty, and we all benefit from a wholesome exchange of views.*

*Finally, with all due respect, none of us should assume to speak for former Call publisher Glen Sheppard. He had plenty of his own opinions—many of which were controversial—and received his share of criticism for them.*

*That said, we hope that you and other readers will continue to enjoy The Call and the rich diversity of opinions contained herein.*

— Mike

**Ditto ... and your retort was off the mark**

Editor:

The banner of *The North Woods Call* says that it is "Michigan's Conservation Sentinel."

I don't think *The Call* is the right forum to criticize the Affordable Care Act.

The reason I subscribe to *The Call* and pass it on to my son in Grand Rapids is to learn about conservation issues. If I want to learn about issues other than conservation, I watch TV [and] read specific magazines, or newspapers.

I know you as editor can have the final say on letters and such, but your retort of Rich Hansen's letter was off the mark.

Sincerely,  
Lynwood Topp  
Paw Paw, Michigan

*Your point is well taken. There are times when we think you may be right.*

*But is it really "off the mark" to demand honesty, integrity and accountability among our leaders—on these pages, or elsewhere—regardless of the subject matter?*

*We suspect that there is no forum where the editorial comments in question would be acceptable by those who don't want to hear alternative perspectives. That is unfortunate in a society that depends on a well-informed citizenry to function properly.*

*Maybe we should be less concerned with the sincere voices of our neighbors and pay closer attention to what is happening to the nation and our liberty at the hands of those who are actually manipulating the levers of power.*

*Just saying...*

— Mike

**The small farm is gone**

I am not a farmer.

I have spent the vast majority of my life living in farm country, though.

It seems that back many years ago almost every farmer milked cows. Not anymore. Now, milking is a corporate thing. A bigger—much bigger—operation that is very sophisticated and much more efficient. Gone is the small individual milk parlor.

At one time, not all that long ago, every farm had small fields and fences, and typically a classic farm lane that accessed the individual fields. These fence rows and lanes typically had grasses and 'weeds along the base, or border, that not only acted as a wind and soil break, but as cover for a diverse variety of wildlife. Very few now exist in southern Michigan.

The rate at which farm fields are expanding and fence rows disappearing is staggering. Apparently, farmers have adopted the same operating philosophy as the

federal government—"bigger is better!" Bigger equipment, GPS-guided planting and harvesting and bigger yields are driven by the ethanol market, which has most Americans sold on the concept of burning moonshine in our automobiles to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, both foreign and domestic.

I personally am not against developing an alternative source of fuel, or the concept of ethanol to lower the carbon footprint, though I do not believe that ethanol ultimately lowers the carbon footprint and I am starting to wonder about the trade-off for less trees, less native plants, less wildlife, more soil erosion, more chemicals and, eventually, more sediment in our streams.

The farms close to me have changed hands recently. The new owner has taken out very large oak and maple trees along the county right-of-way, which allows him to plant right up next to the road.

(Continued on Page 6)

**Viewpoint****Let's restore the public trust**

By Dr. John Richter

*EDITOR'S NOTE: The following essay appeared in a recent edition of Jordan Valley Voices, the newsletter of The Friends of the Jordan River Watershed. It speaks to an issue on the minds of many conservationists.*

It is outrageous that a major foreign corporation can lease public lands at bargain rates, withdraw vast volumes of fresh water for free, repeatedly violate Michigan's Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool, pollute these waters with toxic chemicals they don't have to disclose and then permanently dispose of this waste deep underground.

Recently, over 20 million gallons of fresh ground water was used this way to frack just one natural gas well. There are plans to drill thousands more of these wells, using even larger volumes of water. If so, the total volume of water to be withdrawn, polluted and permanently removed from the hydrologic cycle will deplete groundwater aquifers and forever threaten what's left by underground toxic waste disposal.

**Michigan was once a national leader in conservation.** Management policies and environmental regulations enacted following the senseless carnage of the logging era fostered Michigan's miraculous rebirth. While it's still a work in progress, the rejuvenation of our natural resources is legendary. Our state parks, forests and bountiful natural resources—especially our abundant clean fresh water—are the envy of the world.

**This legacy is now being threatened.** I cannot recall a time when there have been so many attempts to dismantle environmental protective statutes. This seems incredulous at a time when the threats to our environment are unprecedented.

Some of these threats are the result of the need to feed and fuel an ever-expanding human population. But others are caused by the deliberate manipulation of laws and regulations to facilitate the reaping of private profits from public natural resources assets.

The public's interests in our state's natural resources are being usurped by the oil, gas and timber industries in collaboration with our state government and those responsible for oversight. The DNR's budget has been slashed, and its been stripped of regulatory oversight. Senior managers have been forced into early retirement, leaving a void in institutional knowledge and experience. Citizen advisory boards have been abolished and the Natural Resource Commission politicized. Even time-tested statutes like the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and Safe Drinking Water Act are being ignored, unenforced, or diluted in the name of jobs, profit and economic growth.

Wholesale leasing of public lands for oil and gas drilling (fracking), high-volume water withdrawals forever contaminated with toxic chemicals, and enhanced logging operations constitute real present-day threats to our environment and the public trust.

**I fear modern society has entered a "new normal" that looks hauntingly similar to the early 20th Century.** Back then, abundant human and natural resources were over-exploited by a powerful elite.

Immense fortunes were made at the expense of the public and nature. Virgin forests were clear cut, waters polluted, communities stricken by water-borne diseases and lands despoiled. These calamities resulted in the Dust bowl and the Great Depression. That unregulated rush for wealth and disregard for the environment brought colossal prosperity to a few, but ruin to most others.

In Michigan, vast primal forests were ravaged, followed by massive forest fires. Our great rivers and lakes were choked and poisoned, and once-prolific wildlife was driven into extinction. People realized too late that nature and a healthy environment were integral to their own quality of life and prosperity.

**Fortunately, far-sighted leaders emerged.** Having witnessed first-hand this wasteful decimation, they vowed to prevent this kind of reckless destruction and profiteering from ever happening again.

They enacted visionary policies and laws that allowed our wounded lands and waters to heal. Large tracts of tax-reverted lands were placed in public ownership and designated a Public Trust. The lands, air, waters and natural resources of the state were thereafter managed for environmental quality and the public's benefit. State government was charged with the duty to protect our publicly owned assets from pollution, impairment, waste, exploitation and destruction.

**These concepts, collectively known as the "Public Trust Doctrine," were enshrined in Michigan's Constitution,** which reads—in part—"The conservation and development of the natural resources of the state are hereby declared of paramount concern in the interest of the health, safety and general welfare of the people. The legislature shall provide for the protection of the air, water and natural resources of the state from pollution, impairment and destruction."

Other fundamental provisions in our state's governing documents, such as the Organic Act of 1913 and Michigan's Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) of 1970, reinforce the Public Trust Doctrine and are codified in Michigan law. Repeatedly, through time, Michigan courts have reaffirmed that state lands and natural resources be held in the Public Trust and be managed for biodiversity, sustainability and public benefit. The results of these actions have been a

(Continued on Page 6)

**Thank you**

A special thanks to those of you who expressed condolences over the passing of *The North Woods Call* editor's mother.

We very much appreciate hearing from you via cards, e-mail messages and telephone calls.

Some shared personal experiences from losing their own parents and offered assurances that there is indeed light at the end of such dark tunnels.

Others offered general words of wisdom for coping with the painful loss and promised to keep us in their thoughts and prayers.

Each of you provided much needed comfort during this time of sorrow and helped put the experience in greater perspective.

Your kind words and heartfelt sympathy mean more than you may know.



## Viewpoint

## Let's restore the public trust

(Continued from Page 5)

resounding success.

**Today, Michigan is at a crossroads.** Vast deposits of natural gas lie beneath our diverse state forests, where timber has regrown to once again be valuable. Governor Snyder has declared that natural gas extraction and timber harvests will lead Michigan out of its economic slump.

The governor-appointed Natural Resources Commission has leased thousands of acres of public land to multinational corporations for the drilling of oil, gas and water wells. Fracking has been permitted on our public lands and even exempted from major environmental protection laws.

Environmental impact studies are not required prior to the drilling and industrialization of our rural communities. Newly enacted management guidelines for our 4.6 million acres of state forests rejected the recommendations of a bipartisan core advisory board and instead call for increased timber harvests and protect nothing for old growth or natural areas.

Incredibly, Michigan's Senate voted to abolish biodiversity and sustainability as management guidelines for our publicly owned natural resources. This one act alone would open the floodgates for the commercialization of our state forests and parks, and contravene the Public Trust Doctrine.

**Michigan is poised to repeat some of the most egregious mistakes of our past.** We need to remember history and heed the warnings of respected scientists and outcries of citizens who have borne first-hand the full impacts of fracking.

Recent experiences and graphic examples from neighboring states clearly demonstrate the crushing impacts fracking has on fragile ecosystems, farm lands, water, forests and rural communities. The same natural gas for which some are willing to sacrifice our state's natural beauty and pure waters for instant profit is being burned (flared) as waste in North Dakota. Is this gas that important, or is this rush to drill just mere profiteering? Who stands to gain from this exploitation? How does this benefit the citizens of Michigan, or the environment?

**In this era of political gridlock and economic uncertainty, average citizens are overwhelmed.** We feel manipulated and deceived, powerless to have meaningful input to this rigged game. People have been systematically shut out of the decision-making process by those who stand to gain. Property owners, conservationists and entire communities feel powerless to protect their vital interests from these industrial-scale developments.

Many activities related to fracking were carefully exempted from regulatory oversight and are actually subsidized with taxpayer money. Townships and communities were stripped of their normal zoning authority. Many homes and personal properties with or near gas wells cannot get insurance or mortgages, and are deemed worthless.

As witnessed a century ago, we need leaders to emerge who strive to a higher calling other than selfish wealth and power. Providing for the future quality of life for our children and grandkids is one of them. Protecting the sanctity of our state's natural resources is another.

**In Michigan, the road to prosperity will not be found by paving the roads for fracking.** Degrading our public lands and permanently polluting our pristine waters does not lead to economic prosperity, or future sustainable growth. Our challenge in this modern era is to responsibly steward our abundant, but finite, natural resources for the public good and the environment, using biodiversity and sustainability as our guiding axioms. Use, but don't abuse.

Everyone shares the common needs of clean air, pure water, wholesome food and open space to freely pursue our interests. Reaffirm the Public Trust Doctrine and respect the wisdom of nature.

We cannot disassociate ourselves, or our well-being from the quality of the environment. Mankind must balance our activities and consumption with the needs of nature—much like a trust fund spends the interest on its investments, but not the principle.

Let future generations be able to enjoy the fruits of a healthy environment and gratefully applaud the prudent decisions we make today.

*Dr. John Richter is a northern Michigan veterinarian and president of Friends of the Jordan River Watershed Inc.*

## That pesky white stuff—Part I:

## The many names for snow are not all bad

It's appropriate that I write this during the "Blizzard of 2014."

We all have different names for the white stuff that falls and often most of it is not good. It causes wrecks, closes schools and hampers ice fishing.

Of course, it's a boon to skiers, snowmobilers and snowshoers. But to wildlife and the Eskimos, it can be very significant. So much so that all the Eskimo people have literally many names for the snow that they and the wildlife encounter.

The further north we go in Michigan during winter, the more types of snow we may experience.

In this column, I will be using Inuit names for most of these types of snow, although other Eskimo tribes and the Finns have similar names for it.

Snow that is falling is called *Anniu*, snow on the ground is *Api*, snow on the boughs of trees is *Qali*, drifting hard-packed snow is *Upsik* and deep snow is called *Pukak*.

One benefit for those scrabble players is that many of these words don't have a "u" following the "q" in them. Of course, if you love snow for whatever reason, we are happy when we have "*Api*." Sorry, I just couldn't resist the poetry.

One of the more significant snows that wildlife encounters is when the snow gets rather deep, providing a *Pukak* layer. This bottom layer provides homes for many small critters. The deep snow insulates the ground, and the frozen ground thaws upward and becomes quite warm, often into the 40's. This gives a warm environment for voles, shrews, mice, etc. to live within and forage. The snow actually may begin to thaw and provide little caverns.

## The small farm is gone

(Continued from Page 5))

This results in drifting of snow in areas that never were a problem before. I suspect that during drought conditions, some topsoil will be displaced too.

He is in the process of taking out acres of fence rows and shrubs and small wood lots. Most of this (including many large trees) ends up being pushed into large piles and burned.

It certainly is his right to do as he pleases with his land. I guess. I don't believe he and most farmers in this area are willing to sacrifice profit and yield for conservation. This is a trend that is gaining speed and momentum, and pushing land prices to unbelievable all-time highs.

I have read that traditional grassland—CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) fields—in

The Natural World  
By Richard Schinkel

We all know about the use of snow by ruffed grouse to dive into for protection and to stay warm for the night. It's a great place for mink and weasels to seek out these smaller morsels of food.

Mice are not necessarily free from predation, even though they are hidden under the snow. Owls, with their great hearing, can still detect them and dive with uncanny accuracy into the snow to come up with a mouse.

I believe we all have seen fox and coyote move across a field, then stop and turn their heads side-to-side, only to jump and pounce on unsuspecting mice.

Since the vegetation warms up and actually decays, occasionally methane-like gases build up. Mice become what I would call "drunk or drugged." They then burrow up to the top and race around in circles on the surface—a very bad place for a dark mouse to be on a background of white snow.

Often you will see a trail moving around with an abrupt stop, drop of blood and wing marks in the snow.

The other type of snow I want to discuss is *Siqoqtoaq*. This has several names when translated. In the north, it usually forms from the sun warming the upper layer of snow, making a "crust," hence the name "sun crust." Eskimos also call it "hole ringed in blood or red," because it cuts the caribou legs as they travel and break through the crust. This is one reason caribou migrate north for a while during the spring to avoid

the *Siqoqtoaq*, melting of surface snow.

Around Michigan we mainly experience this snow when we get rain on the cold snow surface. As you can imagine, the *Siqoqtoaq* gives wolves and other large predators an advantage in taking large prey like deer, elk, moose and caribou. Often wolves can run across the sun crust surface and easily out-manuever the prey.

As a boy, I read Jack London's short story "To Build A Fire," which tells about the snow falling from tree branches above and putting out a fire. This *Quali* snow is significant, not only because it provides safe hiding places beneath conifers, but because when the snow is heavy enough, it will actually break limbs—providing food and what used to be called "frost pockets."

When the branches break, the tree gets lopsided. If heavy snows build up on one side, it may break down the tree entirely. This provides an opening where the surrounding trees can grow larger limbs on the sunny opening. If these trees get too heavy on that side, they may also break down, creating an even bigger opening until the spot gets large enough to allow the wind to stop the snow from further breakage. This phenomenon has been called creating "frost pockets," but actually has nothing to do with frost.

**Don't miss Part II about snow in the next North Woods Call.**

## Jordan River advocate dies

Sherm Thomas, co-founder of the Keep the Jordan River Clean campaign, died Oct. 8 at the age of 94.

Thomas and his wife, Peggy, lived on the river by Rogers Bridge for many years. Before Peggy died, she made her husband promise her that he would do whatever he could to keep trash out of the river.

Thomas inspired co-founders Tressa Youmans and Tom "Tinker" Breakey to help him with this task. The trio formed the Jordan River Action Group in 2009. Among other things, booths were placed at access sites for the collection of trash and returnables.

An average of 140 bags of trash and 15,000 returnable cans and bottles have been collected each year. Money collected from the returnables have helped area Scouts purchase equipment, send several youngsters to Scout camp and award several scholarships to East Jordan High School band members.

Thomas will be missed, Breakey said, but his vision and dedication continue to help keep the Jordan clean.

## Losing parents: The passing of the torch to a new generation

Dear Mike,

I just read your tribute to your mother in the latest *North Woods Call*. I'm sure that brought a warm and loving smile to her face.

I'm sure many people, including me, can relate to what you wrote.

It seems that when you lose your parents you pass into a new type of fraternity. It's a natural process and the way it should be. But it also represents a new type of aloneness, since

no one is a close and dear to you (except maybe a few pets, but that's different) than your parents.

It truly marks the passing of the torch to a new generation. You no longer have anyone to fall back on, despite your personal shortcomings.

Even today, I think back on Christmas past, or think of a favorite recipe that only Mom or Dad could make, and wish I could just call

them up to ask.

May we all savor those special memories with our loved ones and cherish the opportunities to make new ones going forward.

Best wishes now and in the new year.

John Richter  
East Jordan, Michigan

Mark Karaba  
Marshall, Michigan



# Clear-cuts: It's sound science, says Department of Natural Resources

Richard Nixon wasn't the only one to say, "Let me make this perfectly clear."

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has its own version of the 37th U.S. president's famous phrase.

"Clear-cutting is a sound scientific management technique for harvesting and regenerating certain forest types," explained Deb Begalle, forest planning and operations section manager with the DNR's Forest Resources Division. "Usually it's for shorter-lived species—such as aspen and jack pine—which are also sun-loving species. They need a lot of sunlight to establish and grow."

The Forest Resources Division is in charge of managing the timber on state forest land. The DNR's Wildlife Division is in charge of managing the animals. But because forestry practices have a big impact on wildlife habitat, the two divisions co-manage state forests to benefit both timber and wildlife.

While their approaches may differ at times, both divisions agree on one often misunderstood technique: clear-cutting.

Clear-cutting involves removing virtually all the timber from a stand, which encourages regrowth of the preferred species. But it doesn't involve stripping the landscape as it did during the timbering era.

"Clear-cutting isn't what it was 100 years ago," Begalle said. "We leave some trees in place for a variety of reasons—for wildlife, for aesthetics, sometimes in clumps, sometimes individual trees.

"People are averse to the look of clear-cuts. They see a lot of slash (branches, logs and other debris

from natural occurrences, or logging operations) on the ground and find it unsightly. But the slash puts nutrients back into the ground as the branches decompose. It also provides micro-habitat for wildlife species, such as salamanders, and brush piles for rabbits."

DNR wildlife biologist Mark Sargent says young aspen is important to a host of species—grouse, woodcock, deer, rabbits, hare, moose, elk and numerous song birds.

"In the case of grouse, young aspen stands provide brood-rearing and nesting habitat and as they grow older, they produce winter food via buds," he explained. "But young aspen also provides browse for deer, elk and moose—leaves, stems, tops and bark. As the trees grow larger, they grow out of the reach of the animals."

But along with aspen come other shade-intolerant plants—raspberries, forbs, dogwood and hawthorns—that provide food or cover for wildlife, Sargent said.

"A clear-cut can create outstanding browse and still provide habitat for grouse and woodcock," he said. "It's a win-win situation."

The most critical characteristic of clear-cuts is that they really don't last long.

"We always assure trees are going to grow back quickly," Begalle said. "In the case of aspen, it will come back so quickly that within a year we have seedlings all over the place."

Jack pine, on the other hand, generally has to be replanted. The DNR replants jack pine within two years of a cut.

Aspen is typically managed on 40- to 60-year rotations for several reasons. That's not only when



Clear-cutting helps regenerate species that can't compete in mature forests, according to the DNR. Both aspen and jack pine are routinely clear-cut. Aspen (pictured) must be clear-cut to maximize regeneration.

the trees have good timber value, but when they're prime for regenerating.

"The older it gets, the less well aspen regenerates," Begalle said. "Aspen sort of uses up its vitality. It regenerates through its root system and, if it's losing vitality, it won't produce as many sprouts."

Clear-cuts maximize regeneration. If an aspen stand is selectively cut, it will not regenerate as well and many trees won't survive in the shade.

Jack pines are usually managed on 50- to 70-year rotations.

"If jack pine gets over-mature, it's prone to insect problems—such as jack pine budworm—which increases mortality and the risk of wildfire," Begalle said. "The older it gets, the more susceptible it is to problems."

However, not all mature or over-mature stands of jack pine and aspen are clear-cut.

"We stay out of areas with threatened or endangered species,

or areas of particular environmental sensitivity, such as natural areas," Begalle said. "Along water courses, we use the Sustainable Soil and Water Quality Practices manual that was produced by DNR and Department of Environmental Quality, and was last updated in 2009. It's basically to ensure that no soils or sediments go into the streams and there is shade provided by trees along the waterway."

Clear-cuts tend to be relatively small—averaging 40 acres—and, if it's more than 100 acres, DNR policy is to review the plan before the timber harvest to make sure it's justified. Sometimes, however, larger cuts are necessary. One factor on the size of the cut is the habitat requirement by certain wildlife species, Begalle said.

"Kirtland's warbler, for instance, needs hundreds of acres of young jack pine. So we'll have large timber sales so we can regenerate large areas—sometimes 300-plus-acre clear-cuts."

While the cuts are well-planned, one of the things the DNR is sometimes criticized for is not leaving buffer areas around clear-cuts.

"We usually do not leave buffers along private property

lines, because people then think that's the property line," Begalle explained. "A lot of people utilize or build on that uncut area because they believe the cut is the property line. And if we left buffers along all the property lines, that would leave thousands of acres unmanaged."

"We try to keep aesthetics in mind," she continued. "If we have long-lived tree species, such as white pine and oak, we will try to leave those along roadways and private property. But if they're short-lived trees, or in poor health, they become a hazard or die fairly quickly, and don't serve the purpose for which they were left. We want to create a new, healthy forest as quickly as possible."

Clear-cuts do not work for all trees, such as hardwoods or saw-log conifers, but where short-lived, shade-intolerant species are concerned, both Wildlife and Forest Resources division staff agree: Clear-cuts are clearly the way to go.

For more information about how the DNR manages Michigan's state forest land, visit [www.michigan.gov/forestplan](http://www.michigan.gov/forestplan).

—Michigan DNR report



DNR workers replant jack pine (above) within two years of a clear-cut, while aspen—like the one-year-old stand shown below—begins regenerating almost immediately after being cut.

—Photos courtesy of the Michigan DNR



## Where are the CO logs?

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We waited patiently for some fresh conservation officer logs for December, but they weren't posted before press time. Consequently, we decided to publish without them this time. We expect that the holiday season slowed down production of the reports by Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials, so we decided to fill this page with some other items. The CO reports should be back in the next issue.



## Marketplace of the North

### Classified Ads

**VIDEO**—From *Nebraska Ranchers 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. \$20 each, plus shipping & handling. For more information, see the Newshound Productions page at [www.mynorthwoodscall.com](http://www.mynorthwoodscall.com).

**VIDEO & BOOK**—*Buck Lake Ranch: Nashville of the North*. A 78-minute documentary and 133-page softcover book about a historic rural music park near Angola, Indiana. \$20 each, plus shipping and handling. For more information, see the Newshound Productions page at [www.mynorthwoodscall.com](http://www.mynorthwoodscall.com).



## Final Shot



### Snow Walking

Fresh snow that blanketed much of Michigan in early January offered ideal conditions for snowshoe activity. There should be plenty more opportunities to take to the pristine white woodlands with weather forecasters calling for more cold and snowy days ahead.

## Improving waterfowl habitat

An 850-acre prescribed burn is planned for St. Clair Flats State Wildlife Area in St. Clair County when the weather conditions are right in early 2014.

The burn will help to remove the invasive plant phragmites on portions of Dickinson and Harsens islands. The project is funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant Program.

Phragmites australis, also known as common reed, is a perennial, wetland grass that can grow to 15 feet in height. While some phragmites are native to Michigan, an invasive, non-native, variety of phragmites is becoming widespread, and is threatening the ecological health of wetlands and the Great Lakes coastal shoreline.

Invasive phragmites creates tall, dense stands which degrade wetlands and coastal areas by crowding out native plants and animals, blocking shoreline views, reducing access for swimming, fishing and hunting and

sometimes creating fire hazards from dry plant material.

In an attempt to improve habitat on the St. Clair Flats, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—along with Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Michigan Sea Grant, Wildlife and Wetlands Solutions, Clay Township and local landowners—has been controlling the spread of invasive phragmites through herbicide application.

Now that the phragmites have been treated with herbicides, a large amount of dead standing phragmites remain. The burn will remove this standing material and improve marsh conditions for waterfowl and other wetland wildlife.

Before a burn is conducted, experienced and trained DNR fire staff will study the area and carefully develop a burn plan to maximize the desired effects of fire while assuring safety procedures are in place.

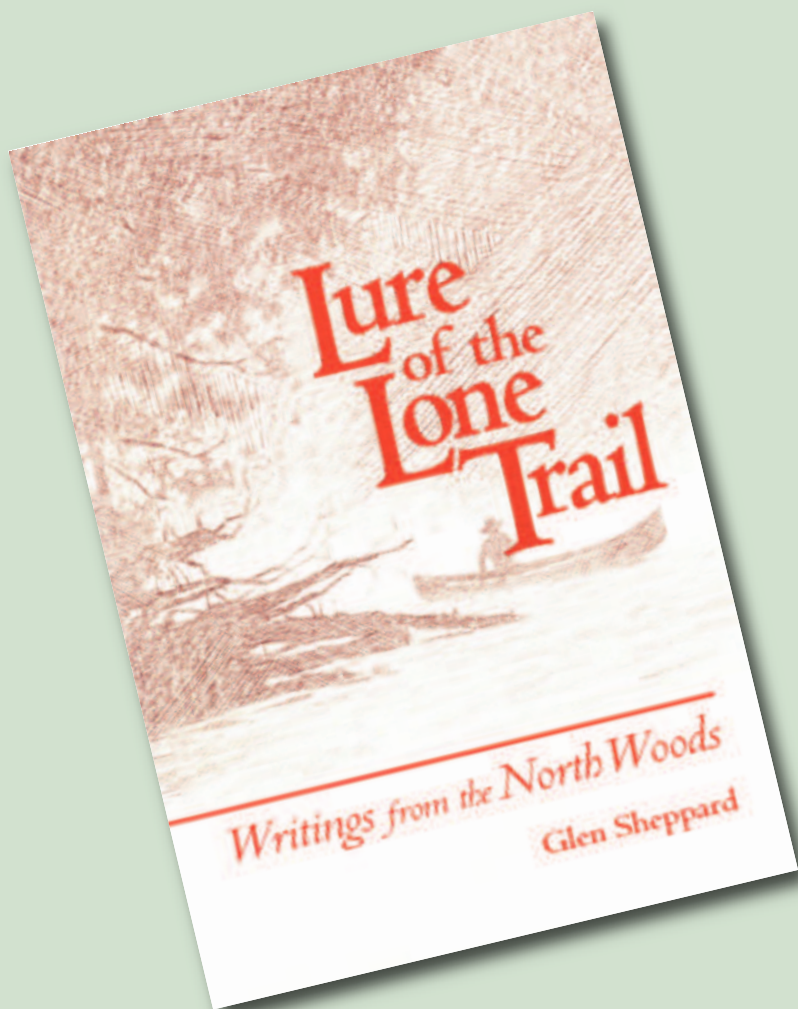
## Believe it or not, there's still time!

If you don't already have your copy of this collection of writings by longtime *North Woods Call* Publisher Glen Sheppard there are still 12 left. Order yours today.

The book is out-of-print, but we picked up a handful of new copies from Shep's estate and are offering them for sale until they are gone.

Check our website for availability and ordering information:

[www.mynorthwoodscall.com](http://www.mynorthwoodscall.com)



## Invasive parrot feather found

The highly invasive plant parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) was reportedly discovered at a small detention pond in Wayne County's Brownstone Township.

It appears that the non-native species is isolated to the detention pond, but a more intensive survey of the area is planned for the spring of 2014, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Working cooperatively with the local homeowners' association, Aqua-Weed Control Inc. (the original reporters) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the DNR obtained permissions and permits for a late-season herbicide application. Treatment of the species was conducted in early November, funded through a federal grant project. The site will be monitored for treatment efficacy, with any necessary follow-up treatments to begin in spring 2014.

The source of the infestation is unknown, but it's possible that the plant—popular in aquariums and water gardens—may have been released to the pond, DNR officials said.

It is a highly aggressive submerged plant, which will eventually grow to emerge 6 to 12 inches above the water's surface.

—Michigan DNR report

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