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**Opening day and Josh Greenberg’s rivers...**

By Dave Smethurst

The last Saturday in April is always a special day to trout fishermen. It’s the Trout Opener. Even though today it is more of a tradition than an event, with so many streams open—some under special regulations—I think you can fish for trout somewhere every day of the year. Nonetheless, it is deep in our trout bum brains that this is still a special day. Maybe more than any recent opening days, I’m excited. I recently finished a new book that got me thinking, smiling and optimistic. Josh Greenburg, owner of one of the iconic fishing lodges and shops in the country—Gates Au Sable Lodge outside of Grayling—has written a wonderful new book, “River of Sand: Fly Fishing Michigan and The Great Lakes Region.”

Written in what seems to me to be a conversational style, it is a book of stories about Josh’s fishing trips—alone, with clients, or with friends. There are three things I really like about this book that make it—along with “Spring Creek” by Nick Lyons—one of my all-time favorites, both to be read and to re-read. I’m a “seasoned” trout angler. I usually catch fish, unless I’m distracted by, oh, cedar waxwings in a spinner fall of mayflies, or a turtle inspecting my boots as I sit on a log (a small one, not a big snapper), or an... (Continued on Page 2)

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**Encana settles bid-ripping case for $5 million**

Encana Oil and Gas USA has agreed to a $5 million civil settlement with the State of Michigan to resolve allegations that the company conspired to avoid bidding wars against a rival company during oil and gas lease auctions.

On May 5, representatives of the Delaware-based energy firm pleaded no contest before Judge Maria Barton in Cheboygan District Court to one count of criminal attempted antitrust violations, a misdemeanor.

The other company charged in the bid-ripping case—Okahoma-based Chesapeake Energy Corporation—vowed to fight on. Several witnesses had been called during the preliminary hearing and the judge was expected to decide whether there was enough evidence to proceed to trial.

The civil settlement with Encana was filed with Ingham County Circuit Court and includes the following key terms:

* The company will pay $5 million to the State of Michigan.
* $2.5 million will go to funds managed by the Department of Natural Resources and affected by Encana’s actions, and the remaining $2.5 million will fund the state’s antitrust enforcement activities.
* The company will enter into a four-year “corporate integrity agreement” with the state as part of a consent judgment, providing increased transparency of future oil and gas lease bidding activity.

State officials, in turn, agreed to an 11-month delayed sentence on the attempt charge, and the dismissal of the high court misdemeanor conviction relating to a contract or conspiracy. If Encana abides by the terms of the plea agreement, the criminal case will be dismissed after 11 months.

Public auctions of state-held oil and gas leases are held twice yearly—once in May and once in October—by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). During the DNR’s May 2010 auction, both Chesapeake and Encana purchased natural gas leases in Michigan. In 2012, Reuters News Service uncovered a possible conspiracy between the two companies’ executives, discussing an agreement following the May 2010 auction to... (Continued on Page 2)

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**Priming the Pump**

The other tourist season will soon be in full swing, pumping much-needed tourist revenue into northern Michigan’s economy. Although we prefer less-crowded roadways and parks—such as this temporary emptiness after the 2013 state-West Michigan—where we recognize that businesses in the north woods welcome the lucrative influx of visitors this time of year. All we ask is that those passing through respect our natural resources, enjoy their travels and drive safely.

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**LiquID PIPELINE:** A recent report by Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians describes efforts to establish the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River as a “carbon corridor” for the North American energy industry. According to an online posting by Ted Schettler of the Science and Environmental Health Network, Barlow’s report details plans to transport “dangerous new forms of energy”—as well as waste from more traditional forms—around, under and on the water. It is also a call to action to stop these plans before it is too late, Schettler said.

**WOLF PETITIONS:** A second ballot proposal aimed at stopping gray wolf hunting in the Upper Peninsula will appear on the Nov. 5 ballot. Election officials said enough valid signatures have been collected to advance the proposal, which would pivotal a law passed by the legislature in 2012. A second proposal, which would repeal a different law authorizing the hunt, is already on the ballot. Yet a third petition is being circulated by hunting and conservation groups supporting the hunt.

**FREEWAYS VS. TOLL ROADS:** Some federal and state officials reportedly would like to convert more interstate highways to toll roads. This, they say, would generate revenue and provide additional funding for road construction and repairs. Others point out that motorists already pay significant fuel taxes to fund such activities and claim this is just another way for government to acquire more money from citizens, which then can be siphoned off for multiple other uses. We can expect more debate about this in the future. In the meantime, drivers continue to dodge this year’s plethora of potholes on Michigan roadways.

**ICE SHEETS:** As of late April, there was still a significant amount of ice on the Great Lakes—particularly Lake Superior. A full month into spring, huge sheets of ice were crashing into the shore. National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration officials said that Gitchee Gumee was still more than 60 percent covered—compared to just 3.6 percent the previous year at the same time.

**WOLF SURVEY:** Michigan’s 2014 wolf population survey showed no significant change in the estimated number of wolves in the Upper Peninsula, according to officials from the Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division. It is estimated that there were 636 wolves in Michigan this winter, compared to 658 wolves the previous year, they said. Twenty-two wolves were taken during the 2013 hunting season.

**EMERALD ASH BORER:** The emerald ash borer—an invasive species that targets ash trees—has been found at Aloha State Park near Cheboygan. Ash trees once made up about 85 percent of the trees within the park. After the tree has been infected... (Continued on Page 2)
Encana settles bid-ripping case for $5 million

(Continued from Page 1)

split up Michigan counties where each company would be an exclu- sive bidder for both public and private leases. In the five-month period fol- lowing the state's May 2010 auc- tion, Encana and Chesapeake have been a key driver behind the state-held lease price in Michigan dropping from $1,510 per acre in May 2010 to less than $40 an acre at the October 2010 auction. In light of these findings re- vealed through an investigation by the Michigan attorney gen- eral's office, Encana and Chesapeake were each criminally charged for their alleged bid-ripping in collaboration on March 5, 2014 in Cheboygan District Court. They were charged with one count each of antitrust viola- tions relating to a contract or co- operation in restraint of commerce, a high court misdemeanor punishable by a $1 million fine for a cor- poration; as well as one count each of attempted antitrust viola- tions, a misdemeanor punishable by a $1,000 fine.

Both companies have said they conducted internal investigations and found no collusion. They said their earlier discussions were related to a joint business venture that never came to fruition. Closing briefs in the case against Chesapeake were to be filed by the attorney general's office on May 16, 2014. Chesape- kea on May 23. The judge will issue her opinion after that.

Opening day and Josh Greenberg's rivers...

(Continued from Page 1)

Martin Greenberg's new book, "Rivers of Sand", has a河水 theme and will appeal to a wide audience including trout anglers. It's a book that you will enjoy reading and you will learn a lot from it. The author, Martin Greenberg, is a noted author and outdoor writer. His latest book, "Rivers of Sand", is a wonderful book that will provide you with a wealth of information on fly fishing and trout angling.

Josh Greenberg's book is a must-read for any serious trout angler. It's a book that will inspire you to go out and explore the rivers and streams of the north country. It's a book that will teach you how to read the river and find the fish. It's a book that will help you develop your own fishing style and techniques. It's a book that will take you on a journey to the north country and show you the beauty of the rivers and streams.

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Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant have requested detailed information on the current status of two Enbridge oil pipelines laid in the Mackinac Straits more than 60 years ago. The formal request to Enbridge Inc. and Enbridge Pipelines Inc. asks for detailed information to ensure the Great Lakes are protected from a catastrophic spill in the event of a pipeline failure.

“We have a responsibility to practice good stewardship of the Great Lakes, the crown jewels of Michigan’s ecology and economy,” said Schuette. “The unique location of these pipelines, in the Straits, means failure is not an option. This request is part of a comprehensive approach to ensure we work aggressively to minimize risks and protect the lakes at every turn.”

“This administration has worked hard to protect the environment and support the industries we regulate,” added Wyant. “We are asking for assurance that Enbridge is monitoring and maintaining its infrastructure. Michigan does not need another pipeline break. Our vast, vital natural resources must be protected.”

An April 29 letter signed by Schuette and Wyant requests the information about the Enbridge pipelines within 60 days, including:

**Pipeline Life Expectancy:** Details on the construction, modification, and estimated life expectancy of the pipelines, as well as any anticipated replacement plans.

**Pipeline Use:** Existing and potential uses for the pipelines in the future.

**Preventive Maintenance and Leak Prevention:** Pipeline inspection processes and mechanisms for leak prevention, detection, and control.

**Spill Response Plans:** Company response plans in the event of a leak or spill.

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**Counting Hawks**

Migrating hawks crossing the Straits of Mackinac were near their peak numbers in late April when these photographs were snapped. Nearly 5,200 red-tailed hawks had been tallied so far—the largest number of birds. The total count was approaching 9,000 individual birds—16 species, all flying north from winter homes in diverse locations ranging from the southern United States to Central and South America. The watch for hawks and other migrating birds—including eastern bluebirds, and chipping, savannah and vesper sparrows—was expected to continue until May 31. The public is invited to observe. Just follow the hawks signs posted on West Central Avenue in downtown Mackinaw City.

For additional information, visit www.MackinacRaptorWatch.org.

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**Environmental compliance meeting**

If you are responsible for making sure an organization is in compliance with Michigan’s environmental regulations, you won’t want to miss the 2014 Environmental Compliance Conference. Registration is now open for the event, which is designed to help businesses and environmental professionals comply with environmental standards.

The conference, hosted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, will be offered in three locations—Traverse City (May 29), Grand Rapids (June 5) and Livonia (June 10).

The registration fee of $130 includes breakfast, lunch, all conference materials and a copy of the “Michigan Guide to Environmental, Health and Safety Regulations.”

The event qualifies for six continuing education hours for professional engineers. Certified municipal wastewater operators can receive 0.5 CEUs in the “managerial” category for attending the wastewater track only. Environmental consultants, state and local officials and anyone else interested in learning about the subject are also welcome to attend.

For more information and to register, contact Alana Berthold at bertholda@michigan.gov, or (517) 284-6854.

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**MUCC and others challenge feral swine ruling**

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC)—along with other agricultural and conservation leaders across the state—were urging state officials to appeal a March court ruling which overturned an order that declared wild hogs to be an invasive species.

The order and declaratory ruling by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—to clarify how the DNR would determine which pigs were invasive—were mixed by the Marquette Circuit Court, which said they were capricious, illegal and outside of constitutional standards. The judge ordered a stay of the ruling, expecting the state to file an appeal.

Here is an excerpt from a letter reportedly sent to Gov. Rick Snyder by the MUCC:

“…If it stands, this ruling will put Michigan’s agriculture sector at risk of devastating economic losses. It will also create serious problems for our natural resources and wildlife and put the health and property of Michigan residents in danger.

“The DNR invasive species order targets non-native species such as the Eurasian and Russian wild boar, and crossbred between these breeds. These non-native hogs are fast-breeding, voracious and destructive animals with no natural predators in Michigan. They destroy important crops, endanger livestock, threaten our wildlife and natural resources, and cause billions of dollars in damages to property.

“They also carry diseases that can wipe out livestock and our natural wildlife, such as pseudorabies and bovine tuberculosis, as well as harmful bacteria, such as brucellosis, which can seriously sicken human beings.

“The DNR invasive species order is critical to protecting Michigan’s natural resources and economy from a species that causes serious harm to our land and water, as well as to our agriculture industry.

“Just as we work tooth and nail to stop Asian carp and zebra mussels from entering our lakes and rivers, we should stop invasive swine from causing further damage to our land and economy.

“Furthermore, allowing this ruling to stand could have lasting implications on the ability of the DNR to regulate invasive species in the future.”

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**Deer habitat grants given**

Nine Upper Peninsula conservation organizations have been selected to receive 2014 Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative (DHIP) grants from the Department of Natural Resources’ Wildlife Division.

The grants, totaling nearly $65,000, will fund deer habitat improvement projects in Alger, Chippewa, Dickinson, Iron, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee and Ontonagon counties.

The DHIP grant program is designed to attract and support proposals from non-government organizations and citizen groups interested in improving white-tailed deer habitat in the Upper Peninsula. The competitive grant program, funded by the state’s Deer Range Improvement Fund (DRIF), requires that the projects be located on non-state managed land, including private property and Commercial Forest Act-entailed land.

Grants will go to the following organizations:

- The Dickinson Conservation District ($9,250; U.P. White-tails, in partnership with The Forestland Group LLC ($10,000); Wildlife Unlimited of Iron County ($7,500); Marquette County Conservation District ($6,410); the Ontonagon chapter of Whitetails Unlimited ($7,710); Grand Marais Sportsmen’s Club and U.P. Wildlife ($6,400); Drummond Island Sportsmen’s Club and Stoney Creek Timber LLC ($4,800); the Ontonagon chapter of Whitetails Unlimited ($7,710); Grand Marais Sportsmen’s Club and U.P. Wildlife ($6,400).  
- Created by legislation in 1971, the DRIF fund is supported by a $1.50 allocation from each deer license sold (except for senior licenses), which equals $2.2 million to $2.8 million in annual funding. This restricted funding is for the enhancement, maintenance and acquisition of deer habitat state lands.

For additional information, call Bill Scullon at (906) 563-9247.

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**Ask your local librarian to order The North Woods Call**
Great Lakes governors agree to Asian carp containment

Great Lakes governors and the premiers of Ontario and Quebec have announced an agreement that will empower states and provinces to act collaboratively in the event of a “serious” regional threat from aquatic invasive species.

The agreement is designed to prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species, foster mutual aid among states and provinces to respond to such threats and encourage further collaborative actions including the sharing of staff and expertise.

The agreement was reached in response to the Council of Great Lakes Governors annual meeting in Chicago—follows up on a resolution approved during its 2013 meeting to protect the Great Lakes, which called for specific actions to address the issue.

Michigan, for its part, will include all of the “least wanted” species on its prohibited and restricted species list by July 2014.

Once upon a time, I went to a local electronics store to make a simple purchase. A friend had given me an old outdoor television antenna. I needed a hundred feet of wire and a rotor kit to hook it up.

I had never previously owned an outdoor antenna. For years, I’d been content with fuzzy-looking broadcast channels. I’d grown used to a confused double image of network news anchors. But now I had a chance to bring a little clarity to my life. And I was determined to make the best use of the gift.

At the electronics store, the twenty-six-year-old clerk looked at me, like, “You can’t be serious.” He couldn’t grasp the fact that I didn’t have cable TV. He offered to fill this void by selling me a satellite dish system. For a few dollars a month, he said, I could get hundreds of channels.

But I didn’t want hundreds of channels. I was as satisfied knowing that I’d be getting better television than ever before—and almost for free. But the clerk didn’t understand that hunting. In fact, I didn’t want the equipment. I’d never had cable TV. I had been raised on a rotor kit.

So, with the jeep loaded with my gear, I headed to one of my favorite local streams to once again feel the current against my legs and Augusta creek wash away the winter blues.

This is the true sign of spring for a trouterman. Hydro therapy, if you will. It is the kind of day that a month ago would have looked rather promising if you would ever see again—65 degrees and not a cloud in the sky. The kind of day you might, in a dream, see in the month of March. Not this year, of course, but it is here at last—a 30-mile drive with the windows down and a slightly giddy look in my face.

The familiar routine of stringing up the fly rod and pulling on waders was as smoothly as expected. I was as excited to the bridge and stand over the water, smile. Hello to an old friend.

This stream and I go back 30 years or so and, when you get to know a body of water as well as I know that stream, you begin wading with a sense of confidence. I notice a few changes in the first hundred yards of the stream and some deepened rungs. Some are across the stream and create some new cover for the trout. Lies. Not

In our estimation, hunting should involve more than cynical de-
Proposed fracking rules come up short

By Katie Salau

Last week, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) proposed updates to rules to regulate fracking in Michigan, and they came up short.

Instead of meeting regulatory reform, the rule changes were minor mark-ups and language changes that skirted main points of concern for Michigan LCV and many Michiganders across the state.

In particular, the proposed rules do not require companies to publicly disclose the chemicals that are added to water during the fracking process before a well is in use. This is critical public health and safety information for people living near wells, and it is not too much to ask that Michiganders are properly informed.

The suggested rules do not require all fluids used in fracking to be stored in a secure tank, nor do they require details and disclosure for fracking operations to be tracked and displayed on the Michigan DEQ’s website.

Fracking well uses millions of gallons of Michigan’s freshwater, which is unable to be returned to the lakes, rivers and streams from which it was drawn. With so much uncertainty about the impacts of fracking on our natural resources, operators should be held to the highest standards of ensuring the quality and quantity of our water.

The DEQ is falling short on setting tough standards.

We’re continuing to pursue the details. Stay tuned for more information about a public comment period.

Katie Salau is communications manager at the Michigan League of Conservation Voters.

Letter to the editor

Gore vs. Bush: A tale of more than two houses

The “Tale of Two Houses” published in The Call in the early May edition of the Grand Traverse Antrim Custer Township. At this writing, authorities were waiting for David to overtake the Center Township Deputies.

People searching for shredded deer antlers discovered the bodies in a rural area near Deer Road. There were no obvious signs of foul play, or any other indication as to how the men died, Bean said.

The tent didn’t contain any firearms, or hunting equipment, he said, and there were no signs that the men may have died from carbon monoxide poisoning. It also didn’t immediately appear that foul play involved them.

Their clothing was tattered and decomposing after the cold and snowy winter, and it is believed the men had been there since last fall.

Antrim County didn’t have any missing persons reported during the preceding six to eight months, Bean added.

Anyone with any information should call (231) 533-8627.

Jay Copeland
Concord, Massachusetts

“Atmosphere of crisis” needed

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, co-chair of the recent Council of Great Lakes Governors meeting in Chicago, said an “atmosphere of crisis” is needed to bring about faster action on the Asian carp threat to the Great Lakes.

During an interview with the Great Lakes Echo, Snyder reportedly said there isn’t enough urgent concern over the issue. The region, he said, “is a very different place,” and many people and many organizations are more interested in the foibles and flaws of celebrities and public figures.

Go figure.

Jay Copeland
Concord, Massachusetts

Here’s one final 2013 deer hunting story

By John Gunnell

This deer story from November 2013 has been bugging me ever since, because it was still being occupied with ice fishing. I realize that my psyche—once acclimated to a bluebill mentality—has difficulty shifting back and re-creating the scenario that, as it turned out, a once-in-a-lifetime-lifetime occurrence.

It was the second Tuesday of our hunt in the Upper Peninsula. Son Dan and I were the last two remaining members of our camp. We planned that day to hunt early, about three miles from camp. We decided to return to camp about noon. After some lunch and a brief siesta, we returned to our own land until dark. I ventured down to a stand we call Hattee’s—named after the original owner of our camp—while Dan held sway over a couple hundred yards near a sandbar of the Menominee.

All was quiet until dark, when I heard a single shot ring out from the direction where Dan was hunting. With only one shot, I assumed we would soon be dragging some meat.

As darkness settled in, I began to make my way back to our camp. When I arrived—and after making a bloody Mary as I heard the rustle of footsteps on the front porch. David came in with news that it was he who shot, but he had either missed or wounded a young eight-point buck. We decided to make use of the little daylight left and look for the back. Finally, on hands and knees, we discovered a thin blood trail telling us the deer was hit.

Anyone who ever trailed a wounded deer knows what we were being prepared for is what we discovered. The reader must realize that detecting and trailing blood without snow can be tough sledding. Deer meander when wounded, consuming time and territory.

The clock told us it was already approaching 10 p.m. when we paused to listen to an eerie sound off in the distance. The sound was not that of one coyote, but of several. Unlike the distant howl of a male coyote, the sounds we heard were not so much a howling as a weaving, as if to be in a fierce battle.

What were we being prepared for is what we discovered. The coyotes—at least three—had inter- acted the deer’s blood and literally field-dressed him before we arrived.

Going back to camp with midnight with an eight-point buck (minus one hind quarter and one shoulder) capped off our day. Interestingly, the coyotes never sink a tooth into the back straps, indicating that they were through before they started.

I’ve chatted with different hunters who have had this experience with coyotes. Dan informed me that, when he had a deer processed, he got thirty-five pounds of venison.

I now revert back to my winter ice fishing focus with no further interruptions until I take up the music of the trout season.

Letter to the editor

Gore vs. Bush: A tale of more than two houses

By John Gunnell

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Energy savings and home costs

EDITOR’S NOTE: This op-ed piece originally appeared in the Grand Haven Tribune.

By Nicholas Ochicpin

If I told you that the State of Michigan could save residents more than two houses by building new homes a net aver- age of $478 every single year, or $104,000 on average, you would probably think that would be a relatively easy public policy de- cision to make.

Unfortunately, it’s not—and this is a real opportunity that is in jeopardy of not being pursued.

What’s at issue here is the adoption of revised Michigan’s Code—improvements that are currently saving Michiganders energy and money.

Many areas in the state think it is a good idea to reject the 2012 code to benefit a narrow range of special interests in the building sector (it is not); those winners would come at the expense of other Michigan busi- ness losers.

Others is home to large and many manufacturers of energy-efficient building products and services. Building energy-effi- cient homes is good for business and good for the economy, but you don’t need to take an envi- ronmental group’s word for it.

The world’s largest business or- ganization, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, advocates the same.

The chamber’s 2014 policy platform calls for “legislation to boost private-sector investment in building efficiency upgrades, help manufacturers reduce energy use, update lighting and ap- pliance standards, and strengthen building codes.”

The U.S. Chamber of Com- merce supports na- tional model building code en- dorsements.

Both single and multifamily homes built to the new 2012 en- ergy code standards will save en- ergy and money—lots of it. If Michigan updates its building codes, the state will save nearly $230 million annually by 2030.

Any home owner should layed out his vision for a “no re- grets” energy future. Wisely, the governor called for an emphasis on “eliminating energy waste” and has made that a goal a founda- tion of his energy plan. Speaking to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the governor has said, “There are things we can do today that ben- efit us right now and pay divi- dends tomorrow, no matter what the future holds.”

Adopting the 2012 energy code is smart policy that moves Michigan towards a “no regrets” energy future. We should not miss this opportunity.

Gov. Snyder and LARA should fend off challenges to cur- rent efficiency standards and adopt the full 2012 code this year.

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Congratulations! It’s a trout!

The cryptic email arrived mid-morning: “Fish arriving early. Be in Mio by noon.”

We brushed our teeth and raced out the door; this rare opportunity to witness a rare sighting welcome 13,200 new members to its river family was something we didn’t want to miss.

We arrived at 11:52 a.m., and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources crew was already there, parked on the loading ramp. The sophisticated truck—branded appropriately enough as “Fish for the Future”—sported a sizeable oxygen tank to keep those little rainbows alive and kicking until they were abruptly ejected into their new river home.

A quick check of the water temperature showed six degrees Celsius—about 43 degrees. The hatchery keeper nodded his head.

“It was nine at the hatchery—that’s good,” he said.

I shook my head. It sounded dam chilly to me.

I had never been to a river birthing before. A long metal pipe was put together, then attached to one of four portals to tanks holding the fish. The other end was submerged in the river near the shore, and fish started spurtting out in a hurry.

Now I don’t know how many brain cells baby trout have, but that had to have been a physical and emotional transition. Used to the concrete raceways at the hatchery, with a roof keeping out most of the sunlight, these little wonders probably found the sandy bottom of the river and the bright sun above somewhat disconcerting. Most hovered right next to the pipe, catching their collective breath, while others darted into the shadows. A few decided that this great big mother river was just too much and tried to return to the shore, but we gently persuaded them otherwise.

Within a half hour, most of the trout had headed out to explore— or hide. We wondered how many will make it in this great big river— how many will thrive and grow really, really big; how many will find special little river holes and hunker down for years; how many will wind up in an angler’s heart sing.

The hatchery keeper’s wife, a lovely person who has watched over trout for 13 years, was amazed at the size difference among the many fish, even though they were all the same age. Just like people, we mused.

I felt like a fish mom as I kept an eye out for struggling, trying to make sure they successfully commenced their next phase of their life journey.

Soon the truck was on its way back to the hatchery, where it would be loaded again tomorrow for another delivery. Three trucks deliver three loads of fish three days a week for several weeks each spring.

That’s a lot of fish, my friends. Fish for the future.

2014 election is shaping up

Conservation and natural resource spokespersons were expected to face a tough battle this fall in out- weighing Common Core state education mandates and Medicaid expansion as wedge issues during Michigan’s 2014 election.

The filing deadline for candidates has passed.

According to the League of Michigan Conservation Voters, no surprises on the primary side last month, but 2014 will be a year for Republican candidates, incumbents and new faces alike to duke it out for seats in the state capitol.

A total of 44 Republican pri- mates will take place for House seats—the second most in the last decade. Democrats in the House are facing fewer primaries than normal, topping out at 37. Of the 44 Republican primaries on the docket, an estimated 19 in- cumbent state legislators will face primary challengers this year.

Michigan Information and Re- search Service (MIRS) reports that, since 2000, only one Repub- lican challenger has won against an incumbent legislator.

On the federal level, following a long string of primary amend- ments from the Michigan delega- tion, there are now more open U.S. House seats than Michigan has seen in 22 years. Two incum- bent congressmen, U.S. Rep. Justin Amash (R—Cascade Twp.) and U.S. Rep. Kerry Bentivolio (R—Milford), will face primary challenges. Aformer Rapidz businessman Brian Ellis (running against Amash) and Birmingham attorney David Trott (running against Bentivolio).

In the 4th congressional dis- trict, home to U.S. Rep. Dave Camp (R—Midland), who will be retiring, a three-way Republican primary between current state Sen. John Moolenaar (R—Midland), Justin Mitchell and Peter Konetchy is heating up.

In the 8th congressional dis- trict, current home to U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers (R—Howell), who is also retiring, the primary will fea- ture former state Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop and state Rep. Tom McMillen, a staunch tea party voice from Rochester Hills.

On the Democratic side, Deb-bie Dingell is not facing any chal- lengers in the 12th congressional district, which has been held by her husband, U.S. Rep. John Dingell (D—Dear- born), for more than six decades.

In the U.S. Senate race, former Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and current U.S. Rep. Gary Peters (D—Bloomingfield Twp.) do not face primary chal- lenges.

Cannery Row

This restored structure on the beach at Glen Haven is a reminder of an early northern Michigan indus- try—not to mention writer John Steinbeck’s classic novel “Cannery Row,” which was set far from Michi- gan on the shores of California’s Monterey Bay. While Monterey has the world-class Monterey Bay Aquarium anchoring the famous location of Steinbeck’s story, Glen Haven has the legendary Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, which each year attracts visitors from all over the United States and abroad. Rather than processing sardines—a staple of the Monterey canneries—the local business canned cherries and other fruit, then shipped it from the Glen Haven dock. Ah, sweet history.

The eastern box turtle: A herald of springtime

As we get into warmer weather, we will be outdoors—hiking, hunting turkey, collecting mush- rooms, fishing and just enjoying the spring ephemeral wildflowers.

Traveling in the woods, we often come across turtles, espe- cially the eastern box turtle. This is our only true terrestrial turtle.

Before we talk about this very special reptile, we should remind ourselves that Michigan law pro- tects all turtles—even snapping turtles—from commercial har- vest, and the wood, spotted, eastern box and Blanding’s turtles are completely protected.

It is very tempting to pick up these slow turtles and try to make pets of them. This doesn’t work out well in most cases.

Generally found only in the Lower Peninsula, they are un- common to rare in most areas. This is due to habitat loss and re- moving them from the environ- ment. The main habitat is open woodland, adjacent fields, swamps and thickets near streams. As with most turtles, they are quite slow and populations have been dramatically hurt by road traffic.

Since their home ranges usually don’t exceed five acres, it is not a good idea to remove them. If they are taken temporarily, please put them back in the same area where they are found.

The box turtle can live to be nearly a century old in the wild— much less in captivity, even under good conditions.

Since the population has been decimated, the home range is so small, mating may occur from spring through fall as a male is lo- cated. The females remain fertile for a few years after mating and lays three to eight soft-shelled eggs in the ground during early summer. The eggs take 75 to 90 days to hatch. Some believe, as with snapping turtles, that if hatched extremely late in the sea- son the young will remain below ground until the next spring.

The eastern box turtle is found in a group of “hinge” shell tur- tles. The upper shell—called the carapace—is dark, with a pattern of orange and yellow. The lower shell—called the plastron—is colored yellow and has a flexible hinge which allows the shell to close totally at the front. This is needed to allow the head, tail and legs to be pulled under the shell when confronted by a predator. Their coloration mimics the dry leaf litter of the forest floor. Male box turtles may have blue patches on the chest, throat and legs. The plastron of the male is somewhat concave to aid in mating. Males often have red eyes.

The turtle’s shell is vital to its survival. The shell of the box tur- tle grows scale-like features called scutes that continue to grow dur- ing the life of the turtle and has growth rings. Some say that you can tell the age of the box turtle by counting the rings, as in a tree, but we have had problems doing that at the nature center. Most often when counting the rings—if the turtle is of any size—we almost always end up with 16, so we be- lieve by experience that this tech- nique is not at all reliable.

Eastern box turtles are omni- vores and feed on all types of plant and animal material. Some maintain that the younger turtles are more carnivorous, because they have been feeding primarily on straw- berries and later blackberries. Since these turtles eat anything, they often consume po- isonous mushrooms, which makes them poisonous to eat. This caused American Indians some problems, as they were an easy meal to catch. Whatever you do, please leave this rare turtle in the wild.

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Cattle litter, a “mountain man,” various outlaws & joining in a rap music video

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Fish egg collection completed

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has completed its annual egg-take efforts, despite extreme weather conditions this spring.

Each year the DNR collects and fertilizes eggs from various fish species, including wild walleye in the Muskegon River and wild steelhead migrating to the Little Manistee River. These fertilized eggs are reared in hatcheries and rearing ponds throughout the state and eventually stocked to create and enhance fisheries in Michigan’s waters.

Of all the walleye stocked in Michigan, 100 percent comes from the Muskegon River’s egg-take efforts. Of the steelhead stocked in Michigan, 80 percent comes from the egg-take efforts at the Little Manistee River weir. The goal for 2014 was to collect enough eggs during these efforts to stock 16 million walleye and 2,000 mature steelhead during these efforts to stock 16 million walleye and 2,000 mature steelhead.

“Each year the DNR has worked to collect walleye and steelhead eggs in order to optimize survival and growth in our hatcheries and rearing ponds,” said DNR Lake Michigan basin coordinator Todd Kalish. “In a typical year, these egg-take efforts occur over the course of a week to collect and process about 600 mature walleye and 2,000 mature steelhead.”

This was not a typical year, however, given the near record water flows and flooding that has occurred in many Michigan rivers. On the Muskegon River, access sites and bridges were closed, while the Little Manistee River weir facility was threatened due to extreme erosion caused by the high water levels. As a result of these extreme conditions, Fisheries Division staff implemented emergency protocols and mobilized diverse staff resources to work unconditional hours and days to assure egg-take quotas were met.

The DNR worked all day and most of the night on April 21 to meet the entire steelhead egg-take quota for 2014, and worked Easter weekend in high-water conditions to meet the Muskegon River walleye egg-take quota.