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www.mynorthwoodscall.com
ICY ADVANTAGE: This year’s harsh winter has some advantages beyond bustling ski resorts and increased opportunities to cross-country ski and snowshoe. It’s also good for Great Lakes water levels, which dipped to record lows last year. The ice cover we’ve seen this winter helps reduce evaporation from the lakes, which experts say is the single largest source of water loss from the inland seas.

BEARS & CROP DAMAGE: Michigan House Bill 5225 reportedly proposes to expand crop damage permits to include the killing of bear. According to a column by Paul Rose, senior editor at the online Northern Michigan Conservation Network, the recently introduced legislation comes at a time when Michigan’s registered bear harvest has declined by 47 percent in the lower peninsula alone, and 34 percent statewide. Rose said the proposal may merely be a technical maneuver to allow an agricultural producer to qualify for a damage reimbursement, but it’s still bad public policy.

WOLF DATA: The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently released statistics from last season’s public wolf hunt, which reportedly showed that the majority of wolves taken by hunters had been speared, which were all that were allowed under the state’s law. Fox said the number “is a statistical wonder” as it is 700% below the DNR’s initial projection.

DNR EMPLOYEES AWARDED: Ed Shaw, an employee of the DNR’s Marketing and Outreach Division, has been named Educator of the Year by the Michigan Conservation Federation. Shaw works at the Carl T. Johnson Hunt and Fish Center, where he coordinates hunting, fishing, trapping and other conservation-focused programming. One of Shaw’s DNR colleagues, Lisa Jackson, was named 2013 Outstanding Conservationist for the City of Ann Arbor by the University of Michigan’s Blue Water Conservation Chapter, which reportedly showed that “biologists know best.”

BLACK LAKE STURGEON: The 2014 sturgeon season on Black Lake lasted just 82 minutes, DNR officials said. When the cannon went off Feb. 1, alerting those on the ice to the end of the season, six sturgeon were reported to be killed, which were all that were allowed under the state’s regulations.

Slip-Sliding Away
Two cross-country skiers make their way through a snow-covered woodland at the Greenwood Foundation, which reportedly showed that the majority of wolves taken by hunters had been speared, which were all that were allowed under the state’s law.

Review of Rexton mine proposal continues
More than 40 people reportedly showed up at a public meeting Jan. 30 to learn more about a potential limestone project near the Upper Peninsula community of Rexton.

The meeting at the Bayliss Public Library in Sault Ste. Marie—hosted by the League of Women Voters of the Eastern Upper Peninsula—included representatives from Graymont Inc. and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The meeting focused on a proposed land acquisition application submitted by Graymont to obtain some 13,000 acres to set up several surface mining areas and perhaps one underground limestone mine.

As previously discussed in The North Woods Call, the company— a leading producer of limestone in the United States—approached the DNR in 2012 about the land transaction and the DNR approved the company’s request to explore the area.

Company officials have said that the area contains “the quantity and quality of limestone that the firm is seeking and the proposed transaction has been under review by the DNR, the Mackinac County Planning Commission and the Eastern Upper Peninsula Regional Planning and Development Commission. If the proposal is accepted and all required permits are obtained, there would be six jobs created by the surface mining operation, they said. If a processing plant is constructed, there could be as many as 25 or 30 jobs.

According to a late January article in the Sault Ste. Marie Evening News, the State of Michigan would be compensated for the limestone as it is mined during the next 100 years through a royalty interest on each ton of limestone removed. The state would also reapply to controversial hydraulic fracturing projects, but the latest version of the bill apparently says that fracking isn’t included, according to a group spokesman. While it may keep some carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, burning the newly extracted oil will release greenhouse gases, said Mike Berkowitz, the organization’s legislative and political director.

Part of the Sleeping Bear Dunes could be up for grabs under a new proposal that would allow an agricultural producer to qualify for a damage reimbursement, but it’s still bad public policy.

Michigan legislators are looking at reducing the severance tax on oil and gas that is produced by using carbon dioxide as a way to tap into hard-to-reach reserves.

The process involves injecting compressed carbon dioxide near an existing well to recover more oil from it. According to proponents of the method, it protects the environment by keeping greenhouse gas from the atmosphere and helps the economy through increased oil production.

The legislation—sponsored by Rep. Aric Nesbitt (R-Lawton) and Rep. Thomas St nkworth III (D-Detroit)—would allow carbon dioxide pipelines and specify that eminent domain could be used to site the pipelines in the same manner as oil and natural gas lines. The severance tax would be lowered from 7 percent to 4 percent for oil and from 5 percent to 4 percent for gas extracted through the carbon dioxide process.

A lower tax is necessary given the higher costs of the labor-intensive method, said Nesbitt.

“This is an opportunity to take advantage of emerging technologies to do a much better job of protecting our environment by capturing the carbon dioxide versus expelling it into the environment,” said St nkworth.

The Sierra Club Michigan Chapter was reportedly concerned earlier that the lower tax would apply to controversial hydraulic fracturing projects, but the latest version of the bill apparently says that fracking isn’t included, according to a group spokesman. While it may keep some carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, burning the newly extracted oil will release greenhouse gases, said Mike Berkowitz, the organization’s legislative and political director.

Partly there is also concern over oil companies being able to use eminent domain to install pipelines on private property.

The oil and gas severance tax reportedly generates about $60 million for the general fund each year.

Silp-Sliding Away
—Photo courtesy of the Little Traverse Conservancy

Slip-Sliding Away
Two cross-country skiers make their way through a snow-covered woodland at the Greenwood Foundation, a privately owned property near Wolverine, Michigan. There is a conservation easement on the property and Greenwood recently hosted a public event to allow exploration of the 1,400-acre parcel.

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Two cross-country skiers make their way through a snow-covered woodland at the Greenwood Foundation, a privately owned property near Wolverine, Michigan. There is a conservation easement on the property and Greenwood recently hosted a public event to allow exploration of the 1,400-acre parcel.

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Peteskey: Wildlife chief sees changing times

By Glen Sheppard

Michigan’s new wildlife chief can’t buy a ranch, and raise and release deer, pheasants and rabbits this year. He’s not going to have a forest the size of the Great Lakes waiting to be discovered.

But Pete Petoskey can mold new concepts and express rather bold thoughts that may effect an impact on the future of Michigan sportsmen as fish chief Wayne Tody’s Great Lakes sports fishery program has had.

And Petoskey is doing just that. Or almost. Actually, he’s been expressing on wildlife, hunter and forest management are not as original as the fish division’s salmon program. But they are as daring.

Michigan game men and foresters for years have secretively said that hunter numbers and wildlife habitat have to be “manipulated” to retain a semblance of “sport” for hunters. But the suggestions of expressing such notions out loud, in public, gave them shivers.

Even now, Petoskey is hammering. He’s saying such things, but he admits he doesn’t believe “Michigan hunters are ready.”

Maybe the hunters are ready.

Willard Musolf, president of the Michigan Deer Hunters Association—the arch critic of the Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) deer program—after reading last week’s North Woods Call, said Petoskey’s ideas “sound good.”

Musolf, who, like Petoskey, is really a good guy, wasn’t endorsing all of the wildlife chief’s new program. He isn’t sold on a license increase. The DNR and legislature, he says, should prove that they will give hunters their money’s worth—which they’ve never done—before they get more money.

He does agree that there should be a longer season in the Upper Peninsula. But he does agree that the number of hunters in the woods at one time should be controlled. He is also convinced that other hunters are awakening to the fact that they must live with some loss of freedom due to the burgeoning population.

“There’s only so much room for people [in the woods],” Musolf said. “We are going to have to do something. Hunters have to realize we have to live with some change.”

Petoskey, his biologists in the field and those who surround him in the Mason Building in Lansing are hunters by hobby. Like so many others, he will admit latterly the possibility that sooner or later there is a place where they can hunt and that they have to take turns running counter to several generations of heritage deep-seated in the north woods.

But Petoskey is now saying just that. The number of hunters in a given season gives time must be limited. Deer hunting is the chief problem. Due largely to lack of targets, small-game hunters are seldom crowded.

How can Petoskey limit the number of hunters in any specific area? There are a couple of ways. Habitat can be improved... so that deer suddenly become over-abundant everywhere... [And] deer licenses can be sold on a permit basis.

* * *

* Pete Petoskey doesn’t have the answer. And he recognizes he won’t know what the reaction will be until he sticks his chin out. That, apparently, is why his handsome jaw is spouting such revolution.

Petoskey has said Michigan can double the size of its deer population and of its annual deer harvest. This, he says, will cost a million dollars a year. But, at the same time, other questions are being raised. Should Michigan pay for and promote increased deer hunting? Or even the present level of deer hunting?

Game and forest managers are starting to wonder. Maybe the forests should be managed for grouse and rabbits, instead of deer.

* * *

The fish division more than a decade ago decided that opportunity, not blood, is the measuring stick, but in the last six years has gone back to equating success with quantity, instead of quality. So Pete Petoskey is musing. A sport without limit?

“If it is important to note that back in the earn-a-buck, beg-a-buck days of the Great Depression, Pete Petoskey’s family owned the small grocery store in Owosso, where Wayne Tody’s family traded. Since then, Troy has captured the admiration of the fisheries world with his Great Lakes program.

Petoskey may, in the next few months, gain as broad respect for his ideas to making Michigan hunters face up to the realities of increasing people pressures on declining wildlife habitat.

The perfect gift for any occasion: Give The North Woods Call to that special person on your list

---North Woods Call Photo

Winter Wonderland

There was plenty of snow on the Michigan landscape in early February—more than some areas have seen in several years. The heavy precipitation, of course, is a boon to winter recreation enthusiasts, but an unwelcome curse to those who simply want to keep their driveways and sidewalks clear. With half of the winter season remaining, forecasters say we are likely to get even more of the slippery white stuff, so keep those plows and shovels sharpened—but go easy on the salt.

Review of Rexton mine proposal continues

(Continued from Page 1)

Another, among the review document says that the tourism and recreation economies could be impacted by the mine due to reduction of available state land. Public access to lakes and streams needs to be maintained, and development within wetland areas should be avoided.

Loss of the state forest land would reduce the amount of property available for hunting, trapping, and other wildlife-related recreation, DNR officials said. The project area also encompasses the upper watersheds of the Black River, Davenport Creek and Paquin Creek—cold water and groundwater-fed streams that support brook trout, chinook salmon, steelhead and coho salmon.

In addition, the east branch of the Sage River and the west branch of the Hendrie River are both located within the proposed project boundaries. Both streams are classified as cold water streams.

Any large quantities of water being directly pumped from mining operations may alter the channel characteristics, DNR officials said in the review document.

It is critical to preserve the hydrologic integrity in the watersheds both above and below the surface, they said. Further, the use of water for processing, or de-watering surface pits and/or under-ground mines is also a concern.

The area in question also provides diverse habitats for important game species, such as deer, bear, snowshoe hare, bobcat, marten, ruffed grouse and woodcock, and supports numerous non-game species, including peregrine falcons, many songbirds and the rare red-shouldered hawk.

It is likely that these wildlife species would be negatively influenced by the regular activity and operations of the mine, officials said.

Two plants that are listed as species of special concern—the alga pond weed and male fern—have also been identified in the area, they said, as well as muskeg and an archeological site.

The document also points out that the DNR typically does not engage in large-scale sales of land to a private individual or organization “without the opportunity for all members of the public to bid on the property by means of auction.”

Because of this, DNR officials suggested that Graymont propose a land exchange in order to proceed with the current program and assist the state in meeting its land acquisition objectives outlined in the DNR’s Public Land Management Strategy.

The general public can make comments during public meetings, or by e-mailing DNR-GraymontProposalComments@michig an.gov.

Comments will be accepted until a final decision is made, DNR officials have said. Additional information can be found at www.rextonproject.com. There also is a Facebook page posted at: www.facebook.com/groups/40136723082145/.

2014 NRC MEETINGS: The next Michigan Natural Resources Commission meeting will be held March 13 at the Ralph A. MacMul lan Center, 204 Conservation Drive, on Higgins Lake near Roscommon.

The Oct. 9 meeting will also be held at that location, while the April 10, May 8, June 12, Sept. 11 and Nov. 6 meetings will be held at the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center, 4125 Beaumont Road, in Lansing. Other meetings during 2014 will be held July 10 at the Outdoor Adventure and Discovery Center, 1801 Atwater Street in Detroit; Aug. 14 at a location yet to be determined in Munising; and Dec. 11 at a location yet to be determined.

NATIONAL SECURITY: Two southwestern Michigan lawmakers have introduced legislation aimed at better protecting nuclear power facilities from terrorist attacks. Sen. John Proos (R-St. Joseph) and state Rep. Al Pocholkas (R-Stevensville) introduced Senate Bill 757 and House Bill 5282 on Feb. 6. The bills—which will go to the House and Senate committees on energy and technology—are aimed at providing nuclear plant security officers with “reasonable and necessary response capabilities” to protect plants, employees and the general public.

FUEL WOOD PERMITS: To help with heating energy needs this winter, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is selling fuel wood permits a month-and-a-half before the traditional starting date of April. The permits—good for 90 days—cost $20 and can be used on designated forest land in the northern two-thirds of the state. They allow for the collection of up to five standard cords of wood per household. The wood is for personal use only and may not be resold, or traded. Due to the harsh winter, a second fuel wood permit may also be purchased this calendar year, in addition to the emergency permit.

ENBRIDGE MEETING: About 150 people reportedly attended a Feb. 5 meeting of the Mackinac County Planning Commission to discuss the Enbridge project pipeline crossing the Straits of Mackinac. According to one observer, company officials said the pipeline is maintained to federal standards and there is no current replacement schedule. They were apparently close-mouthed about specific material that passes through the line, or what might escape if there is a spill, but said the pipeline is not capable of moving heavy crude and there are no plans to move tar sands through it. The meeting reportedly degenerated and ended with several shouts from the audience about Enbridge being “liars.”
DNR unveils new grant programs to improve wildlife/aquatic habitat

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has announced two new grant programs to improve wildlife and aquatic habitat.

Both programs will be funded with a portion of the increased revenue expected from hunting and fishing licenses sold each year, DNR officials said.

The Wildlife Habitat Grant Program (WHGP) is aimed at enhancing habitat for game species. Goals include managing the habitat for sustainable wildlife populations in a changing climate, increasing public participation and support of hunting and trapping, and increasing participation in “non-consumptive wildlife-related recreation.”

“This is an exciting opportunity to partner with others in the region to increase the habitat for the benefit of hunters, trappers and wildlife viewers,” said Russ Mason, chief of the DNR’s Wildlife Division.

WHGP funding is available—through an open competitive process—for eligible single- and multiple-year projects by local, state, federal and tribal governments, for-profit and nonprofit groups, and individuals. Minimum grant amounts will be set at $15,000, with the maximum grant amount available for that grant cycle. The 2014 overall available grant amount is $650,000. The WHGP application period began Feb. 1 and will run through the close of business on March 15. Successful grant applications will be announced by April 1. A detailed WHGP handbook and application are available at www.michigan.gov/wildlife, or www.michigan.gov/dnr-grants.

The $1 million Aquatic Habitat Grant Program (AHGP) program will emphasize protecting intact and rehabilitating degraded aquatic resources throughout the state; developing self-sustaining aquatic communities that provide for continuing recreational opportunities and natural resource-based economies; and encouraging strong relationships and partnerships—along with new expertise—for aquatic habitat protection and recovery.

“Each program will work to increase fish and aquatic wildlife populations statewide by ensuring our best waters remain so and improving aquatic habitat that is currently degraded,” said Gary Welchan, DNR Fisheries Division program manager. “It will also serve to increase direct public involvement in watershed issues and increase availability of high-quality, self-sustaining aquatic resources.”

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Moturil laws cause Beretta to move

U.S. manufacturer Beretta announced in early February that it would be the latest gun maker to expand beyond the borders of its home state due to tougher gun laws. Instead of building in Maryland, which adopted stiff new regulations last year, Beretta is putting up a new manufacturing and research facility in Gallatin, Tennessee.

The company had earlier telegraphed the decision, saying any expansion would occur somewhere that has “shown consistent, strong support for Second Amendment rights.”

Muzzle-loading Remington Arms is also looking at expanding into Tennessee. Other gun-shots—firms from Texas to Wyoming—are seeing an influx of gun makers who feel they’re now unwanted in places they’ve operated for decades.

Ruger and Colt Manufacturing, for example, are expanding from Connecticut into North Carolina, and Magpul Industries pulled up stakes in Colorado and headed to Texas.

In addition, most gun manufacturers have seen an explosion in sales since new anti-gun laws have been adopted. Smith & Wesson, for example, reportedly saw firearms sales rise from $80.4 million in 2003 to $857.5 million in 2013.

Forest plans OKd

Keith Creagh, director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), has approved the agency’s final regional state forest management plans.

The three plans—covering the eastern Upper Peninsula, the western Upper Peninsula and the northern Lower Peninsula—are aimed at helping the DNR sustainably manage four million acres of state forest plans.

They were developed with input from a diverse group of stakeholders, including citizens.

For more information, contact Scott Jones, DNR forest management planning specialist at (517) 284-5873, or visit www.michigan.gov/regionalforestplans.

Huron Pines group presents the 2014 O.B. Eustis awards

The Gaylord-based Huron Pines organization has presented its annual O.B. Eustis Awards, which honor the late industrialist, environmentalist and nature columnist.

The awards, which recognize environmental protection and outdoor improvement efforts in northeastern Michigan, were presented to Huron Pines board member David Smith, the Montmorency County Road Commission (MCRC) and Northeast Michigan Sea Grant (NMSG) during organization’s annual meeting Feb. 1.

Smith has selflessly dedicated thousands of hours to the protection of the Au Sable River Watershed. He has helped plan and implement restoration projects, supervise AmeriCorps volunteers and chaired the Au Sable River Watershed Committee. He is a reliable, devoted and tireless worker who has positively affected the quality of the river and the entire region.

The MCRC is a dedicated partner in conservation projects that benefit northeastern Michigan. By helping replace under-sized culverts, it has improved the quality of local water and habitat. During the past two years, MCRC was instrumental in completing five road/stream crossing improvement projects in the Thunder Bay and Black River watersheds, and has contributed more than $113,000 in equipment and labor to various projects.

NMSG, meanwhile, has empowered young people through student-driven educational projects and creative opportunities to learn about natural and cultural landscapes.

The organization facilitates place-based school-community partnerships to improve the quality of students’ education by extending the classroom beyond the walls of the school and into the “living lab” all around us. This investment in youth cultivates strong leaders and fosters a culture that encourages the enjoyment and protection of our natural resources.

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Spending those fee increases

Changes in Michigan’s hunting and fishing license fee structure—effective March 1—are expected to bring in additional revenue for fund Department of Natural Resource (DNR) programs. In addition to putting more conservation officer boots on the ground, the program for wildlife and aquatic habitat improvement have already been announced (see story on Page 3).

That’s all fine and dandy, and we’re sure that such efforts will help the DNR secure partners to manage these important resources.

But a landowner friend of ours has asked why DNR officials seem to be spending this anticipated money before they know for sure how much the changes to hunting and fishing license fees will yield in additional revenue. We think that’s a good question.

What happens if the money doesn’t come in as planned? Are Michigan hunters and anglers going to buy licenses and special endorsements in the same numbers as they normally have? Will the money still be there if some borderline hunters and anglers decide they don’t like the new fee structure and stop participating?

Maybe we should wait until we know how much money is actually available before we go about spending it. Just a thought.

What about artificial baiting?

While reading John Gunnell’s viewpoint article in this edition of The Call (see Page 5), we were reminded that we have never quite understood the practice of artificially baiting game animals.

We suppose it has something to do with making the hunt success-ful for more hunters, selling more licenses and generating revenue for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). And, in some cases, it’s probably a fairly effective way to reduce the num-ber of certain game animals.

Yet we often wonder if hunters should rely more on their own knowledge and skills to seek and outwit their prey, rather than vi-olating the natural design by tricking hungry deer, bear and other wildlife into becoming sitting targets for those already armed with hang-ling hange pines.

I didn’t do much better, al-though my snowshoes only sank a few inches into the white powder. After only about an hour of con-stant motion—stopping occasion-ally to snap a photographs of the pristine landscape—my legs and leg muscles were beginning to complain and I was looking for-ward to a cup of hot tee beside the pellet stove.

Maybe it’s the fervor of adventur-ing, or perhaps I’m just a bit out of shape these days compared to the glory years of my youth. Whatever the reason, I found myself self-contemplating previous gen-erations of outdoorsman and lamenting the increasing softness of modern man.

Just the voyageurs, for exam-ple. These were tough men— mostly French Canadians who transported goods and supplies by canoe and portages and fearlessly navigated the lakes and northern wilderness during the fur-trade era of the late 18th and early 19th century. Unlike me—with the possible exception of the Masonic work I did year-round during my late teens and early 20’s—they lived on a harsh life of toil. Among other things, they had to carry at least two 90-pound bales of furs that were a half-mile, or longer, and some carried four or five bundles at a time. Their wooden canoes were commonly 25 to 36 feet long and weighed 300 to 600 pounds empty. On top of that, the vessels carried three tons of cargo.

But now often rose as early as 2 or 3 a.m. to begin their typical day’s journey, and were expected to work 14 hours before bedtime and paddle at a rate of 55 strokes per minute. Danger was at every turn and just not because of expo-sures to weather. Drowning was common, along with broken limbs, compressed spines, hernias and rheumatism. They did not have time to live off the land by hunting and fishing, so they car-ried their food with them, and often faced swarms of annoying black flies and mosquitoes.

There were those who took to the northern wilderness to seek their fortune in gold nuggets. It is said that more than 100,000 people started off for the Klondike, but less than 30,000 ac-tually made it to the gold fields in the Yukon Territory. The difficult-ies of the Chilkoot and White Pass trails forced many to turn back. Most found no gold at all, because—by the time they arrived—most of the good stakes had already been claimed.

Jack London, of course, got several good stories out of the ex-perience, but most others went home broke—if they went home at all—discouraged and defeated by the land they sought to tame.

Such is often the fate of man against nature.

Nature will ultimately be the victor, says a friend of mine, an outdoorsman and Alaskan bush pilot in Alaska. That’s why we must al-ways work WITH her and not AGAINST her, he says.

Yet, in this age of Kevlar ca-noes, lightweight camping gear and freeze-dried food, it’s tempt-ing to believe that the odds are be-ginning to tilt in man’s favor.

Some, of course, are better suited to hold their own in the great outdoors than others, but it’s still relatively easy to get into trouble if we forget our place when venturing into the wild.

There really wasn’t much dan-ger in a short snowshoe hike from my doorstep. And it was indeed invigorating—for body and soul—to drink in the pure Febru-ary air and warm my complacent muscles.

But there were lessons to be learned, just the same, as I thought about advances in civilization and the great distance we have come from the earth that sustains us.
by John Gannell

The 2013 regular deer season is now history in Michigan. Driving home downtown from the Upper Peninsula allowed me to notice anew on a subject that lingers in my mind for a practice that flutters all reason. Real hunters bemoan the monster the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has allowed to be created and perpetuated by legalizing the baiting of deer and bear.

In their appointed capacity, our [natural resources] commissioners sanctioned such practice and conveniently “buried their heads in the sand” in accepting the consequences.

Just saying “no” to such a multi-destructive scheme by those so anointed to protect nature’s uniqueness and delicate balance from man’s self-rewarding influence could have once been easily rejected.

Today, DNR leadership—like sheep—are cajoled by subterfuge, resulting in political appeasement. They still dismiss being held accountable for being out of balance with nature, and remain committed to saying “yes” to economic tampering of the kind that “snake oil salesmen” who ignore long-range environmental consequences. Just saying “no” to baiting was too old-fashioned and removed the drama sought to feed small men’s egos. The proverbial cat remains out of the bag and nature still bears the consequences.

Leadership avoided ever answering to anyone or anything. Theirs has become a “parlor game,” relying upon political correctness to cover up their transgressions.

I recently had the opportunity to interview the very sage and much-revered elder statesman from Michigan’s DNR of the past—Merrill “Pete” Petoskey. He, too, rues the day when baiting of wild animals was sanctioned, amounting to their current neutralized existence.

The insidious effect on altering deer and bear patterns of existence by way of unnatural feeding renews the self-reliance and caution they once possessed to protect their very existence.

Some of our leaders—who once still held lingering regrets for being party to legalizing deer and bear baiting—had hoped for a re-destruction, in a “left-handed way,” when chronic wasting disease (CWD) surfaced. Those who silently wished in retrospect that they would have had the courage to originally say “no” once again failed—the late Pontius Pilate—and washed their hands of this outdoor sin. Unfortunately, we again saw a lack of courage by enough of our leaders who could have seized a face-saving CWD outbreak to just say “no.”

Hunters who believe in the notion of nature unaltered long for the day when deer and bear will once again be sighted in their natural meanderings, relying again on their innate instincts. Seeing deer and the occasional bear in the woods, the absence of human-placed food for the purpose of the ambush, could return the woods and its creatures back to the mysteries that once tured us as all in the beginning.

Older men, like myself, have long memories of the [natural resources] commissioners who first gave their approval for deer and bear baiting. Having the courage to reverse earlier decisions, today’s commissioners would initially create a firestorm of opposition from those who would manipulate nature for their own selfish purposes. The anger demonstrated by those who profit most—if unsuccessful in swaying DNR leadership from a higher calling—would then reverberate to threats, scare tactics and other devious practices.

I am reminded of Marc Antony’s funeral address on behalf of his good friend Julius Caesar, when he spoke of honorable men behaving like “brutish beasts” and having “lost their reason.”

John Gannell is a writer and out- doorman living in Rockford, Michigan. Part II of his Viewpoint article will appear in the next edition of The North Woods Call.

A North Woods Call reader wagged her finger at us at last month when we wrote about our “bar” being threatened by leaning scotch pine trees. If there are no animals or farm equipment inside, she said, then it isn’t a bar. That was news to us, but to help satisfy the purists, we offer this structure at the editor’s boyhood home. Geez.

By John Gannell

The 2014 annual meeting of Trout Unlimited’s Mason-Griffiths Founders Chapter was held Feb. 1 at the Mainstream Steak and Rib’s restaurant in Grayling.

A capacity crowd of fifty-five members attended the social hour—followed by dinner, a business meeting, a presentation and awards.

Jim Anderson (Grayling), Boyd Dillon (Mio), Karen Harrison (Grayling) and Mark Hendricks (Grayling) were re-elected to the chapter’s board of directors.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forester Patrick Mahoney presented Chapter Advisor Howard Johnson (Saginaw) an outstanding Project Award from the DNR’s Forest Division in recognition of his work with the Cedars for the Au Sable project. The project seeks to bring young northern white-cedars back to the banks of the Au Sable and Manistee rivers.

Steve Sendek (Grayling) gave a talk with pictures about the Chapter’s Au Sable River habitat improvement project in the William’s Tract above Grayling and the structure repair project below Grayling. The presentation included work in 2011 and 2012 that was done in preparation for the 2013 projects.

President Karen Harrison presented the chapter’s first Rainbow Trout Award for Organization of the Year to Northpoint Fisheries Management, a company owned by Sendek, a retired DNR Fisheries Biologist who is providing oversight for various river projects.

David Smith presented the chapter’s Brown Trout Award for Volunteer of the Year to Mark Rais, chapter treasurer.

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In the ancient, pre-settlement forests of the Midwest, there once grew enormous trees of such enormity that the words “big tree” can’t begin to define or describe them. Of these, none rivaled the sycamore. The most gigantic stood in the Lee County back roads not long after stories such as the Ohio, Mississippis, Wabash, Maumee, Kankakee and St. Joseph. How big? One famous specimen on the Ohio, measured by George Washington and later by French botanist Andre Michaux, was 13 feet in diameter at the base. It was huge and stout, yet as welcoming as a big-bottomed grandmother (you know the type). According to the Michigan State University to sign the 2014 Farm Bill into law. Wetland and waterfowl conservationists are finding plenty to cheer about in the legislation. Among other things, the bill reconnects conservation provisions to crop insurance and includes an important regional sod-saver program. Both provisions are designed in the late summer are offering the best chance of getting a wind, and they pupate into flies, similar in look to a deer fly. Other galls you may try are oak galls. Oaks have a number of galls, with the oak apple gall offering the best chance of getting a wind, and a usual wisp a gall. The willow cone gall often winds up, its lower trunk and 44 feet in circumference. One famous specimen on the Ohio, measured by George Washington and other hardwoods like the primeval sycamores were often pushed into heaps and wantonly burned. The egg mass may be on other objects, even the side of buildings. These eggs, being translucent, make the integrity of the mass will be damaged. The egg mass of the preyng mantis is called an ootheca. Even though you may collect a good number of ootheca, the number of mantises will be limited, as they are voracious eaters and the first thing they see upon hatching is brother and sister, which are mighty tasty. Don’t make the mistake of taking them inside for very long, or you will have a hoard of tiny jumping mantises migrating across your yard. Winter is fun and is actually quite serene, so get out there and enjoy it.
CO Mike Hammill received a complaint about a deer being illegally hunted and killed in the snow. COs Mike McCallough and CO Webster asked the original complainant had shot the deer. He explained that he was not going to like what he saw. The subject claimed he had only shot the deer. The complainant called the operator, who was rapidly trying to locate the subject and his mother for the license the subject had been issued for using another’s kill tag.

COs McCallough and Webster had been requested through the police for a possible injured chicken hawk. The subject claimed a vehicle parked on the road near a beaver dam. CO McCullough had numerous contacts with the second subject. After talking with the subject and checking the traps, the COs located numerous untagged snares and traps in the vehicle. A check of licenses revealed that one subject was trapping without a license, as well as trespassing. This repeat offender received a second theft of property ticket.

CO Warren MacNeill re- sponded to a complaint of a possible injured chicken hawk that was inside a shed. The caller stated that he had been texting the chicken hawk, but refused to eat the chicken he was feeding it. The caller cautiously allowed CO MacNeill into the shed to rescue the chicken hawk. CO MacNeill was able to find the bird and take it outside the shed, where he identified the bird for the caller. The caller was very embarrassed to find out the bird refused to eat the raw chicken because it was, in fact, a chicken itself.

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New Michigan laws to deter poaching of antlered bucks—especially those with trophy-sized racks—and to reduce recreational trespass are now in effect.

The new laws make several changes to fines and restitution payments for poaching deer, including a progressive penalty system:
- For any deer with or without antlers, the base restitution will be $1,000;
- For any antlered deer, there will be an additional restitution of $1,000 plus;
- For antlered deer with 8 to 10 points, an additional $500 will be assessed for each point; and
- For antlered deer with 11 or more points, an additional $750 will be assessed for each point.

A “point” is defined in the bill as being at least one inch long as measured from its tip to the nearest edge of the antler beam. As an example, illegally killing a 10-point buck in Michigan will now result in a $7,000 restitution, plus fines and court costs.

Poachers also now face stronger penalties related to hunting privileges. Under previous law, poachers would lose their hunting privileges in Michigan for the remainder of the year of the conviction, plus three years. Those who kill an antlered buck will lose their hunting privileges for an additional two years on their first offense (potentially six years in total) and an additional seven years on second and subsequent offenses (potentially 11 years in total).

In addition, the new laws address recreational trespass by increasing the civil damage award that a landowner may recover. Previously under the law, the maximum amount a landowner could recover from someone who trespasses on his or her property to hunt or engage in other recreational activity was $250, or actual property damages. Under the new law, the civil action increases to $750 or actual property damages. Additionally, if someone kills any protected animal, game, or fish while trespassing, the new law creates a new misdemeanor with higher fines than allowed for a first violation.

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