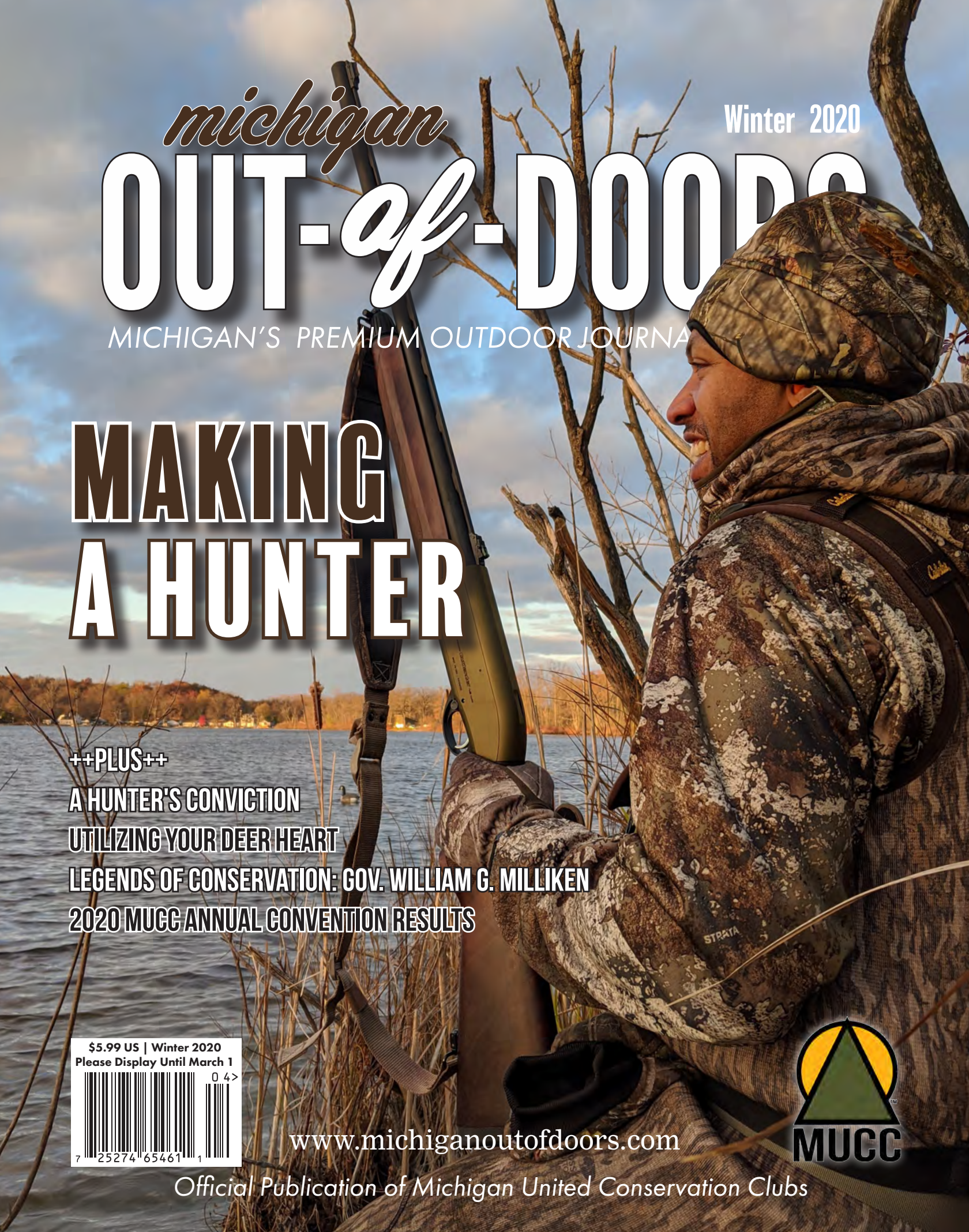
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Each Michigan Out-of-Doors magazine features one or two cartoons drawn by Michigan's-own Jonny Hawkins. I hope they make you laugh as much as they did us.

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BASECAMP

Nick Green, Editor

WELCOME TO MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS

MICHIGAN'S PREMIUM OUTDOOR JOURNAL

As of this writing on Nov. 4, the 2020 presidential election is still up in the air. While it looks like we will have a new administration, nothing is certain at this point.

Regardless of who wins or loses, who throws a tantrum or who weaponizes the voices of the American people, we are in this together.

As my friend, mentor and boss Amy Trotter always says, "We are all in the same boat. And we need to keep rowing together."

This couldn't be more true for conservation, our outdoor heritage and our way of life. Throughout the last three months and even the last couple years, I have seen politics tear apart friendships, families and lifelong hunting buddies.

While I personally don't care to make my distinct political views known on social media, mainly because it serves zero civil purpose and seems a bit narcissistic, I do respect those who want their voices heard.

And by heard I do not mean proclaiming your love or hate for a candidate via Facebook. I mean showing up to public meetings, in the voting booth, at legislative hearings and at compartment reviews.

Each of you has the right and privilege to participate in the processes that define our outdoor pursuits.

Since COVID-19 shattered the procedures by which natural resources policies are set, we have adapted on the fly. Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meetings are being held remotely and legislative hearings are few and far between. The silver lining is that a new, more accessible way for folks to comment and tune in right from the comfort of their own home has become available.

And do you know who has been tuning in and commenting at recent NRC meetings besides a select few stakeholders like MUCC and QDMA? The Humane Society of the United States, Attorneys for Animals and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals sympathizers for the most part. Hunters, anglers, trappers and recreationists have been almost completely absent at these meetings.

Next time you wonder when sandhill cranes will be listed as a game species (and for good reason — both the feds and our DNR has, at one time or another, said we have a huntable population) take a look at who the commissioners are hearing from.

A recent, federal wolf delisting occurred in late October. However, before we can manage them as a state and barring any further lawsuits, the NRC has to determine the scope and scale of management efforts. How do you think they will vote when all they have seen for months at their meetings are animal rights activists?

Two seats will open at the end of this year for the NRC. Who will the governor appoint — stakeholders who show up or those who have become so content with the status quo they don't even pay attention to the body that governs their livelihood, hobbies and way of life?

You have to show up. We have to show up. Hunters, anglers, trappers and recreationists have to show up.

As someone who communicates on natural resources issues through all levels of government and to many different policymakers, I can assure you that the conservation voice is muffled. It's muffled by partisan nonsense, petty diatribes and absent seats. We are shooting ourselves in the foot.

Conservation is not red or blue — it is camouflage. Your voice matters, and those who will decide the fate of your pursuits want to hear it. Show up and become an active part of conservation before it is too late.

Yours in Conservation,

"Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

MOMENTS *of* MEMORY

The bedrock of conservation is taking care of our natural resources so that they can be passed down to future generations. The natural resources that we conserve today were conserved for us by generations of conservationists preceding us, and these generations are ever-changing and ever-flowing. Here we honor the passing of one generation of conservationists to the next.

In memory of

George Zajac

from

Ronald & Cindy Bewersdorff

In memory of

Tom Olkowski

from

John & Deborah Sommerville, Boy Scout Troop #173 and Rosemary Hess

Donald Sherman

from

Patti Alderson

Norma Hayes-Walkley

from

Jack & Judy Vanrhee, Amy Trotter and Tom & Dodie Zolman

David Sherman

from

Tom & Lora Van Giesen, Kim McLott and Bert & Ruth Van Giesen

Paul Farrell

from

Amy Trotter and Kris & Jody Matthew

Mike Lewis

from

Brad & Kristyn Quick

Henry Shelton

from

Kroger Frito Lay Finance Team

Richard C. Stimac

from

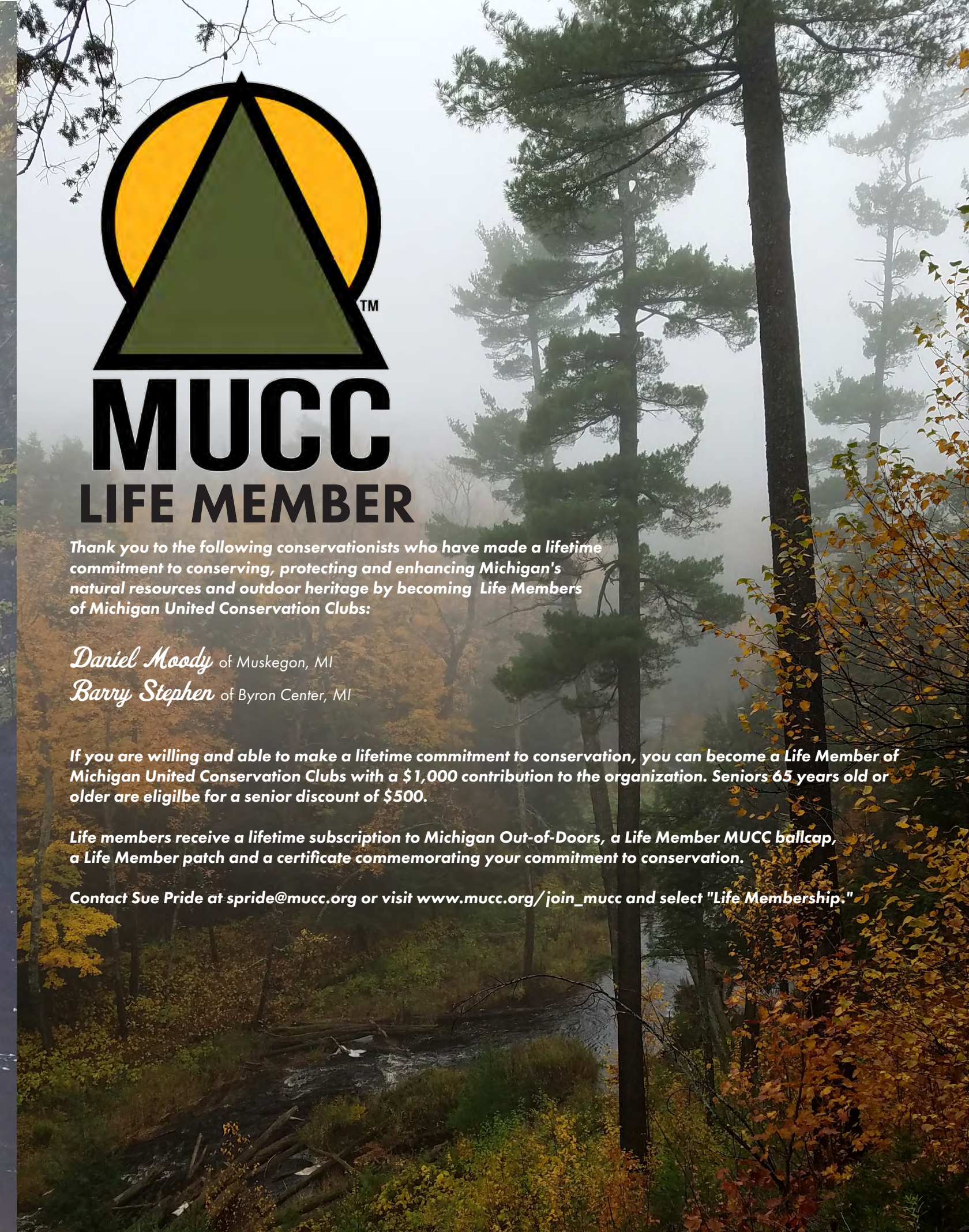
John Covart

Doug Schlappi

from

Harbor Springs Outdoors Club

If you have recently lost someone you would like to honor here, please contact Sue Pride at spride@mucc.org.



MUCC LIFE MEMBER

Thank you to the following conservationists who have made a lifetime commitment to conserving, protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage by becoming Life Members of Michigan United Conservation Clubs:

Daniel Moody of Muskegon, MI
Barry Stephen of Byron Center, MI

If you are willing and able to make a lifetime commitment to conservation, you can become a Life Member of Michigan United Conservation Clubs with a $1,000 contribution to the organization. Seniors 65 years old or older are eligilbe for a senior discount of $500.

Life members receive a lifetime subscription to Michigan Out-of-Doors, a Life Member MUCC ballcap, a Life Member patch and a certificate commemorating your commitment to conservation.

Contact Sue Pride at spride@mucc.org or visit www.mucc.org/join_mucc and select "Life Membership."

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Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 1937 by sportsmen's clubs from around Michigan to protect conservation from politics. Representing more than 40,000 members and supporters and approximately 200 affiliated conservation clubs, MUCC is the largest statewide conservation organization in the nation. MUCC members determine the organization's conservation policies through a robust grassroots process, which MUCC staff works to implement by working with elected officials, state and federal agencies, its members and the public. MUCC has published Michigan Out-of-Doors since 1947 and operates the Michigan Out-of-Doors Youth Camp in Chelsea, MI. Learn more about the full range of programs MUCC uses to advance conservation in Michigan and become a member at www.mucc.org.

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Dangerous Dinner Talk: Religion, Politics and Deer Management

Director's Desk

Amy Trotter, *MUCC Executive Director*

With election season behind us (hopefully), it is now time to focus on an annual tradition many of us know and love: firearm deer season. Hopefully by the time this issue reaches your mailbox, you will have already bagged your target buck or filled the freezer with a doe.

Much like our recent elections cycle or the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, deer management can be just as, if not more, divisive. People on all sides of any given issue are likely entrenched in their beliefs on what is best –whether it is for our country or Michigan's deer herd. Of all the issues MUCC engages in, deer management carries the most passion and emotion of all of them.

Do you think that deer management is polite dinner conversation anymore?

MUCC members have had heated conversations on everything under the sun as it relates to deer management: crossbows, baiting, antler point restrictions, special landowner permits, disease management, captive deer operations, doe harvest and even birth control, sterilization and culling.

We have managed to fend off the Humane Society of the United State's push for sterilization of deer for the time being (through legislation in 2018 that sunsets in 2022), but they have continued their drumbeat at the NRC each month to ask for equal consideration to their perspectives. All the while deer hunters continue to throw barbs across the internet at one another for their methods, their harvest and even their opinions.

I believe that there is no "right" one-sized fits all answer to deer management for Michigan –it is individualized based on personal goals and experience level, location, deer population and available habitat. How can regulations adequately address these various factors? And even furthermore, how can we rise above our disagreements and remember that we hunters are still in the same boat in a sea of non-hunters, while anti-hunting organizations sense blood in the water.

As many of you might be gathering around the dinner table for the holidays this winter, we hope that you take this chance to reconnect with your loved ones and share your stories and your bounty from the fall. If this pandemic has taught us anything, it's how important the outdoors are to our physical and mental wellbeing.

In closing, I also want to say thank you to Michigan residents far and wide for the overwhelming support of Proposal 1 in November to improve and continue on the legacy of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. This proposal achieved the highest level of support ever for a conservation issue on the ballot in Michigan or anywhere else in the nation, passing

The Trotter family: Amy, Marc, May (8) and Clara (3). Photo Credit: Two Ring Photography

with 80 percent or more in nearly every county across Michigan. This is proof that there is more that binds us through conservation than divides us, because when the hippies, hikers and hunters can come together on an issue, that is when we are unstoppable. It is my sincere hope that we can raise the level of civil discourse, even when we disagree, whether in our outdoor community, our state, and our nation in 2021 and beyond. We all want a better tomorrow.

Yours in Conservation,

Amy Trotter

ON PATROL

In each issue of Michigan Out-of-Doors, we highlight some of the recent cases our brave Michigan Department of Natural Resources conservation officers handle. You don't want to find yourself on this list.

August 23 to September 5, 2020

Really?

Conservation Officers (COs) Brian Lasanen and Zach Painter were on patrol in Ontonagon County and investigated gun shots that they heard.

The COs drove by a residence in the area of where they had heard the shots and noticed a large fire with no one around. The COs pulled into the driveway and could smell what seemed to be burning rubber.

The COs made contact with an individual who advised they were burning an old trailer. When asked about the gun shots, the subject stated that they had been shooting at the burning trailer.

The COs took a closer look at the fire and could see parts of the trailer still burning including plastic, insulation, and several tires. The subject was told to put the fire out and was cited for unlawful disposal of solid waste.

A Yoop Pursuit

CO Cody Smith was on patrol in Baraga County when an ORV came around a corner at such a high rate of speed that it caused the machine to drift.

CO Smith activated his emergency lights as the ORV approached. The ORV maintained its speed as it passed CO Smith.

It was noticed that the ORV was missing a trail permit as CO Smith spun around to stop the vehicle. As CO Smith caught up to the ORV, it turned into a dense section of woods that at one time was a logging trail.

CO Smith activated his siren in a last attempt to stop the vehicle. The ORV sped over a berm and blazed a trail through thick vegetation, small trees, stumps, and dirt piles. The ORV then went down a steep hill into a ravine where it blew the front window off the machine along with the left front tire.

As CO Smith caught up on foot, the occupant fled the vehicle with their backpack. CO Smith yelled several times at the individual as they attempted to scale the hillside.

After falling multiple times, the individual gave up. The individual was taken into custody without further incident.

A search of the subject's backpack revealed methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia. The individual was lodged and faces charges including possession of methamphetamine, fleeing and eluding, operating an ORV on a suspended license, no ORV sticker, operating an ORV in a closed area, operationg an ORV causing erosive conditions and damage to trees.

Know Your River and Your Float Times

Near the end of their shift, COs Mark Zitnik and Andrea Dani were dispatched to Osier Road in Delta County to assist 11 canoers who were reported overdue on the river.

The Boy Scout group planned to traverse the East Branch of the Whitefish River from Trout Lake in Alger County to the Osier Road Bridge in Delta County. The trip began at 8 a.m. that morning, but responders knew most people require two days to complete the trip.

The canoers were reported overdue by the person who was supposed to pick them up who had not heard from them in some time. The two COs assisted the US Forest Service, Delta County Sheriff's Department and Delta County Search and Rescue.

The COs agreed to go upriver on foot with two Delta County Search and Rescue crew members

and located two 12-year-old boys that had separated from the group.

The boys were soaked from repeated flips of their kayaks and very cold due to the now 46-degree air. The responding group provided the boys with food, clothing, and even CO Zitnik's boots to wear out of the swamp, as one of the boys had lost his shoes in the river. The boys were excited to see the responders and confided that they believed they were going to die.

Neither of the boys had major injuries and were treated with warmth from a search and rescue trailer. The rest of the group members were located around the same time and transported out by the Search and Rescue team on ORVs. None of the canoers were injured during the event.

Fish Legal, Disclose Your CPL

CO Patrick McManus received a Text-to-RAP complaint about several individuals fishing in the closed section of the lower weir on the Platte River in Benzie County.

When CO McManus arrived on scene, he observed two individuals fishing about 100 feet away from the weir, well within the mandated 300-foot rule outlined in the law.

CO McManus contacted the anglers. After speaking with them for several minutes and asking for their fishing licenses, one of the anglers disclosed that they had a concealed pistol license (CPL) and was currently carrying a handgun.

Michigan law requires anyone that is carrying a concealed weapon under the CPL law to immediately disclose of that weapon and permit to a peace officer before anything else.

CO McManus issued both anglers a citation for fishing within 300 feet of the weir and a second citation was issued to the subject with the CPL permit for failing to immediately disclose the concealed pistol.

Lucky

CO Adam Beuthin was checking anglers on the Tittabawassee River in Saginaw County when he observed an individual fishing with a child. When the CO asked the man for his fishing license, he told him it was in his vehicle on the other side of the parking lot.

The CO took his name and date of birth and told the man to keep fishing while he checked the other anglers. When the CO ran the individual for a fishing license, he came back with no record. The CO asked again for the individual's name and date of birth, the man gave a different spelling of the last name and told the CO he had just moved to Arkansas.

The CO noticed the man was beginning to act extremely nervous and when the individual came back again with no record, the CO detained him by placing him in handcuffs. After asking more questions and hearing stories of being from Wyoming, the man gave his actual name.

He had warrants out of Grand Traverse County. Grand Traverse County Sheriff's Department directed the CO to advise and release the subject. The man was issued a citation for fishing without a license and advised to be honest in the future with law enforcement.

No Toxic Shot Waterfolwing

While checking waterfowl hunters at Pointe Mouillee, CO David Schaumburger found a full box of toxic lead shot. The hunter stated he did not know he could not possess it even though he was not using it.

While also checking his licenses, the hunter stated that he was active duty military and the CO asked him some follow-up questions. The hunter did not have convincing answers, so he decided to have Sgt. Chris Maher chat with the hunter.

Before Sgt. Maher was able to make contact, the hunter came up to the CO and told him that he was not actually active duty and had not been active duty since 2014; instead, he was a reservist in the National Guard. A citation was issued for possessing toxic shot.

Youch!

While patrolling near The Strand, CO Ariel Young and Sgt. Shane Webster observed a female with her pants down and looking to be in distress.

The COs stopped and asked if everything was okay and the individuals with the female stated no and that they were waiting for EMS to show up.

The COs were then informed and saw that the female had been doubly hooked by a fishing lure that had two treble hooks on it, one treble hook in the back of her leg and the other connected to the ring finger on her hand.

EMS showed up a couple of minutes later and the COs helped to get the female to a nearby table to lay her down and attempt to cut the hooks off the lure to help make her more comfortable. The female was in a lot of pain and decided that removing the hooks would need to be done with pain medications at an urgent care or hospital.

After disconnecting the hook in her hand from the lure, the COs assisted EMS in securing the hooks so that they would not further embed themselves and helped her get into her vehicle.

These reports are randomly pulled from the DNR Law Enforcement Division's bi-weekly reports.

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WILS	LANSING	1320 AM
WLDN	LUDINGTON	98.7 FM
WMLQ	MANISTEE	97.7 FM
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WPHM	PORT HURON	1380 AM
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MUCC's award-winning On the Ground (OTG) program has been hosting volunteer wildlife habitat improvement events across Michigan since 2013. Volunteers participate in a variety of wildlife habitat projects on public land and are provided an opportunity to engage in hands-on conservation while learning about wildlife habitat needs.

More than 3,000 volunteers have improved fish and game habitat through weekend projects that involve building brush piles for small game, removing invasive trees, restoring grassland habitat through native flower and grass plantings, hinge-cutting trees for deer and snowshoe hare, installing wood duck boxes, regenerating aspen stands, performing river clean-ups and planting a variety of trees for wildlife food and cover.

After an eventful October with three projects in Fulton, Petersburg and Kalkaska following the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, the OTG program is happy to announce it has returned to the field. We will be building a full schedule of events for the coming 2021 field season across the state and hope to volunteer with you at one of our events. Please monitor MUCC and OTG social media for updates about the program and upcoming wildlife habitat improvement events.

For more event details and to register for upcoming events, please visit www.mucc.org/on-the-ground or contact Habitat Volunteer Coordinator Makhayla LaButte at mlabutte@mucc.org or 517-346-6456.

New Film by National Wildlife Federation Explores National Impacts of Asian Carp

By Drew YoungeDyke
Manager of Sporting Communications

A new film released by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Great Lakes Regional Center explores the national scope of the problems caused by invasive Asian carp, including the values and economies they threaten in the Great Lakes and the impacts they're currently having in Southern and Midwestern waters — and what's needed to stop them.

'Against the Current' features a diverse set of viewpoints representing scientific, tribal, business, tourism, fishing, outdoor recreation and conservation communities from northern Michigan to Tennessee. It also features footage and discussion of the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, where a proposed Army Corps of Engineers project could keep silver and bighead carp out of Lake Michigan. The film comes as legislation to authorize the Brandon Road Lock and Dam project is pending in Congress as part of the Water Resources Development Act. We're also waiting on Illinois to sign an agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers to begin the preconstruction engineering and design phase of the project following Michigan's approval of $8 million in funding toward Illinois' approximately $10-million cost-share of this phase of the project.

In the film, NWF deliberately explores the often underpublicized — but extremely important — values at risk from invasive Asian carp across a wide swath of the country. We often hear of potential impacts to the Great Lakes sport fishery, but NWF also wants to show the threat to connected inland waters, tribal fisheries and the outdoor recreation and tourism economies. To that end, we featured Tom Werkman of Werkman Outfitters, who guides on the Grand River, discussing how Asian carp would impact his business. We also featured Ella Sckrocki of Sleeping Bear Surf and Kayak and Chad Munger of Mammoth Distilling to highlight the impact Asian carp would have on outdoor recreation and tourism, especially in Lake Michigan coastal communities. Doug Craven, natural resources director of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, also discussed the impact they would have on their commercial and subsistence fisheries.

We also hear speculation that maybe Asian carp wouldn't be able to survive in the Great Lakes, but recent scientific studies have shown that they'll have plenty of food to survive and spread in. Ali Shakoor is a scientist, tournament walleye angler, and a USGS licensed charter captain who has worked on some of those studies. In 'Against the Current,' he discusses the parameters Asian carp need to survive, how they affect native and sport fisheries and some of the places where they're predicted to have the largest impact if they invade the Great Lakes, like

Saginaw Bay and Green Bay.

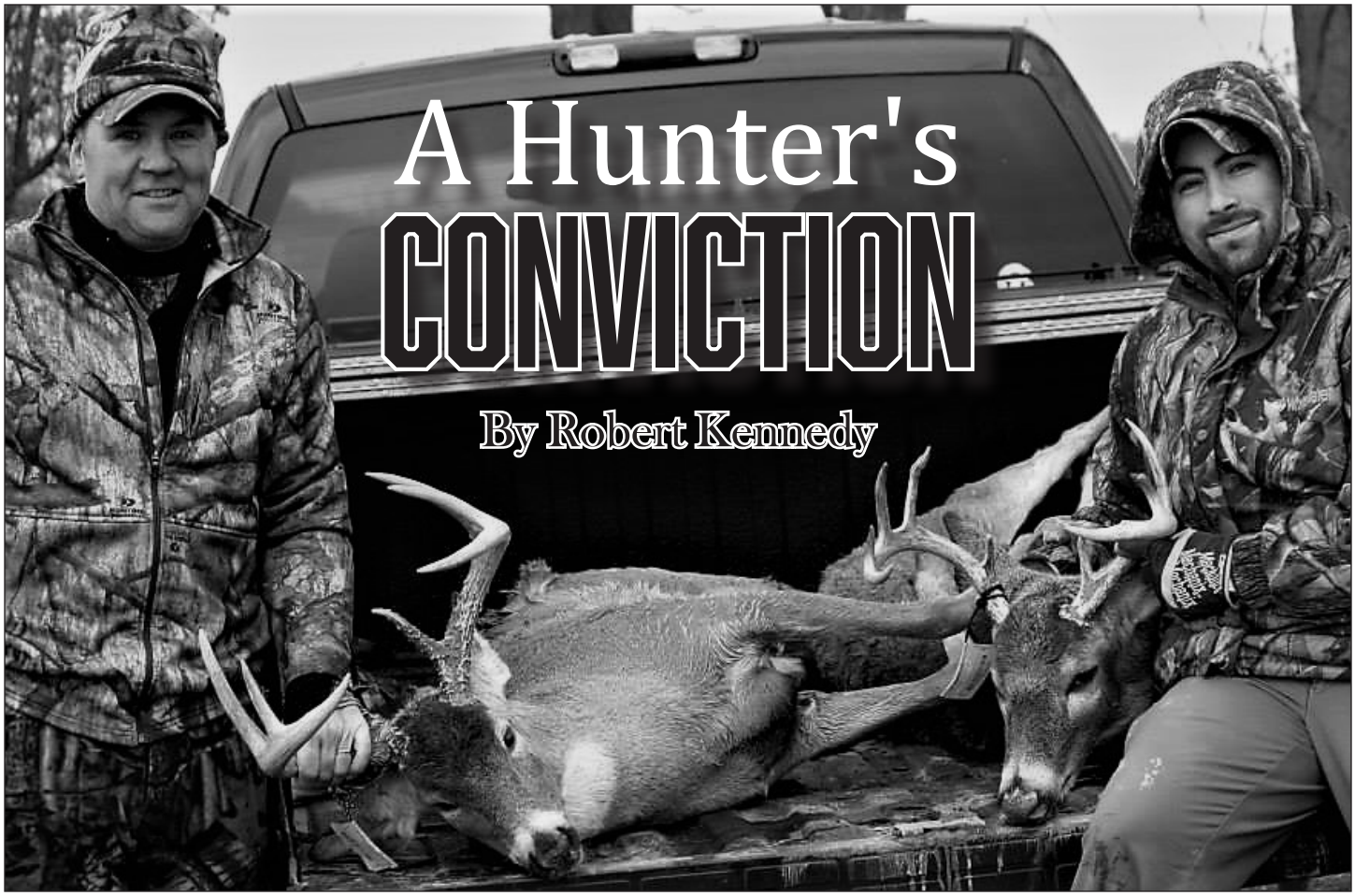
We hear frustration that nothing is being done about Asian carp because of how long it is taking to add additional defenses in the Chicago Area Waterway System, but progress has been made in keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes. The film highlighted Eagle Marsh Berm, where Emily Wood, executive director of the Indiana Wildlife Federation, explained how it prevents bighead and silver carp from moving from the Wabash River into the Lake Erie watershed during flood events. Robert Hirschfeld, water policy specialist with the Prairie Rivers Network — the National Wildlife Federation's Illinois affiliate — described how they're using some commercial fishing to try to control Asian carp populations in the Illinois River, but how serious barriers like the Brandon Road Lock and Dam are needed to prevent them from invading the Great Lakes.

Asian carp are already having an impact in places that we don't often hear about, like inland rivers in Indiana, and in ways we don't often hear about, like property values and even duck hunting in Tennessee. We tagged along with Dave Hosler of Pile Cast Fly Fishing and Don Cranfill of Driftwood Outdoors to experience fishing in the Tippecanoe River and Wabash River, which are both infested with Asian carp. We found fish disturbed both by the motor on Hosler's drift boat and even Don Cranfill's paddle — one even jumped in the boat with me. We also fished with my colleague Bill Cooksey of Vanishing Paradise and Mike Butler, CEO of the Tennessee Wildlife Federation, on Kentucky Lake and its connected Camden Bottoms Wildlife Management Area. As we were ducking and dodging the silver carp leaping all around us, it certainly confirmed why we want to do everything we can to keep them out of the Great Lakes and Michigan's inland waters.

Finally, Marc Smith, Great Lakes policy director for the National Wildlife Federation, explains why Asian carp aren't just a Great Lakes fishing issue: they're a national issue affecting our waters, our economies and our way of life. Our strategy of nationalizing the Asian carp issue is to secure the approval and funding to block Asian carp from invading the Great Lakes through projects like Brandon Road and to secure the funding to remove them from Southern and Midwestern waters while preventing them from invading new waters in those regions.

'Against the Current' can be viewed free of charge on the National Wildlife Federation's YouTube channel, on the National Wildlife Federation Outdoors Vimeo channel and on the National Wildlife Federation Great Lakes Regional Center's Facebook Page.

The feature was filmed, produced and edited by Jordan Browne of Michigan Out-of-Doors TV and supported by a grant from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust and donations from Rep Your Water and Favorite Fishing. Shorter segments of it recently premiered on Detroit Public TV's Great Lakes Now program and Michigan Out of Doors TV.



A Hunter's CONVICTION

By Robert Kennedy

There is a journey many people take during their evolution as hunters, outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen. Much of that journey encompasses learned knowledge only gained by experiences and time spent afield. We can find shared adventures with others during that time, and when we look even deeper into our journeys, we can find moments of spiritual awakening and realized responsibility. Everyone's story has differentiations, depictions and varying convictions. With that, a hunter's transformation is a never-ending tale that continually manifests itself each time we step foot away from civilization into a wilderness free of things only humanity is hindered by.

The progression we experience can be subtle and regularly overlooked, but often there are moments in our hunting history that will change our outlook for seasons to come. These moments in our progression can be memories of our best hunting experiences and even our worst hunting experiences. They can be the moment of taking game, creating friendships based around hunting, processing our own wild meats and even moments of the lives lost at our hands. Many things in a hunter's journey become intertwined with our core being and personal surroundings. These timestamps in our personal history, if recognized, can become convictions of responsibility during our journey as hunters.

"The progression we experience can be subtle and regularly overlooked, but often there are moments in our hunting history that will change our outlook for seasons to come."

As most do when their hunting mentor is their father, I began my journey at a young age. Memories of sitting in the damp autumn leaves while hunting squirrels and dozing off underneath towering red pines before sunrise to be abruptly startled awake at the sound of a thunderous gobble nearby are recollections that are surely not to pass anytime soon.

One of the fondest memories imprinted on my core is the journey that found me standing over my first deer. I was the young age of 12, which was the legal age to start archery hunting at the time, and anticipation for my first hunt had been boiling inside of me for years. I feverishly had been practicing with my recurve and self-fletched arrows prior to the archery season for months. The amount of archery practice that took place was not only out of

motivation, but my father had also laid a well-grounded standard of excellence before I could attempt to take an animal's life.

Upon the beginning of archery season, I found myself suited up in some fundamental, hand-me-down camo. There were no early opportunities for a successful hunt during our first few outings with my father at my side. A few long walks and hours of sitting in a fence row had led to only a few sparse sightings of deer and a close encounter with a skunk that was shuffling its way through the moonlit corn stubble on our way back to our vehicle. As an adolescent, my optimism was at an all-time high, and a couple of eventless evenings of hunting were not about to change that outlook of positivity.

The evening after the skunk encounter found us in the same makeshift brush pile tucked into the fencerow that was located on my great grandmother's farm. Perched on the ground with the sun slowly setting behind our backs, we watched a few doe forage in the harvested bean field that had come out of the timber off to our right. Not anticipating anything to come from our left, as it was barren other than the tailing fence row, I was struck by surprise when faint steps on the dried oak leaves caught my ear in that direction. Fully expecting to see a squirrel hoarding nuts away for winter, I found myself looking at a deer a mere 10 yards from us on a path that would lead it nearly within arm's reach.

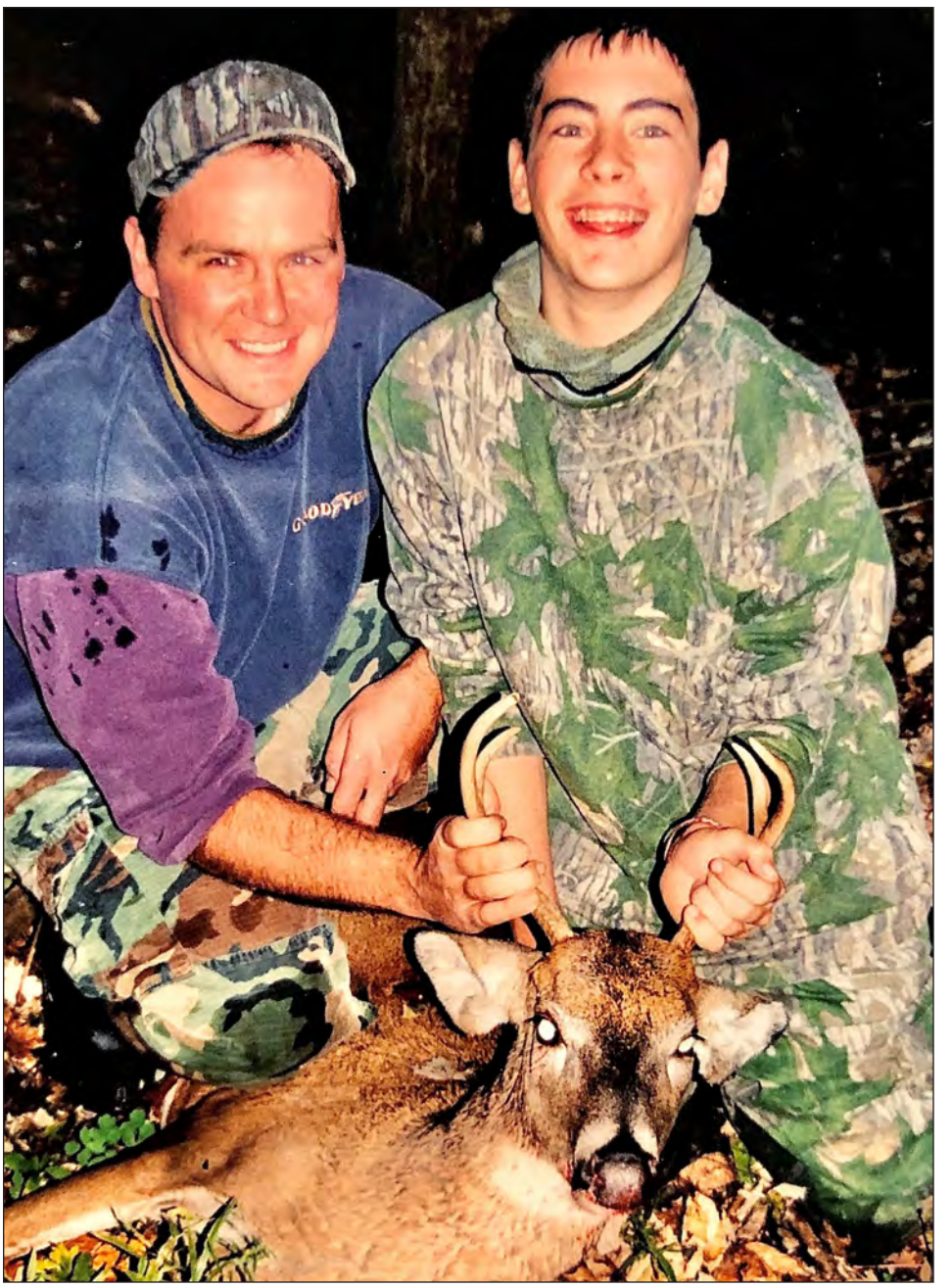
The deer did not veer from the path, and as it cleared the entangled pin oak limbs while lifting its head, the realization of it being a buck sent adrenaline coursing through my body. At the time, I did not recognize the squeeze on my thigh from my father trying to signal me to the ready, but my recurve bow had already been in a prepared position.

As if time had nearly stopped, the buck paused directly in front of us just six feet away. I drew my bow back and fired in one fluid motion, watched my arrow bury behind the shoulder and witnessed the deer fling its hind legs above my head from the impact of my arrow. It tore off towards the dark timber alerting the does to danger and to recede back to cover. With the adrenaline still pumping through my body, the commotion that ensued after the shot seemed so loud to my senses and then the silence that fell after the field cleared seemed as if a darkness had fallen over the area.

My father grabbed me and pulled me to him with a squeeze of admiration for the feat I had just accomplished. Shaking as he held me, the realization for what had just happened set in and I returned the embrace to my father. I was flooded with emotions of happiness, conflicting sadness, senses of accomplishment and excitement. Sharing that moment with my father was an amazing experience but not the only turning point that night.

The deer had most certainly

The author, right, poses with his father next to his first buck he took at 12 years old with a traditional, recurve bow. The harvest of that deer started a lifelong obsession with game and conservation for the author.



expired quickly, as tracking the blood trail was a simple task. Finding him at peace next to a swamp in the dark timber overwhelmed me with joy. It was not joy for his death but joy in my skills as an efficient hunter. Even then, as my father left me to grab the vehicle, I was alone in the dark with nothing but my thoughts and a trophy lying next to me. The time I spent alone with the deer in the darkness allowed me to reflect on the sadness and respect I held for the animal. At the beginning stages of my hunting journey, I had already started to comprehend the hunter's paradox complexities.

We care so much for the animals that we pursue, but we also hunt them. And, for the seasons following my first successful deer hunt, reflecting on that very thought has been one of the most important tools in my journey as a hunter.

It wasn't long after that historic day that my hunting morality manifestation started to blend with conservation efforts. With humanity holding the blessing and curse of the emotion of compassion, I had a great sense of responsibility towards the animals that I pursued. Not only did I want to be the most ethical hunter I could be, but I wanted to give more back to the wildlife than I ever took from it.

On the family property, we began with habitat improvement projects. Our efforts encompassed planting grasslands, pine trees and food plots and reshaping the timber stand. We started to learn and educate ourselves on herd dynamics, managing sex ratios, predator control and other native wildlife populations. We dove headfirst into a timeline of projects and education that became never-ending. In a sense, it became more rewarding than a successful hunt.

After years of shared focus between my father and I on our property projects, I began to broaden my devotion to giving back to the wildlife by helping neighboring properties and joining the local conservation club. Hunting for me had now progressed into not only helping the local wildlife by giving back to it more than I took, but it also formed new friendships while inspiring the desire for teaching others.

With much time passed since my first-deer core moment, a continual transformation due to hunting persists. Battling with moral and philosophical questions still linger, but reflecting on our history as outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen and the positive impacts we drive help quell any negatives that may weigh on our hearts surrounding hunting. Our storyline from its historical birth is tied to hunting, understanding

the wilderness we trek and making sure there is wildlife for generations to come. Picking apart our own hunting story can reveal convictions that we need to come to grips with and rectify where we can.

Propelled by experiences and respect for the animals that we pursue, each step into the wilderness elevates a deep passion for the wildlife and continues to evolve a hunter's significance in the animal kingdom. Different levels of compassion and responsibility are scattered throughout every hunter, and the actions we take on that sentiment, no matter the magnitude, can positively impact our hunting journey for years to come.

Our storyline only ends on the last breath we take, whereas the land we have dominion over will continue to evolve. Today's convictions and the actions we take will dictate the future of the game we pursue and the wild places we wander through.

Utilizing Your Deer Heart

By Blake Sherburne

"I really liked the idea of utilizing the heart instead of leaving it in the woods like I always had in the past, so I started to do a little research."

I grew up consuming wild game. Dad took me to follow along bird hunting as soon as I could navigate the woods. I was in the deer blind with him as soon as I knew how to keep quiet. I do not even remember catching my first fish. I grew up consuming wild game, but we did not live on it.

We ate plenty of fish, but Christmas tree harvest season does not lend itself to much time in the deer blind or tree stand. Anyone who knows upland bird hunting knows that it is not, at least in Northern Michigan, a hobby that fills the freezer. Grouse and woodcock were a treat more than a staple.

My mom is unparalleled in the kitchen, so it was always wonderful when we did have game for dinner. But for the most part, it was always so common that I just considered it food. It did not come to possess the importance it has now until I was out on my own and providing and preparing it for myself.

I was a junior at Central Michigan University the first time I cooked venison for myself. I was home to work every weekend during harvest season. I got a chance to sneak out to a deer blind and was successful. That winter, I took my venison back down to my apartment.

That first night I dug out the money cut. At home, backstraps and tenderloins were reserved for special occasions. They were only for sharing. At college, it seemed every night was a special occasion, so tenderloin was apropos. Lacking foresight and patience, two qualities I am yet to master, I tossed that little bit of goodness in the microwave and set it to defrost as I had not gotten it out in enough time to let it thaw on its own. A few minutes later, it was warm and in my hand. It went into the skillet with a little butter and oil and salt and pepper. It came out as tough as shoe leather. That spectacular failure led to a call to my mother regarding cooking that would turn out to be the first in a series of, well, that is yet to be determined. That first solution was easy, "Don't thaw your meat in the microwave, Blakey," but she has since proven uncanny in sussing out my countless mistakes over the phone. Most recently, she helped solve the mystery of the cake that would not rise. I realized that I had been reading her 'T' for tablespoon as a 't' for teaspoon on attempt number three. She laughed at me and explained what I already knew, "Blakey, those uppercase and lowercase Ts have different meanings." My lack of patience had struck again.

My cooking education continued after I graduated from college and lived on my own. I lived with a very good friend who is also a hunter and a fisherman, so wild game meals became almost a daily occurrence. Then I dated and married my wife, who is not much of a fan of cooking, but she loves venison, fish and upland game, so I continued to prepare those meals.

As I learned more and more about cooking, I started to get intrigued with other less-utilized parts. My mom never prepared organs, wild game or otherwise, so I had no experience with them. Dad and I used to keep our deer livers for an older country neighbor who loved them, but that was pretty much the extent of my knowledge.

I started my experimentation by keeping the hearts out of my next couple of whitetails. The first I pan-fried for myself. The flavor was fine, but the texture and bite were different. The second I prepared the same way, but this time for my wife and myself. She was less than impressed with the results. The flavor was fine, she said, but the bite turned her off a

Careful preparation of the heart before the pickling process must be done in order to yield a tasty finished product.

little.

I really liked the idea of utilizing the heart instead of leaving it in the woods like I always had in the past, so I started to do a little research. I have always liked pickled finger foods like cucumbers, of course, eggs and the midwestern favorite, bologna, so when I ran across pickled venison heart, I knew that it would at least be worth a try.

I found a recipe that looked good; admittedly, I was not experienced with pickling then. The recipe is as follows:

Ingredients:

1 venison heart
2 small onions
2 quarts of vinegar (I prefer apple cider vinegar)
1 cup of sugar (I prefer brown)
2 tablespoons of salt (I like seasoned salt)
1 tablespoon of pickling spices
1 head of garlic, finely diced
hot pepper flakes to taste
1/2 cup of water

Directions:

This recipe makes more pickling juice than you need for one heart. Maybe even four. You can store the extra in the fridge for when you get more deer later in the season, or if you have a big jar, you can keep adding heart to it when you get another deer

Take the heart and trim off the fat cap and any vessels that didn't get trimmed during field dressing. Place it in a pot, and fill the pot with water till the heart is just covered. Simmer on the stovetop for 45 minutes — avoid a rolling boil

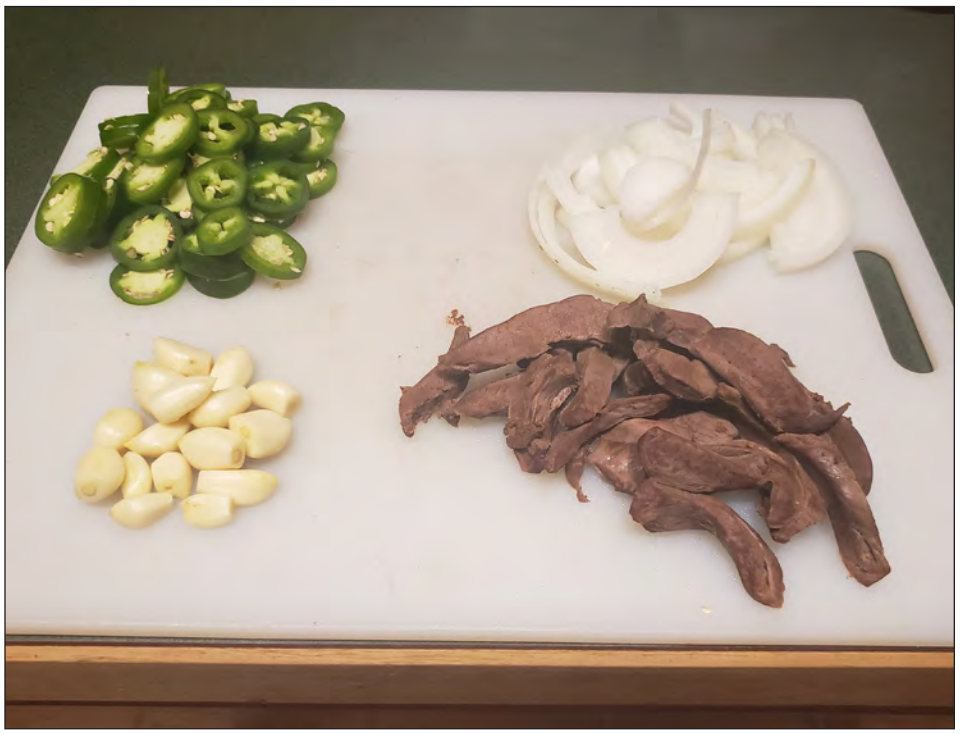
While the heart is cooking, place all the other ingredients in a pot and bring to a boil, stir and remove from heat. This gets all the salt and sugar to dissolve, as well as getting the other flavors to meld.
Take the heart and rinse it under cold water. Or let it cool on a plate. This is more so you can handle it: slicing up a hot heart is not fun on your heart-holding hand.
Slice the heart into quarter-inch slices. Be sure to trim out the little artery branches because they can be chewy

Put the sliced heart in an appropriately sized jar, and cover with the pickling fluid. If you have a lot of extra fluid that you don't use, just make sure you get a decent amount of the garlic and spices into the jar

Let it sit in the fridge for a week.

As I look back on this recipe, I realize that I immediately started modifying it. I quickly omitted the sugar as the apple cider vinegar is sweet enough on its own, and I think we can all agree that what we do not need is more sugar in our lives. I clean and slice the heart before simmering it. This gets the coagulated blood out of the chambers and all of the connective tissue and valves out of the heart while it is raw and easy to slice. I disassemble the heart and trim it and finish by cutting it into slices that will fit on a cracker and a slice of good cheese. I also add sliced jalapenos, which add a little zing to the meat even if one does not want to include them in each bite.

The sliced venison goes into a saucepan along with a healthy dose of seasoned salt. I cover the meat with water and bring the water to a boil. A few rounds of this kind of preparation taught me to pay close attention to my pot. The blood that is left in the tissue forms fairly unattractive flotsam on the surface, and if you let that blood, now gray and ugly, boil over onto your stovetop, you might end up with an unhappy significant other. It is a mess to clean up, and the smell of burnt boiled blood is not something you want hanging around in your home. I learned that if I removed the pan from the heat just as the water started to boil and the blood began to foam towards the top of



the saucepan and let the whole mess cool down, the meat would be cooked perfectly and, once cool, ready to go directly into the jar.

I slice up a few jalapenos, an onion or two, pick apart and peel a head of garlic, which is a chore I have come to hate. These all go in the jar raw in between layers of the cooked heart. On the stovetop, I combine the apple cider vinegar, water, pickling spices and a little more seasoned salt. I picked up a tip from my uncle: The pickling spices go inside a bit of cheesecloth, tied off with a length of twine or a zip tie. This way, you do not have to pick little black peppercorns and miniature pieces of bay leaf off of your meat when you go to eat it.

I refrigerated the pickled heart for a week before I took it out for our Monday night gathering. The introduction to my friends was a resounding success; in fact, I have not introduced anyone to it who did not like it. A cracker, a piece of good cheese, a slice of pickled heart, topped with a pickled jalapeno or two and a slice of pickled onion turned out to be great football-watching finger food. Arguably, the onion and jalapenos that come out of the jar are the best part, and the pickled garlic is not half bad either.

Occasionally, I will get a message from one of those friends that reads, "Left a heart in your garage fridge for you." I am proud that my efforts to squeeze another meal out of a successful hunt has led my friends to tote their deer hearts out of the woods. One of them even took a moose hunting trip to Newfoundland. He was the only hunter in his group to harvest an animal, but another group in camp at the same time killed two, and he brought all three moose hearts back to Mesick, Michigan to be pickled and enjoyed. Three gigantic moose hearts were eaten and appreciated that might have been left in the Canadian north woods to rot or be scavenged. It is enough to inspire me to keep experimenting. Liver is next. And whitetail tongue tacos are on the menu for this year, too.

The pickled heart, along with the other fixings in the pickle jar, are best served over a cracker as finger-food.

Photos by Nick Green

Patience & Perseverance: The Journey

By Ian FitzGerald

Twenty minutes 'til shooting light. I've been there before. We see a few ducks, maybe a flock if I'm lucky. Heck, maybe I get a shot off if the timing is right. But they don't drop. They never do.

Perhaps it's just a concoction of my poor luck and subpar shooting skills. But that can't be it? I shot a 36 out of 50 at the Michigan Out-of-Doors Youth Camp Charity Shoot — apparently a staff record. As the sun began to light up the marsh, something felt different. With my two-coworkers, mentors and friends on either side of me, I felt hopeful. After all, this was my third season.

Since I started working at MUCC as an intern in 2018, I've had the opportunity to pursue woodcock, grouse, ducks, turkey and white-tailed deer. Alas, many early mornings in a marsh and multiple mile treks in aspen stands did not provide me my shining moment. Leading up to this season, there was fate associated with 2020. I had people telling me that "this is my year!" And so it was.

It was nearly an hour after first light. We had seen multiple flocks and singles around us, but nothing worth poking at. That is until a bluewing swung a left into our spread. It was too late for my novice eyes to identify the Anas discors; a skill I hope to sharpen in time — along with my calling.

After hearing "shoot it!" and its wings flapping, I had missed my opportunity. The few shots from my friends waiting for me to take the first crack went amiss, and

I was in the same spot as before — gameless.

Circles began to form on the marsh water as a light rain moved in on top of us. If my colleagues were to throw in the towel with stronger rains on the horizon, then so was I. We had an important meeting that evening, and I had my hunting fill for the early season already. It's not like I was missing out on something — I had never achieved that something.

We remained hopeful as our clothing stuck to our skin with every drop. The weather droned on for about another hour until the sun poked its head out of the clouds. Almost as if to say "Wow, you guys actually stayed here?"

That was when we heard the honk. We had seen a few geese earlier in the day, but nothing that made us quite as hopeful as this did. A large brush patch was behind us blocking the view from what we all knew what was coming. As it emerged from behind us to the left, Shaun McKeon, MUCC education director, was in the middle of his fabled "poptart time." He will still claim that's the reason the goose even came by in the first place. He managed to shoulder his shotgun and fire towards the bird. I was right there and ready for my shot. Before I knew what was happening, the goose was in a spiral motion towards the water. I winged it.

Nick Green, Michigan Out-of-Doors editor, hollered towards his yellow lab Annie to retrieve. By the time Annie made her way out into the water, the goose had swum a ways away, maybe 80 yards from our blind. But, it was no match for Annie, and she got a piece of its wing just as it was making a final dive.

We left the marsh and I was able to get a tutorial on how to clean a goose. I even had my first visit from a couple DNR conservation officers. It was a first for everything that day, I guess.

As the day went on, I had a smile on my face, as I always had in the marsh or field. I was leaving with protein harvested by none other than myself. It's contrary to my usual diet, as I made a decision to become a "vegetarian" three years ago in an attempt to become more connected with my food. The use of air quotes is because of my eagerness to consume anything that I harvest myself, whether it be fish or game.

As I drove away from our spot, I pondered what made that day possible. I was fortunate to have mentors, a spot to hunt and a dog to retrieve. I've been lucky to have access to these things through my work at MUCC, and just three years ago in college, I would have had no means or idea of how to go about this. As I venture on in my tenure with MUCC, that's something I am dedicated to working on: access for all and education for those not fortunate enough to have grown up in this space.

I pulled up to my apartment thankful as ever to come home with only an empty stomach, as opposed to the usual stomach and hand. If I end the season without other bagged game, I could safely say that 2020 was still my year.

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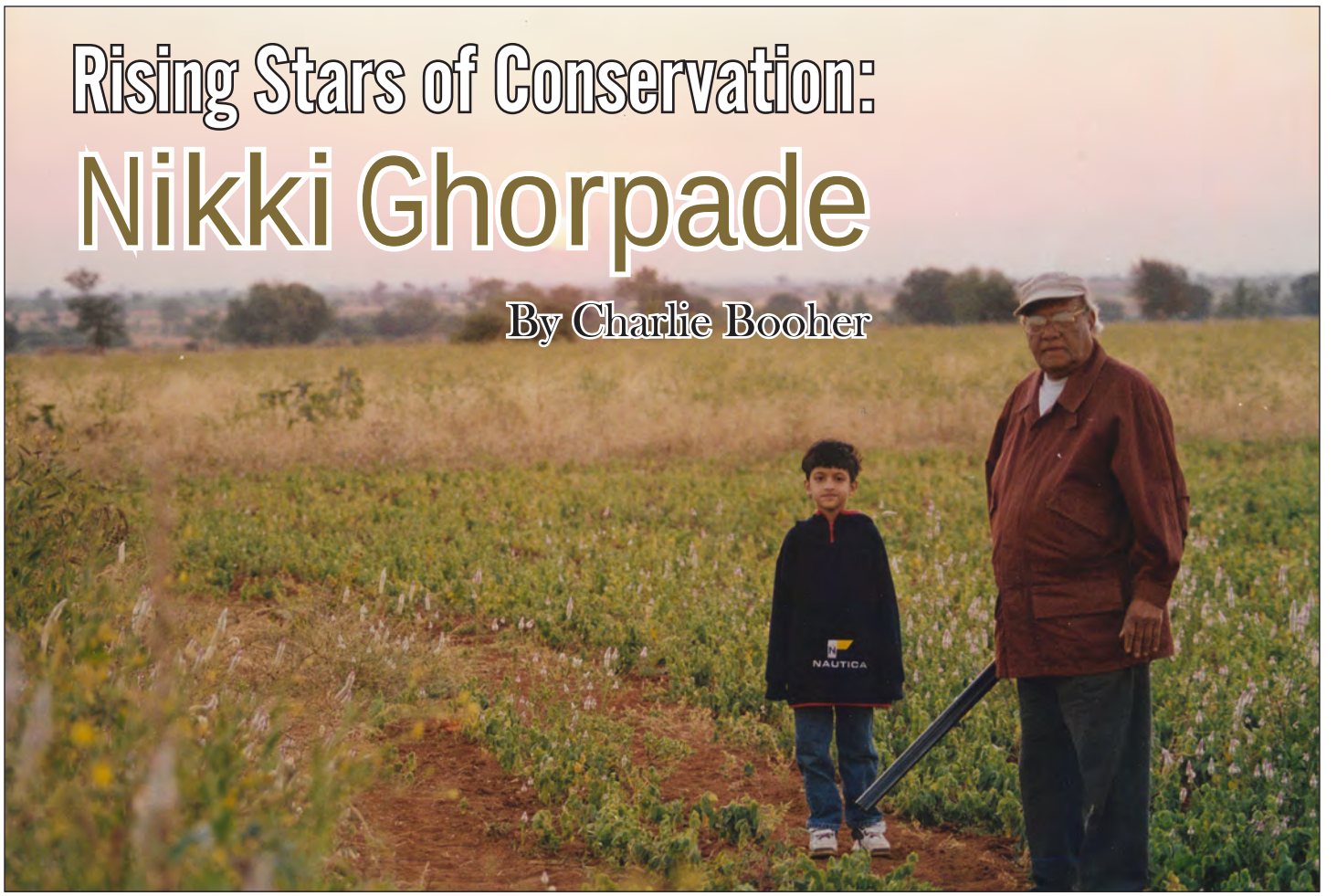
Rising Stars of Conservation:

Nikki Ghorpade

By Charlie Booher



We all approach conservation from a different direction — some of us through wildlife biology or water science, through policy analysis or geography or by way of journalism and communication. Writing about wildlife and wild places and communicating science is often just as important as research itself. Nikki Ghorpade has built his early career on just this — and in a good year, he can do it in four different languages (English, Swahili, Marathi and Spanish). Now, Ghorpade works as a government affairs representative for Ducks Unlimited's Great Lakes/Atlantic Regional Office in Dexter, MI, but he didn't quite take a traditional path to get there.

Growing up in suburban New Jersey, Ghorpade was raised in close proximity to large metropolitan areas and the waterfowling hotspots of the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays. However, his love and appreciation for the land originated nearly 8,000 miles away at his grandparent's small farm in Southern India. Each summer, Ghorpade would spend upwards of three months with his parents visiting his extended family overseas, some of that time with his paternal grandfather on their 70-acre plot of ground. He describes his paternal grandfather as a "larger than life" figure who had an outsized influence on his life and career trajectory. As a trained botanist and farmer, this former World War II pilot spent a few weeks each summer with his grandson from the U.S. and planted the seeds for a career in wildlife and water conservation.

"It was always different when we spent the summers there," Ghorpade said. "We spent all of this time outside, and I would try to soak up as much knowledge as I could from my family who had such a deep knowledge of their land. It wasn't the same back home in Jersey, but I carried those experiences from India with me."

Ghorpade attributes his love of the outdoors to the time spent with his grandfather, along with a healthy dose of National Geographic TV. However, it wasn't always clear that he could make a career out of this passion.

"I thought I wanted to pursue a career in business," Ghorpade said. "That was my original reason for going to the University of Miami — that and the warm weather. I was really drawn to the opportunity to camp, hike, kayak and get outside nearly all year and explore some of the unique marine, wetland and terrestrial ecosystems of Southern Florida. After so much time in New Jersey, it was time for a change."

His experiences in one of his school courses brought him away from business and towards a path in conservation communication. In an environmental studies course, Ghorpade says that a canoe trip to Everglades National Park and a conversation with a professor

In response to Mr. Alan Campbell's Legends of Conservation column, the Michigan Out-of-Doors editorial staff sought to highlight individuals who might someday make their way into those pages. The Rising Stars in Conservation column seeks to introduce readers to the next generation of natural resource conservation professionals, sharing their experiences, their voices, their ambitions and their outlook on the future of the field. Leaders today look different, hold different positions and have been trained differently than traditional conservationists, and they are worthy of an introduction.

set him on a path towards degrees in ecosystem science, policy and public relations.

"I really learned the importance of communication from my dad, who spent part of his career as a journalist, but I wanted my education to be grounded in science," Ghorpade noted. "That was really important to me. I really found that there are a lot of paths that you can take to be adjacent to what you really love, and you don't have to be a zoologist or a field biologist to make a huge difference in the world. Often, the biggest impacts come from outside of those traditional professions."

While enrolled in this program at Miami, Ghorpade also spent time at the School for Field Studies in Tanzania, where he studied the relationships local people have with wildlife. While other students tracked lions or elephants in the Maasai Steppe region, Ghorpade put his knowledge of Swahili to use. It wasn't quite what he wanted to be doing, but it was a formative experience.

"This time really opened my eyes to the fact that conservation isn't really about wildlife," Ghorpade said. "It's all about people because people make a choice to conserve or utilize the natural world however they see fit."

Beyond his time at Miami, Ghorpade claims a fairly nonlinear path. He graduated with the hope of pursuing a career with a large, multinational conservation organization, but he realized that his bachelor's degrees and lack of experience just weren't enough. So, he put his communication skills to work, first for a New York advertising firm and then for a documentary film company where he worked on a film conveying the importance of water issues around the world.

"While I didn't learn a whole lot about conservation in my first job out of school, I certainly learned a ton about how to communicate with people — and that's what got me the next gig," Ghorpade said. "Our filming really opened my eyes to the importance of the training that I had received. I was the only scientist on our team, so I took on the important role of translating that science and the importance of water issues in a way the general public could understand. Scientists are great and do critical work, but they're often not the best at communicating their work outside of their community."

Like many jobs these days, eventually, the funding dried up, and the documentary was published. Remembering conversations with a professor at the University of Miami, Ghorpade made some calls and eventually enrolled in a safari guide school in Botswana. After two months of learning about guiding, he took a two-week internship at a game reserve in South Africa – an

internship that he parlayed into a yearlong position spent helping tourists view the unique, charismatic wildlife of Southern Africa.

"That was the holy grail of jobs for me," Ghorpade told me. "I got to talk to people about wildlife every day, see some really, really cool things and live in an awesome place. This was one of the most fun positions I've ever had."

Unfortunately, between visa issues and other elements, that position had to come to an end, and he returned to the U.S. to spend some time with his family and reorganize for another job search. On his break, he found himself in a duck boat on Delaware Bay with his dad for the first time since hunting with his grandfather many years before. They paid a guide who re-introduced their family to Ducks Unlimited, and the Ghorpades became members when they got home. Soon after, Nikki would join the Ducks Unlimited family.

He accepted a paid internship position with Ducks Unlimited's public policy team in February of 2018 and has worked as a part of this team ever since, joining as a full-time employee after his time as an intern. This team works to fulfill the mission of conserving, restoring and managing wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl with a vision of a landscape with wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever. The public policy shop in Dexter does this in state capitols from Augusta, ME to St. Paul, MN and everywhere in between.

Ghorpade told me that he is really pleased with what he's doing right now, but would love to continue to work with DU in a larger, more expansive role — possibly overseeing public policy at a greater scale to advance an ethic of conservation on the

"It can be difficult to overcome feelings of dejection in a field that has become fairly competitive, but it is important to do everything you can to show your persistence and dedication to the causes that you believe in."

landscapes of the Great Lakes and Atlantic regions. When asked about his conservation ethic and the biggest problems he sees in the world today, he led with a Mark Twain quote: "buy land, they aren't making it anymore." Ghorpade sees human encroachment onto traditional wildlands as one of the biggest problems facing the world today.

"The world is finite, but the human population is growing at a rapid rate and expansion is limiting room for wildlife," Ghorpade said. "Conservation in the coming decades will be defined by the ability of humanity to co-exist with wildlife, and climate-related changes will only enhance these problems. Places like Nairobi National Park in Kenya or the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge in Denver, CO could become the new normal for wildlife. I am really interested in the dynamics of who gets to use these lands and to what extent."

Organizations like Ducks Unlimited do this on a daily basis, but they can't do it alone and should utilize techniques and concepts from broader contexts. There are very different wildlife conservation models that are used on different continents to balance the needs of humans with the needs of wildlife that we're tasked with protecting. All of these require folks like Nikki to engage partners in private, public and nonprofit communities to restore, manage and conserve land actively. His career has taken him around the world, yet the skills that he has used in all of his jobs have built a strong foundation for what he does every day.

To those looking for a career in wildlife conservation, Ghorpade told me that the most important things are persistence and connections. Aspiring conservationists must be dedicated to their cause and to working in the field, but they must also be creative and add their own expertise to the field writ large. It can be difficult to overcome feelings of dejection in a field that has become fairly competitive, but it is important to do everything you can to show your persistence and dedication to the causes that you believe in.

The field's future is bright with people like Nikki at the helm, but it is concurrently a challenging, dynamic and difficult pursuit. Our world and the conservation field are changing, but future professionals are well-adapted to communicate and respond to these changes. Nikki and his colleagues, at Ducks Unlimited and beyond, work every day to make the world a better place for people and wildlife — building on a strong foundation for the future of wildlife conservation.

Partisanship:

The Dogs and Birds that Unite Us

By Nick Green

The dirt road left washboarded by spring's transition to summer amplified a chatter-like cadence before the Toyota 4Runner came to an abrupt halt. I sat on the tailgate with my dogs, Calvin and Summit, after running them in the 90-degree July heat through a tangled mess of aspen.

Great — I thought to myself. Colorful stickers covered every inch of the back windows on the SUV. I presumed an animal rights activist or do-gooder was set to exit the vehicle and provide me a tongue lashing for "abusing" my dogs in the sweltering heat. Fight or flight kicked in, and a confrontation was braced for.

"We exchanged numbers that July day and parted ways — I'm not sure either of us knew the ramifications of that chance meeting."

Stepping from the 4Runner was a man my age with a straight-billed cap, Teva sandals and a Patagonia shirt on. Suddenly, I felt comfortable in my physical defense.

As the man approached, he smiled and said, "Nice dogs. Did you find any birds in there?"

The bokeh-like background surrounding him quickly cleared. Ruffed Grouse Society, American Woodcock Society, FISH Michigan and Got Timberdoodle stickers on the SUV came into focus.

"What kind of dog is that?" he asked, pointing at my small Munsterlander, Calvin. As I peered beyond him, still not having answered any of his questions, I noticed a kennel in the back of his SUV. "What kind of dog do you have," I retorted.

Left: The author places a GPS collar on his small Munsterlander, Calvin. Photo: Abraham Downer; Below: Abraham Downer steadies his English setter, Remi, during a training session near the author's home.

An unimaginable meeting

The year prior, in 2017, I had written a story about woodcock banding for Cadillac News. As a beat reporter for a small daily in Northern Michigan, natural resources stories were always well-received. With a deposit down on a shorthair, I decided I would start researching and writing every bird dog and hunting article I could before my editor called me out on my newfound obsession.

I came to meet Sally Downer and a couple other woodcock banders during a mid-May jaunt through what is dubbed Hoosier Valley in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. I wrote the banding story and thought I would never talk with Sally again. I did recall her mentioning a son named Abraham, though.

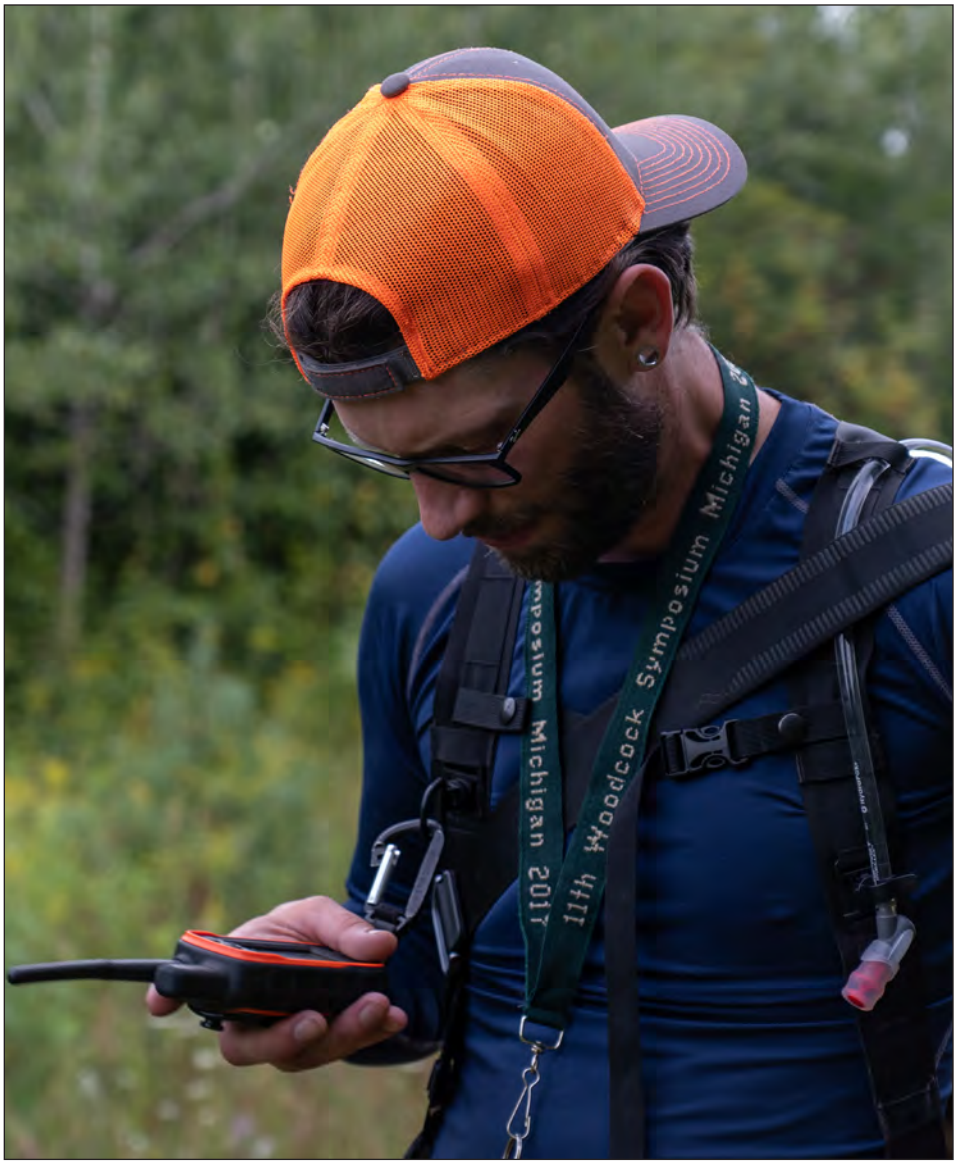
As I shook hands with the driver of the 4Runner, he introduced himself as Abe. The connection to Sally was immediately made, and the dots were connected.

Abraham Downer came into my life at an impressionable time during my upland journey. Despite our wildly different styles, political views and, really, anything to do with our social way of life except birds and dogs, we formed a bond as two young hunters who were saved by our outdoor endeavors.

We exchanged numbers that July day and parted ways — I'm not sure either of us knew the ramifications of that chance meeting. That fall, we met for a hunt during the woodcock flights. Not knowing Abe, I decided to meet him at one of my marginal covers. The dogs pointed some birds, and we each had a few woodcock to take home.

A shared history

It wasn't long after that fall 2018 hunt when Abe and I started to spend more time together. He invited me to his northwoods property on the Boardman River and into Sally's home — where he stayed on weekends to get respite from the urban sprawl of mid-Michigan.



Suddenly, someone so different than myself in almost every aspect of life was becoming the person I confided in. We related over some of the more sordid times in our pasts. We shared stories about grandfathers who instilled in us love and respect for the King. And we both knew that luck had granted us the kindest, most generous women in the world to raise us.

Most importantly, we discovered ourselves through dogs. Like Abe, I was a non-traditional student and went to college after living through life's seemingly high highs and low lows. Both of us brought our first bird dogs home as late-20-somethings getting ready to graduate college.

Sally and her husband Dave instilled in Abe a love for bird dogs from a young age. And even though my love for our four-legged best friends didn't start with bird dogs, it certainly came full-circle when I met Abe.

Abe isn't the first friend of mine to have differing political views, and he won't be the last. Whether it is his belief that folks should be more intentional in their firearm ownership, using them as tools for hunting instead of just a toy — while I believe we should be able to, quite literally, own a tank — or his uncanny ability to call me out when I am stereotyping someone for the way they look, he has undoubtedly helped me grow into a better person.

Abe is the first friend of mine who I can have a knock-down-drag-out political argument with and, two minutes later, hi-five when we remember our dogs and what brought us together.

A new outlook

Our differences don't end with our political views, either. Abe's a dyed-in-the-wool setter guy, and he has probably never done any training beyond "whoa" with his brilliant setter, Remi. He regularly mentions that he has no great love for GSPs — I am not sure he is to be trusted still on that one. Whereas, I own an array of different dog breeds, am much more diligent with training and think that hipsters with their long-haired dogs better get to brushing. However, the only thing that is constant is change, said Heraclitus.

Fall of 2019 brought about my third annual Mudbats, Drummers and Greenheads camp. Never having a week-long guest at camp, that year was set to be different when Abe decided to also take the week off. We set up camp and began our week consisting of too many libations, missed shots and, most importantly, the dogs that saved our lives.

During that week, I learned tolerance, patience and how to navigate the tough conservations with someone so different than myself. But, no matter what, when the last splash of watered-down gin or Budweiser extinguished the evening's fire, we retired to our respective campers with our dogs and a mutual respect for one another.

Paying a bird the utmost respect it deserves by plucking it was another lesson Abe passed on to me. He taught me culinary tactics that could make even venison liver tasty (my apologies

Left: Abraham Downer checks his GPS during an August training day in the northwoods. Below: Abraham Downer moves in to harvest a pigeon the author's German shorthaired pointer, Summit, pointed. Photo: Nate Akey

to those who actually like the taste of liver). We have shared countless hours in the kitchen together since that first meeting, and I have to say that I have never eaten better wild game than at the end of Abe's spatula or tongs.

Dogs brought me to Abe and closer to the upland birds I love. More importantly, bird dogs are the foundation upon which my tolerance for opposing views and differing ideas blossomed. As funny as that may sound, bird dogs were the catalyst that taught me that no argument with someone and no political stance is worth writing someone off.

This may come off as some rambling love story between two star-crossed bird hunters. And it kind of is. But it is also the story of who I have become: someone who can listen to all sides of an argument, someone not so quick to judge and someone who can see through partisan ideals and realize that each individual person has faults and triumphs.

Abe will spread my ashes if I pass before him. I imagine that feeling is reciprocated should he pass before me. We will see each other through the best and worst of times that have yet to come. And it all started from a happenstance meeting next to an aspen stand over bird dogs on a sultry July day.

Partisanship, by definition, is an extreme bias towards something — although we often default to associating it with politics. In this case, partisanship towards the dogs and birds that unite us made me a better and more rounded person and brought me a lifelong hunting buddy. This journey with Abe over our dogs has provided me the ability to withstand a little discomfort when trading opposing views with a fellow hunter, and for that, I am thankful.

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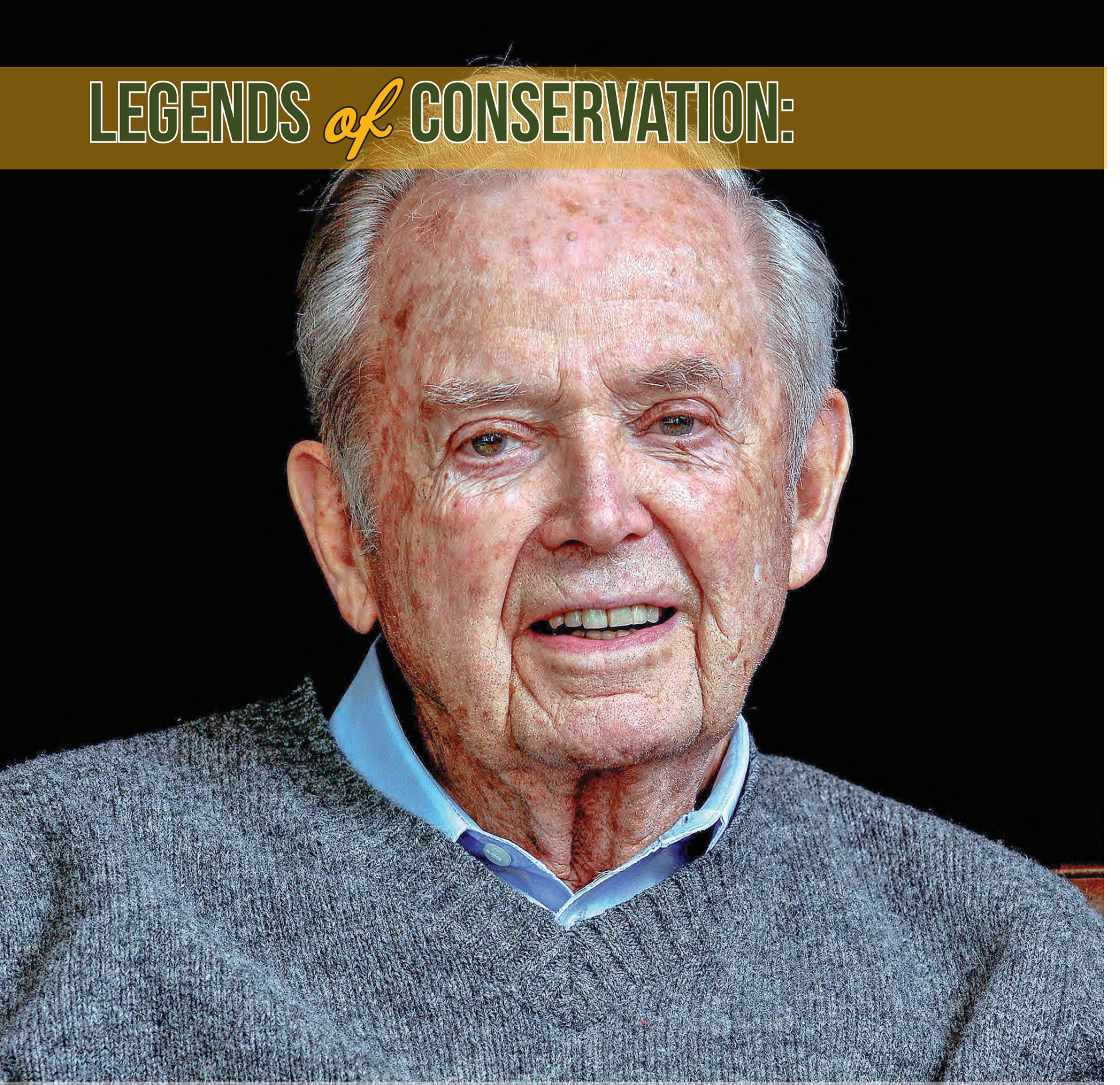


Gov. William G. Milliken

March 26, 1922 - October 18,2019

By Alan Campbell

"The simple truth is that Michigan has always been and will always be a 'quality of life' state. The truth is that the quality of human life in Michigan depends on nature. The natural beauty of Michigan is much more than a source of pleasure or recreation. It shapes our values, molds our attitudes, feeds our spirits."

Gov. Milliken wrote the foreword for Dave Dempsey's 'Ruin and Recovery'

Gov. Bill Milliken had little time for Friday cocktail parties. He could be found at the end of a long week patiently sitting on the steps at the rear of the Michigan Capitol, waiting for a ride to his beloved Traverse City.

Should a stranger walk by and recognize him, all the better to pass the time.

"If you saw him on a Friday afternoon waiting on the back steps of the Capitol waiting for his car to come, he'd say, 'Sit down for a couple minutes and shoot the breeze,'" said Bob Garner, former television host of Michigan Out-of-Doors and a legislative aide who worked closely across the aisle with Milliken. "He was that kind of guy. He was an incredible individual."

Golden age of conservation

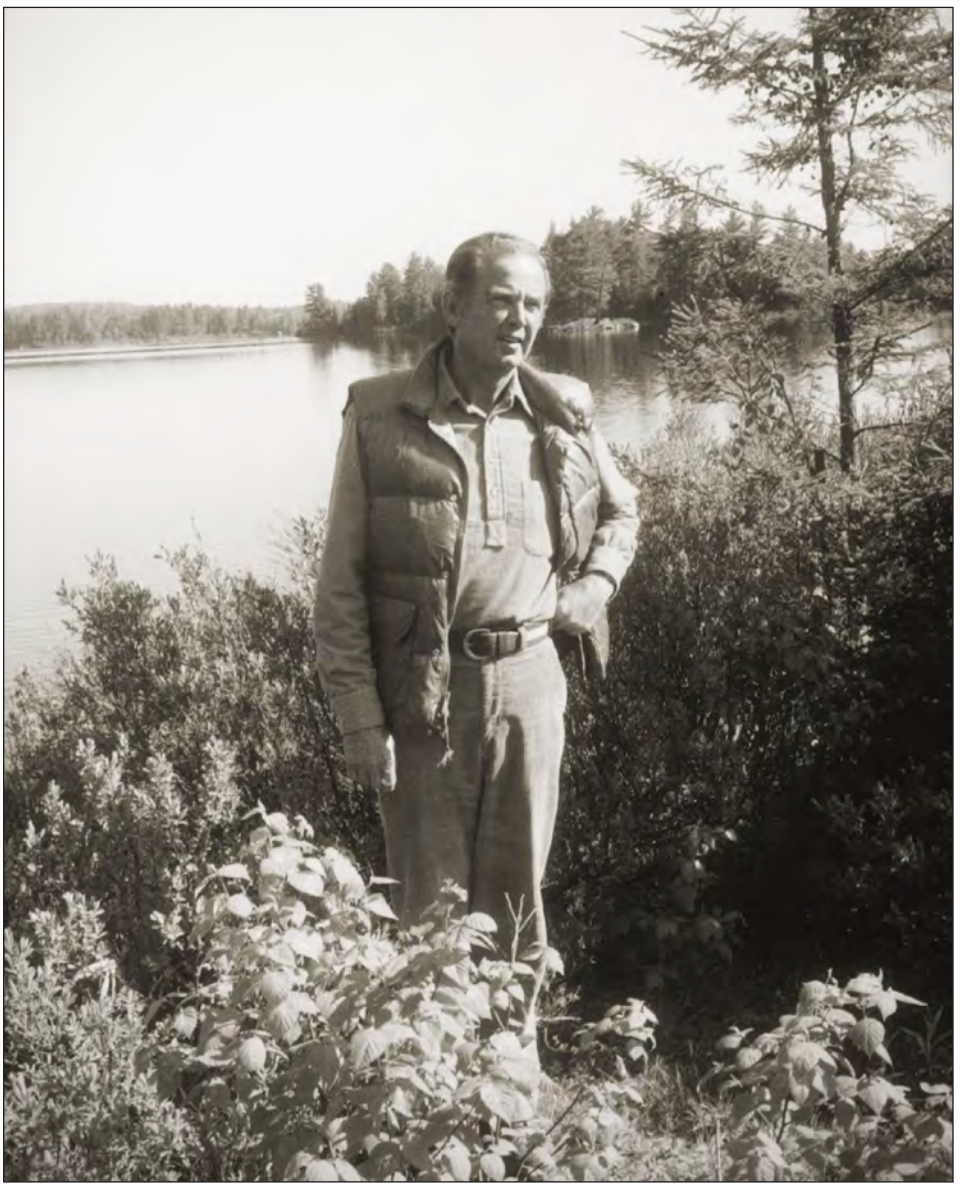
In today's terms, William G. Milliken would be an unlikely hero of conservation for a couple of reasons.

First, conservation has become a too-little used word, yielding to the more popular environmental mantra. The concept of conserving natural resources has been overshadowed by preserving them. Milliken would be considered an environmentalist in today's terms — and probably wouldn't care as long as he left Michigan in better shape than he found it.

Soft-spoken, a reluctant politician and with little personal interest in hunting and fishing, Milliken also was a Republican. And frankly, the perception of Republicans and Democrats as interpreted by the public and media have reversed in the 50 or so years since Milliken pushed Michigan toward a reputation as a national leader in environmental issues. Other states were facing the same problems that besieged Michigan — laundry phosphorus aging young lakes, DDT build-up threatening the survival of bald eagles, highways littered with valueless cans and bottles — but most could not muster the political will needed to change the status quo.

Milliken was all about getting Michigan to a better place.

"His state of the state message in his last year was 144 pages long," said Bill Rustem, whose relationship with Milliken started during an internship with the governor's office while attending Michigan State. "It was a book. He was full of



ideas and always wanted to press forward to get things done."

Rustem started off writing press releases — he specifically recalled hyping the National Asparagus Festival in Hart — important to local communities but of little impact on a statewide scale. He finished as a speechwriter and policy director in Milliken's administration. Admiration for his boss grew with each of Millken's 14 years heading state government.

Rustem, who spoke this summer at a memorial service held at the Kresge Auditorium at Interlochen Academy of the Arts, noted that Milliken's approval rating as he left office in 1982 was 70 percent — among Democrats. It was 83 percent for Republicans. Some 75 percent of African-Americans approved of his job performance, and 70 percent of union members liked him — even after Milliken had been through brush-ups with politically-powerful unions and corporations while blazing a path of protection for Michigan's land, air and water.

Despite facing a Democratic House of Representatives every year while governor, Milliken's conservation record includes passage of the Michigan Environmental Protection Act, Truth in Water Pollution Act, Inland Lakes and Stream Act and the Wetlands Protection Act. And the Natural Rivers Act, Truth in Air Pollution Act and Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act.

There were plenty more, all made possible because he excelled in finding common ground among leaders with opposing views.

Milliken was a skillful yet transparent political tactician — something rare these days. Bent on cleaning up Michigan highways, he tried during private meetings to get lawmakers, union bosses and the beverage industry to support a dime deposit on cans and bottles. Lawmakers, driven by concerns about union job losses and business expenses, wouldn't budge.

So Milliken appealed directly to the public. In 1976 he partnered with MUCC, which collected signatures to put a Constitutional amendment on the ballot. The betting line — and big money — said "no way." But 64 percent of state residents voted 'yes.'

Rustem recalls one union boss stating that only "nut cases" would support the bill.

"The fact that the governor was willing to go out and support it gave the bottle bill legitimacy," Rustem said. "He was a Republican in the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt."

While other states wallowed in politics, Michigan led a movement to preserve or conserve — choose your term — itself despite the expected internal disagreements.

"The phosphorus ban was not popular among factory workers with Amway. The DDT ban was not popular in chemical plants. The bottle bill was not popular in factories that made bottles and cans. It was a different era," Rustem said.

Garner said Milliken wasn't afraid to take on his own party. Twice battles raged in the 11th hour over raising taxes to balance

the state budget, and twice Milliken confronted reluctant Republicans.

"He spoke to them in small words that were easy to interpret. He told them they needed to dig up a couple more votes or they would get no cooperation from him," Garner said.

Milliken's drive was anchored in his political goals.

"To harness the whirlwind of change … to keep it blowing us into paths of progress instead of paths of destruction … that is the greatest challenge we face," he said in 1969.

Milliken's eternal partner in policy was his wife, Helen, a woman's rights leader who proceeded him in death in 2012.

Unlikely path to the Capital

Several turns of events had to go Milliken's way if he was to become governor. Included were his survival and the promotion of his boss to Washington.

The Milliken name is well-known in the Traverse City area and associated with the former Milliken's Department Store in the downtown district. His father, candid and unbendingly honest, served in the Michigan Legislature, as did his grandfather. His mother was politically active and community involved. Son Bill's love for the outdoors was kindled while paddling a stream near Acme and trout fishing "with little success," according to the program published for his memorial.

He enrolled at Yale University, but felt the call of duty during World War II and enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1943. Despite twice parachuting from plummeting B-24s over France and being wounded, he survived 50 missions as a waist gunner. Known as the "Liberator" in military terms, crews nicknamed the B-24 the "flying coffin." Half of the bombers did not return from the most brutal of runs.

While training in Colorado, Miillken met Helen Wallbank, who agreed to wait for him to return from war. They married in October 1945, one month after he was honorably discharged.

Milliken explained his turn to politics. "After 10 months of flying missions and not knowing whether you'd live another day, you saw how precious life was. I thought frequently how I could live life to the fullest when the war was over. I developed a sense of wanting to give something back. I wanted to make some kind of meaning out of my life," he said.

After graduating from Yale, Milliken returned to Traverse City to help run the family department store. He served six years as chair of the Grand Traverse Republican Party, then went door-to-door campaigning to unseat an established Republican state senator. He quickly rose among party ranks to majority floor leader, and Republicans chose him to be the running mate of eventual governor George Romney in the 1964 election.

After serving as lieutenant governor, Milliken became the 44th governor of Michigan in 1969 when Romney resigned to serve as

Housing and Urban Development (HUD) director in the Nixon administration.

He was quickly given the nickname of "boy governor" by detractors.

"They found out he had a pretty firm backbone," said Nancy Dockter, who started as Milliken's receptionist and eventually became his personal secretary. "The world could use a few Bill Millikens. He was from a different time, a gentleman. He had such a sense of fairness about him."

Dokter recalls helping to organize meetings of what Milliken termed the "quadrant" — the legislative leaders from both political parties.

"They would pretty much meet weekly in his office. He always thought that good policy was better than good politics. That was always important to him," Dockter said.

Milliken was an active runner, finding time to recreate in the outdoors. On weekends, the Milliken's would retreat to Traverse City to refresh.

Helen Milliken, a progressive thinker, played an important role in forming public policy away from politicians, lobbyists and pundits, Dockter said. She recalled Helen's strong interest in preserving Pigeon River State Forest from wide-scale oil drilling, which led to creation of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund that has channeled nearly $1.2 billion into recreational opportunities for Michigan residents. The petroleum industry, environmentalists and political parties all became involved in what started as state law and eventually became an amendment in the Constitution passed by state voters. Milliken worked hand-in-hand with State Sen. Kerry Kammer, a Democrat from Clarkston.

"It was Helen who was instrumental in preserving the Pigeon River Forest when they were attempting to license to drill for oil there," recalled Bill Milliken Jr. "She told him it was inappropriate. So he got (a conservation ethic) from growing up, and he got it from his spouse."

Pure Michigan

Washington came calling after Milliken left office as Republicans considered the popular Michigan governor a shoo-in to win a U.S. Senate seat. Milliken considered.

GOP Senate majority leader Howard Baker whisked him to the nation's capital, where a picture emerged of life among the powerful and famous.

"They painted him a picture of what life would be like in Washington," said Bill Jr., a member of the Mackinac Bridge Authority and trustee for Washtenaw Community College. "He said, 'You know, if I went to Washington, I'm not sure how I'd get back to Traverse City on weekends.'"

Milliken retired without ever losing an election. Having always considered precious Michigan as the best place on earth, dipping into national politics would take away from his work at home.

So Milliken stayed active in Michigan affairs, advocating on behalf of abused women and seeking to reduce life sentences for convicted small-time drug dealers. Gov. Jennifer Granholm appointed him co-chair on a commission studying land use.

In a speech given to an MUCC conference, Milliken eloquently described Michigan's soul as "found in the soft petals of a trillium, the gentle whisper of a headwater stream, the vista of a Great Lakes shoreline, the wonder in children's eyes upon seeing their first bald eagle. It is that soul that we must preserve."

Hundreds of friends, family and associates paid tribute to Milliken at Kresge Auditorium. Speakers included Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and nationally-syndicated writer Jack Lessenberry. Bill Jr. estimated that well-wishers were evenly split between Republicans and Democrats.

William G. Milliken is quoted from 1979 on the back page of the memorial booklet.

"I, for one, believe that it is the duty of our generation to assure that the world we leave to our children and their children is a clean, green and healthy one. A world with clean water, healthy air and enough untrammeled space to provide for recreation needs; a world that recognizes its resource limits as well as its needs."

"Michigan citizens have always held natural resources and outdoor recreation among their highest priorities. And they are willing to make — and indeed insist on making — sacrifices to improve and protect the environment. We must be concerned about what our landscape will look like in the future and the opportunities it will provide to future generations of our citizens. That means all our citizens — whether they live on farms, in rural areas, or in our cities."

Gov. Milliken wrote the foreword for Dave Dempsey's 'Ruin and Recovery'

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Is R3 Paying Dividends?

By Charlie Booher
MUCC State Policy Fellow

Populations of hunters and anglers are, without question, on the decline. Over the last 20 years, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been invested annually to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters and anglers (collectively, R3). However, very little of that money has been spent to critically assess the programs that are being funded or on finding out whether or not these investments are having any success in creating new hunters or anglers. Concurrently, state fish and wildlife agencies are hemorrhaging funds as hunting and fishing license sales continue on a sharp decline.

For better or for worse, the days of small family farms, dispersed population centers, and decoys and shotguns in high school lockers have largely come to a close. The hunters and anglers who grew up under these conditions are getting older, and today's kids aren't being raised in these environments. The world is a vastly different place than it was 50, 25 or even 10 years ago. While many blame the rise of video games and cell phones for kids not spending as much time outside, I'll add urbanization, firearm laws, lack of access to land, increasing commitments to sports, academics and extracurricular activities to that list.

Today's Michiganders are more likely to grow up in a suburb and less likely to know a farmer than their parents or grandparents.

Public hunting land is notoriously crowded and intimidating to new hunters. And there is a great deal of pressure on kids (our traditional recruiting demographic) to play a sport, join half a dozen clubs, keep their grades up, have a part-time job and vie for a spot at the college, university or trade school of their choice. Arguably, today's kids are being pulled in more directions by more people than they have been in recent history. For that matter, adults are too. Research suggests that people today feel that they have less free time than people of similar demographics have reported in the past. Regardless of all this, people aren't hunting and fishing as much as they used to be, but this decline in hunters and anglers underpins a number of more impactful issues.

In lots of courses on public policy and administration, professors wax poetically about a concept called problem framing — essentially, the way we talk about problems in society, government and nearly anywhere else and the impact that the language of a problem has on the solutions that are developed. To a large extent, people have focused their attention and framed this problem as a decline in hunters. Others see the problem as a lack of access to hunting lands or restrictive firearm laws. Regardless, each of these problems merit different solutions. I would argue that a more suitable

problem to try to solve is the one that is really making our leaders in conservation sweat: the drop in hunting license sales.

In the United States, state fish and wildlife agencies are charged with the conservation and management of all wildlife in the state, which are held in a public trust. As I've discussed in previous issues of this magazine (see the Back to the Basics series in 2019), all of the wildlife in any given state is owned by the citizens of that particular state and is held in a public trust overseen by the government of that state. The execution of this oversight is often what we call wildlife conservation or wildlife management, and it is typically done by the state fish and wildlife agency (our Michigan Department of Natural Resources). All of this work is paid for by hunters and anglers through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and through grants funded by federal excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery tackle, fishing equipment and marine fuels. These federal funds are dispersed to the states based on the number of unique individual license buyers in each state. So, our ability to publicly fund wildlife conservation under the current system is directly threatened by a decline in hunters. That is a problem.

Some have suggested that recruiting, retaining and reactivating hunters and anglers is a viable solution to this crisis. To some extent, I would say that these training programs are a valuable enterprise. Creating new hunters and anglers will maintain a part of our heritage that is important to many of us in the conservation community while also giving the next generation an important set of ethics surrounding wildlife and the broader natural world. Teaching people to hunt or fish also tends to spur important conversations about where our food comes from. However, for all of the benefits of these programs, these programs bear significant costs.

It is extraordinarily expensive, in time and resources, to create a hunter. Time and resources that, for many of us, came from our moms or dads, aunts or uncles and grandparents. Birthday gifts of new equipment and hand-me-down clothes, guns and gear made things at least a little bit easier. Without these things and significant amounts of time hunting with my dad, it is extremely unlikely that I would have started hunting on my own. I pride myself on being a waterfowl hunter, which is (arguably) one of the most intimidating species to begin hunting. The regulations are complicated and often require the ability to identify birds on the wing — a skill that is notoriously difficult to learn even with a great deal of time and mentorship. Much like golf, duck and goose hunting is likely the most gear-intensive hunting pursuit. Decoys, waders, boats, dogs, shotguns and more are all very expensive to buy new. Calls are hard to use, even for experienced hunters and

waterfowling almost always takes place on the water, adding another level of potential danger. Plus, it is a wet, stinky, messy pursuit. Wet waders, soaked dogs and bloody feathers can rival any high school locker room — a difficult sell for those who are avid hunters already, not to mention those who are entirely new to experiencing the outdoors in these ways.

R3 programs and workshops seek to fill all of these gaps. Many of them provide kids with opportunities to hunt and mentorship networks to answer important questions. They teach classes on hunting that often include a hands-on curriculum for pursuing, harvesting, butchering and cooking game — skills that hunters used to depend on families or close friends to provide. In many states, these are being sponsored by state wildlife agencies and use hunting and fishing license dollars to pay for it. However, in 20 years of significant investment in R3, hunter numbers are still on a steady decline.

R3 is a clear solution to the decline in hunting and fishing participation, but I would argue that it is not a powerful enough tool to overcome the social, economic and demographic factors that underlie the declines in hunting and fishing. It is certainly not a holistic solution to the decline in hunting and fishing license sales and will not alone bolster funds for conservation or management. When we see wildlife conservation funding as the problem, we come up with drastically different solutions than if we merely see a lack of hunters as a problem. In my mind, the question becomes: will the money spent on R3 ever return to the conservation arena?

To be clear, I am in no way advocating against recruiting, reactivating and retaining hunters and anglers. I am, however, advocating that we rethink the investment of public monies in these programs and critically assess whether or not these funds will pay dividends for conservation.

There are plenty of organizations dedicated to this cause. Pheasants Forever has a robust hunting heritage program, the National Wild Turkey Federation has a significant recruitment effort through their "Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt." initiative, and the Boone & Crockett Club has built a curriculum surrounding hunting for sustainability. MUCC participates in a variety of these programs and supports them through member-clubs. Many are reporting some success in recruiting adult-onset hunters, often citing their care for food as a reason to start hunting later in life. As a hunter, all of this is good.

These programs are excellent, and I suggest that you support them to address the issue of hunter decline. However, they do not and will not adequately address the issue of conservation funding. That is a problem that should be addressed by state fish and wildlife agencies, who will likely find that their investment in creating a new hunter is a very expensive endeavor that is unlikely to show positive returns — especially not $11/year at a time. The recruitment of new hunters, anglers and trappers will likely not be the solution to the conservation funding decline. It is time to analyze that problem through different lenses and to develop more effective, durable solutions. Further, our state fish and wildlife agencies must make wise investments with their ever-declining resources as the system of wildlife conservation in this country continues to splinter.

Regardless of R3's ability to fund conservation, it is still worthwhile to share the value of hunting, fishing and trapping with others. So please, take a kid hunting or fishing, share some venison with the family next door or talk to your friends about the importance of hunting to you and your family. We know that making new hunters, anglers, and trappers is difficult — and we certainly don't want to see the sports that we are passionate about go away. If you want to start hunting or fishing, please reach out to any of a number of hunter-conservationist organizations. We are always more than happy to help point you in the right direction.


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MAKING A HUNTER

By Shaun McKeon

The path to becoming a hunter is a different road for each individual. Some people are seemingly born into the heritage and traditions of deer camp, while others discover their passion for the outdoors later in life.

For Jason Smith, a marketing professional from Chicago, his first foray into the outdoor world was work-related. As a marketing professional, Jason and his team were looking to work with the clothing and gear company North Face. As the team prepared for meetings with their client, Jason began thinking about what it would be like to spend more time outside and less time in the city. However, living in Chicago and not associating with many people who spent much time in the outdoors beyond the city, let alone knowing many hunters, Jason was a bit stuck on getting the support a new person needs to become a hunter.

Fast forward to 2019 when Jason and a friend decided to leap into the hunting community. That spring, they both signed up to join the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF), which was hosting a Learn to Hunt turkey event in the southwest corner of Michigan. A Learn to Hunt turkey weekend consists of three days of learning the ins and outs of turkey hunting and is geared towards beginning hunters and those looking to learn how to hunt a new species.

Although Jason wasn't able to harvest a turkey over the Learn to Hunt weekend, he decided hunting was something he would continue to pursue. He was drawn to the idea of being able to hunt for turkeys solo and not needing a large amount of gear to get started. He also decided it would be important to stay in touch with this community and take advantage of other opportunities as they arose.

In November of 2019, the Michigan Pheasant Hunting Initiative held a learn to hunt pheasant event at the Allegan State Game Area, and once again, Jason jumped at the opportunity to take advantage of the program. I had the pleasure of being assigned as the group mentor for Jason and was able to spend the day with him teaching about pheasant biology, practicing on the trap range and hunting behind editor Nick Green's small Munsterlander, Calvin. Throughout the day, Jason asked a ton of questions, and his excitement to learn was palpable. He wanted to know what type of hunting I did and why I was passionate about it. When I told him I am primarily a waterfowl hunter, I could see a gleam in his eye that he knew that was something else he wanted to try. Learn to Hunt does not currently have a learn to waterfowl program, but I told Jason if the cards lined up in 2020, I would be happy to show him the ropes. The pheasant event wrapped up with Jason harvesting his first pheasant, and after a few goodbyes, I wondered if our paths would cross again in 2020.

Mentoring a total stranger from another state and inviting him to stay at my house for a weekend seemed a bit crazy in the back of my head. I had only known Jason for a total of five hours before I had committed to mentoring him. It was a big leap on his end as well. He didn't know who I was or what it would be like hunting with me, and while Jason lives in the big city, I live in rural Shiawassee County. We look like we come from very different worlds on the surface, but my passion for ducks and Jason's passion for learning seemed to make this gap smaller.

The first thing I wanted Jason to get started with was gear. While I had decoys and an assortment of required waterfowl-specific gear, one thing I don't have for a new person to borrow is waders. In the past, I have heard too many horror stories of people borrowing the back-up pair of waders from a friend and having a miserable time with cold, wet feet. I sent him links to the brand of waders I use, as well as those that friends use and tried to steer him in a warm/comfortable direction.

About three days later, my

phone rang and it was Jason. He was calling me from Cabela's while looking for waders. We talked about several pairs while he tried them on and eventually settled on a pair that seemed to work for him. While I was on the phone, we talked about basic duck calls so he could get started practicing his calling; I also had him pick up some other creature comforts in gear like a hand muff and a shell belt that would be helpful for his time in the marsh. When I hung up the phone, we talked or texted for almost two hours before Jason was headed to the register. With the swipe of that card, I knew he was committed, and I would try my best to show him the excitement and adventure that is waterfowling.

Finally, Friday, Nov. 30, 2020 arrived, and Jason showed up at my house around 8:30 p.m. I wanted to get to have a get-to-know-you session and review the plan and gear for the upcoming hunts. Jason was on time, and with his easygoing personality, we became fast friends. What I had anticipated being a short one-hour review before we headed off to bed early rapidly turned into a two-plus hour session of getting to know Jason on a deeper level.

4 a.m. on Saturday rolled around, and we were on our way. The spot we had decided on had produced birds throughout the early part of the season. It was a riverbank with some log jams where wood ducks had been feeding and loafing.

It was an easier walk-in spot, and I was hoping we would see birds. As fate would have it, the week leading up to the hunt had been rainy and the river had risen approximately 2 feet. Anticipating the high water, Jason and I dragged a kayak through the woods so we could place decoys and hopefully retrieve birds. After placing the decoys and settling in, I explained all of the ins and outs of why we had done the different things that go into preparing for a hunt as well as what to expect for the morning sit. Three hours later and only a few wood ducks buzzing high above the treetops left us with an empty game bag.

We pulled out of that spot empty-handed but optimistic for the afternoon. Even though we didn't have any ducks in the bag, I had a bird-processing session planned for after lunch. Taking the time to show people what to do after the harvest is just as important as the harvest in my book. I had a mallard from an earlier hunt and showed Jason the anatomy and how to break it down for a few different cooking techniques.

After a quick check of the MSU-UM football score, we headed out to a second public land spot nearby.

This hunt was a marsh hunt where Jason would be able to see across the marsh and hopefully have better opportunities to see birds than sitting along the river corridor. The weather and ducks were again not on our side, and we spent a lovely 55-degree windless afternoon hiding in some bushes wishing for some cloud cover or wind or ducks to show up. Once again skunked, the main takeaway from the afternoon hunt was walking through shin-deep muck in waders for the first time is a unique experience. The saying slow and steady wins the race was repeated several times, and although a few close calls occurred, no undergarments were soaked during our afternoon excursion.

With one more opportunity Sunday morning, I was feeling the pressure to at least get Jason to

have the chance to pull the trigger. For dinner Saturday night, I cooked goose, mallard and wood duck, so Jason could see a few different techniques and experience the different flavors each bird brings to the dinner plate. After tasting duck for the first time, it increased his desire for success.

Sunday morning dawned with 30 mph winds and rain. Today would be the day I thought. I had recruited another friend to join us on Sunday as we headed to a third different spot. On Sunday, we hunted the peninsula of a lake and were settled into the cattails. Luck was on our side with the weather, and the birds came. As a pair of wood ducks buzzed passed before shooting light, we took that as a good sign. As the sun rose, a trio of mallards swung low and banked for the decoys. Two peeled off early, but the third had swung within range — as the wings cupped and the bird hovered, I told Jason to take the shot

He rose and pulled the trigger. Miss, then again — bang — and this time, the mallard tumbled from the sky. I turned to look at him and knew that smile would be there for the rest of the day. As our friend retrieved the downed drake, our excitement level soared. We finished the day with three birds downed, including two nice drake mallards for Jason. He would be heading home a successful duck hunter

On top of the desire to pursue adventure and healthy meat, hunting for Jason runs deeper. To him, hunting and engaging in the outdoors is a way to be more connected to different communities. It is a gateway to becoming a better father, bridging the gaps between diverse communities and helping to lay the foundation for improved accessibility, health, and wellness for a more inclusive conservation community

For me, the weekend was about more than shooting ducks. The time I spent with Jason turned out to be better than I could have hoped for as a mentor and I appreciate the friendship we began to build. It was a pleasure to welcome another member into the waterfowl community, and I look forward to hearing stories as Jason continues to grow as a hunter and spend more time with him in the blind.

This story also reminds me that recruiting one new hunter is cumbersome. The time, effort and knowledge are things that can not simply be learned in a one-hour class. It took a weekend, resources and can-do attitude to create a new duck hunter. Can you offer a weekend to someone to help save our pursuits?

Can you make the switch to non-toxic ammo, tackle?

Those opposed to lead ammo, tackle say voluntary transition to non-toxic alternatives is best way to go

As evidence of lead's harmful effect on wildlife continues to accumulate, an energized, vocal and rapidly growing group of hunters and anglers of all ages are making the transition from lead ammo and fishing tackle to non-toxic alternatives.

Conservationists like Drew YoungeDyke, who has written extensively on the topic for the National Wildlife Federation, say not using lead is part of being a responsible steward of natural resources in the 21st Century.

YoungeDyke uses an analogy he borrowed from a friend to illustrate the point: A good hunter wouldn't pull the trigger on an animal if they knew another animal behind them was at risk of being injured or killed by the shot. The same applies to using lead, which can end up hurting more than just the targeted animal.

Most already are fairly well acquainted with how harmful lead can be, especially here in Michigan, where traces of the metal discovered in the drinking water supply of thousands of Flint residents made national headlines a handful of years ago.

Particularly dangerous for children's developing brains, for animals, lead can cause serious health problems and, oftentimes, death.

A recent study conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and

Michigan Department of Natural Resources found that the No. 2 cause of death among bald eagles in Michigan was lead, (the No. 1 cause was collisions with vehicles while the birds are scavenging on the side of the road).

The study found that bald eagles oftentimes inadvertently ingest lead while feeding on the carcasses of animals punctured with lead ammunition.

A recent convert to the non-lead lifestyle, YoungeDyke is the first to admit that he hasn't always been as passionate about the subject as he is today.

YoungeDyke recalls the countless lead sinkers he's lost over the course of his life while fishing on the lake near his family's cottage located on the western edge of the Upper Peninsula.

It's troubling to think about, YoungeDyke said, because loons in the area dive deep into the water to pick up pebbles and other objects from the lake bottom to help them digest food.

There's little doubt that some of his lead sinkers have ended up in loon stomachs over the years, YoungeDyke said.

Negative impacts on loon populations due to lead aren't merely theoretical: YoungeDyke points to a 2018 New Hampshire study that estimated that lead poisoning over a 24-year period led to a 43% reduction in the state's loon population.

And it isn't just wildlife that can be affected by lead ammunition.

A 2008 study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in North Dakota found elevated blood-lead levels in people who ate wild game, prompting warnings that children and pregnant women should avoid game harvested with lead.

While there's little evidence to suggest that lead is having a population-level impact on bald eagles in Michigan as of yet, YoungeDyke said for him it's a matter of ethics.

"It's important to me that I don't contribute to poisoning the environment," YoungeDyke said. "It comes down to the individual hunter. If it's important to you as an ethical hunter, you shouldn't use lead. There's no judgement for people who haven't made the switch. But it's at least something to consider."

Drew YoungeDyke shot this squirrel with copper .22LR ammunition using an 1892 Marlin lever-action. Photo: Drew YoungeDyke

Michigan United Conservation Clubs is the latest organization to advocate for the voluntary use of non-lead shot, bullets, fishing sinkers, jig heads and other items whenever possible.

"Increasingly, there are more and more alternatives to lead in hunting ammunition," reads a resolution approved by MUCC membership during their summer convention, held online this year due to restrictions on public gatherings caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"In some cases, these alternatives perform better than lead, such as the newer copper bullets and tungsten jigs … THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That MUCC educate the sporting public of the potential impacts using lead, and the alternatives, for hunting ammunition, as well as fishing gear. The resolution concludes that the use of lead ammunition at shooting ranges isn't as much of a concern.

MUCC Executive Director Amy Trotter said while there are legitimate reasons people can't or choose

Using tin split shot in place of lead is another way to make the non-toxic switch. Photo: Drew YoungeDyke

not to switch to non-lead alternatives for hunting and fishing, the purpose of the resolution is to continue the conversation about the topic.

"It's a recognition that regulatory measures may not be required if we let people know about the alternatives," Trotter said.

At a federal level, a ban on using lead shot for waterfowl hunting took full effect in 1991 following a failed lawsuit filed by the National Wildlife Federation that aimed to ban lead shot altogether.

California currently is the only state in the country that has implemented a full lead ammunition ban — an aggressive measure that many conservationists here in Michigan are trying to avoid.

George Lindquist, former MUCC president, said he was incredulous when he first heard reports that bald eagles were dying from lead exposure.

"I questioned that right away," Lindquist said. "Where are they getting the lead from?"

After all, there are some legitimate reasons to continue using lead.

Lindquist said for one thing, some firearms — especially older ones — aren't able to fire ammunition made of the most affordable non-lead alternatives, such as steel. In those cases, sometimes the only alternatives available are bismuth or tungsten, both of which are considerably more expensive.

Another factor that may have made it more difficult for some people to switch is availability in remote areas where there aren't very many options for people to shop for ammunition.

YoungeDyke said there also are differences in the efficacy of lead versus non-lead ammunition, although he added that much of the negative perception that exists about alternatives is based on how they performed when they first were introduced a number of years ago.

Lindquist said he's convinced based on the research that lead poses a major threat to the environment and wildlife, which is why he switched to alternative ammunitions and is now an advocate for not using lead. He also happens to be the person who drafted the resolution approved by MUCC this summer.

Lindquist said it might surprise some people to learn that when lead bullets puncture an animal, the metal becomes fragmented and dispersed throughout its body, with some pieces ending up in the meat and guts — prime real estate for a hungry bald eagle, or any other scavenger, for that matter.

In some cases, animals killed by lead ammunition are placed out in the open by hunters so they can observe with their trail cameras what critters show up to feast. Being easily accessible increases the chances of animals feeding on the carcass and becoming poisoned.

In his experience, Lindquist said alternative ammunitions such as copper work just as well, if not better, than lead, although he admits that not every hunter (or angler) has the ability or means to make the switch immediately.

"If more people request it, more people will sell it," Lindquist said. "We can gradually move toward it voluntarily, rather than having to make a law about it. Why not do it; if you can do it? That's where's I'm at, and that's what I try to stress."

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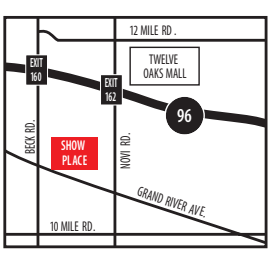

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The unstated corollary: They live in agony who only stand and wait

By Andy Duffy

While cutting the grass a few days ago, I pushed the mower once again over the mostly-bare spot in the yard and I couldn't help feeling remorseful. The grave I dug last fall is populated now by a scant few lambsquarters and tiny blades of grass – sad laurels with which to commemorate the life of a dog. But the rustic resting place, a handful of pictures and some memories are all that remain of Maggie, my big golden retriever.

For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these: "It might have been!"

So wrote John Greenleaf Whittier, and maybe he was never more sagacious than at that moment. The words have since been mocked and parodied, but they still ring with poignancy and pathos. It's sad to see potential go unfulfilled, and Maggie (not her real name) might be the poster dog for the principle.

Maggie was four or five maybe when she came home with my wife and me. The daughter and son-in-law of her owner weren't entirely sure how old she was. Maggie belonged to an elderly lady, though, who could no longer keep her. The lady was going to a hospital for surgery, and then she was going to a nursing home, but she didn't know it. It's one of the tragedies of the aging process. The body goes and the mind goes. Anyway, the daughter was looking for a new home for Maggie. When my wife and I saw her picture on Facebook, it melted our hearts.

We made the trip to meet Maggie, and we were stunned by how obese she was. An elderly, indulgent owner who couldn't take the dog for frequent walks or romps in the woods and possibly gave her lots of table scraps – well, we've all seen similar situations. And, even though Maggie's owner had a fenced back yard, something gave us the impression that she took the dog outside on a leash when nature called. No wonder Maggie was obese. Still, my wife and I agreed to take her.

I wasn't sure Maggie would even make it to our house alive. I thought she might have a heart attack getting in our car. She was that out of shape. Still, she had a zest for life even if she didn't have any endurance. She would retrieve a ball if someone tossed one for her, and she would do it excitedly. To the end of her days, though, one retrieve was always enough for her. Instead of giving the ball to the tosser to throw again, she would hang on to it and try to catch her breath.

We put her on a strict diet when we got her home, but it was too late for us to accomplish much with her. After a year, she might have been

The author's English springer, Lily, with a brace of pheasants she flushed and retrieved last fall. Working dogs love to work.

Sure, this beagle gets hair on the couch. She's not in a pen, though, or, worse yet, on a chain. And she gets hunted a lot. Content here, she has just returned from a rabbit hunt.

half her former size. She was still overweight, though, and the years of obesity had taken their toll. She was pigeon-toed, and we guessed it was from being overweight. Although she showed no signs of hip dysplasia, neither did she ever do anything more than waddle.

She loved going on rides, though. Perhaps that was the only activity she could still enjoy. I would let her clamber in the car with me nearly anytime I went anywhere.

So, of course, she found herself along one afternoon when I was going hunting with my English springer. And that had been part of my plan to begin with, to get another hunting dog.

Unfortunately, Maggie was unable to hang with us even for a short time. We hadn't gone 50 yards when she turned around and headed back for my car. Some of her spirit died that day. She seemed to realize that she'd never be able to go for romps in the woods. I don't know if she knew what she was missing. Perhaps even when a pup, she had never gone for a romp in the woods. She knew she was missing something fun and magical, though. It was evident.

And that's the thing about dogs. They have a keen intelligence. They enjoy life. They have the capacity to know when they're having fun, and they know when they're bored. They also know when they're just wasting their lives by doing nothing.

"I've become convinced that we need to ensure that our dogs are compatible with the people they give their allegiance to."

I don't want to be offensive during this time when a significant percentage of the population of this country has the feeling that others aren't valuing their lives as they should. Still, I believe if anything is true, this is: Dogs' lives matter. Their lives matter to them, anyway, and their lives should matter to their owners. If they don't, their owners are people of a lesser sort.

I believe I've mentioned this conviction in the pages of this publication before, but it's worth repeating. And the older I get, the more attuned I get, I think, to the needs of a dog. I know dogs don't have extensive vocabularies. They communicate with body language and guttural sounds, not slick words. And dogs don't understand the subtleties of language, the differences between nouns and verbs and whatnot. But people still use words with dogs. And I've begun to make sure I spend more time hugging my dogs and

scratching their ears and talking to them. I tell them, "Your life matters. It's significant to me." And they'll wiggle and writhe, and I think they understand what I'm telling them.

I believe it more fervently after having Maggie. Dogs need to be matched to their owners. Many wonderful people shouldn't own hunting dogs (or shepherds or many other breeds). Dogs waste their lives who only sit and wait.

It pangs me when I see dogs doing nothing: the hunting dog not hunting, the herd dog not herding or the sled dog not pulling sleds. I've become convinced that we need to ensure that our dogs are compatible with the people they give their allegiance to. People who have time only for a pet should get a dog from that set of dogs that only want to be pets. People who can hunt a lot (or have livestock to herd or sleds that need pulled) who also want a pet can look for a dog with something more.

There is nothing wrong with someone — even an outdoorsman — having a lap dog. A lap dog's purpose is to run around the house and be companionable. Many dogs appear happy doing just that. I've seen them, the shih tzus and Boston terriers and teacup poodles. Whatever those dogs' ancestors were bred for years ago, a lot of the ancient instincts seem to have been bred out of them. They're apparently content living a milquetoast life. What's heart-rending is when dogs designed for noble purposes are denied their opportunity. And it happens often. Unfortunately, Maggie was one dog among many who live unfulfilled lives. Here's another example.

I know a guy who once had an English springer. As the owner of one and a huge fan of the breed, I think I know a thing or two about them.

An English springer is a highly intelligent, alert and driven dog. Even now, as I write this during the height of the summer, my English springer, Lily, lies around the house waiting for bird season to open. She may appear unmindful of my activities. Actually, though, she is attuned to my every movement. She is always watching or listening for indications of my intentions.

If I put on my cap, Lily knows I'm going outside. If I put on my cap and pull my car keys out of my pocket, she knows I'm going for a drive. If I ask her if she wants to go for a ride, she's at the door ahead of me. If my wife is around, Lily knows I'm probably going somewhere with her, and Lily won't be coming along. Dispiritedly, she will jump up on the couch where she mopes until I return home.

The non-bird season for Lily consists of long months trying to find something entertaining to do. She follows me to the garden, where she lies at its edge in the shade of a bush. When I pick up a rock and toss it out of the garden, Lily runs and retrieves it. That is

We should let our dogs run through the briars and the brambles and the switch grass and suffer from the heat of the sun and the bite of the frost.

The author's English springer, Lily, sits in the shade of a forsythia. That's where she often spends her time waiting for bird season to come around again.

her favorite pastime, I think, during the offseason. We have a large forsythia bush that I can't mow around without moving stones away from it. Those are the stones I've thrown from the garden that Lily has retrieved.

So, back to the springer my friend owned.

I don't remember exactly how he acquired Renegade. As I recall, someone decided he no longer wanted the springer and offered him to my friend. Whatever the circumstances, my friend took Renegade, perhaps to save him from a worse fate. But, as far as I know, my friend never hunted the dog. Bored to tears, Renegade spent his long, sad days yapping incessantly on a chain. Such a life might be fine for a potato beetle. It's terrible for a dog, though.

"To confine, whom nature has given the urge to scrap, to perch, to flap her wings, to take dust baths, in a wire cage in which she cannot do any of these things, is revoltingly cruel and I cannot bring myself to talk to anybody who does it, nor would I, on any condition, allow such a person inside my house," wrote John Seymour, the great proponent of small-acreage subsistence farming. And he was writing about chickens.

He added, "Let your hens run outside so that they can suffer, as we do, the heat of the sun and the bite of the frost… Give each hen a handful of grain every evening and a handful or two of high protein food in the morning and any scraps you can spare." In return, Seymour wrote, chickens will eat a lot of insect pests and give a person chicks and eggs.

And dogs have a lot more cognizance than chickens do. If we can adjudge that it's cruel to keep a chicken cooped up where it can't scratch and dig in the dirt, how much crueler it is to keep a dog from doing what it was bred to do.

That means we need to make the same bargain with our hunting dogs that Seymour suggests for our chickens. We need to let them hunt. We need to let them run through the briars and the brambles and the switchgrass. We need to let them point and swim and retrieve. We need to let them get the occasional snout full of porcupine quills, especially if they otherwise would be living some safe existence lounging around a house and getting fat as Maggie did (or even worse, rotting at the end of a chain as Renegade did). If we're not letting dogs do their thing, we're guilty of cruelty. I can imagine the pain we're causing them.

That means dog shoppers need to show some restraint when they're looking for a family pet. If nobody will work with a hunting dog and use it for its intended purpose, pass it up. I know how tough that can sometimes be.

I spent years of my youth raccoon hunting, and I would love to have a rangy bluetick or redbone hound. I've seen some nice-looking pups for sale, too. I haven't forked over the cash for one, though, because I know I won't hunt a coonhound enough to be fair to the dog. We need to care enough for our dogs to match them to their owners. A person might love to hunt birds over a dog. That doesn't mean he should buy a bird dog. Unless he can hunt a lot, he should hunt his birds with a friend or a guide. And that's a principle that runs at large. Nobody should buy a dog just to let it rot its life away.

We will all have a reckoning with death someday, and others will evaluate our lives. At my evaluation, I want someone to declare that I treated my dogs the way I wanted to be treated.

And I want to be treated like this. If I need some young whippersnapper along to hunt with me, so be it. These, though, are the highlights.

I want to be allowed to run through the briars and the brambles and the switchgrass as much as possible until the day I die. I want to feel the heat and the cold. I want to flush birds and feel the smoothness of a gun butt against my cheek and the cold steel of a gun barrel in my hand. I want to get blisters on my feet. I want to get a snout full of porcupine quills myself occasionally. If I go with my boots on, that's OK. It will be much better than spending my last days in my bedroom slippers. And if that's the way I want to go, how selfish of me to want anything less for my dogs.

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2020 MUCC Annual Convention Recap

COVID-19 presented obstacles, MUCC able to overcome them using online resolution and election process

Despite being unable to hold its Annual Convention in-person, Michigan United Conservation Clubs' members voted through 14 resolutions in an online format that ended earlier this year.

In total, 24 policy resolutions were brought forth for members to weigh. Given the circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and the in-person, grassroots debate that makes MUCC so powerful, no resolutions from the online format failed. MUCC will take up the 10 resolutions that did not meet the threshold for online passage at an in-person meeting later so proper discourse on the matter can occur.

MUCC President Greg Peter (Chelsea Rod and Gun) succeeded Immediate Past President George Lindquist (UP Whitetails of Marquette County) and will carry the gavel until June of 2022. Tim Muir, Jr. (Lake St. Clair Walleye Association) was elected as the new vice president. He will serve two years as vice president and chair of the Conservation Policy Board and assume the presidency in 2022.

Fran Yeager was elected to the treasurer's position, with Steve Dey (Straits Area Sportsmen's Club), Keith Huff (Montmorency County Conservation Club), Dan McMaster (Shiawassee Conservation Association), Patrick Hogan (Tomahawk Archers) and Travis Powers (Individual Member) rounding out the elections for Regions 2,4,6,8 and 8, respectively.

All proposed bylaws amendments were passed, and a full list of passed policy resolutions and election results, including the Conservation Policy Board, are available by visiting mucc.org.

MUCC Executive Director Amy Trotter said 2020 has tested MUCC's resolve, but she is relieved the organization was able to move forward with the policy process.

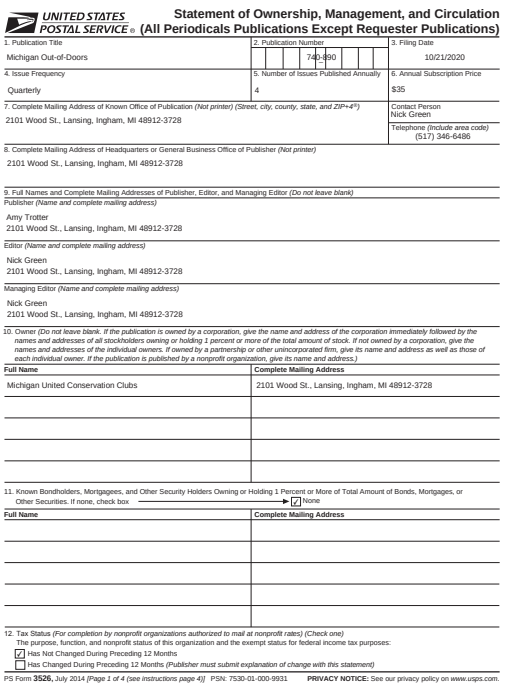
"Given the state of politics, it is more imperative than ever that MUCC members have their voices heard and reverberated throughout the halls of the Michigan Capitol, in Washington D.C. and at NRC meetings," Trotter said. "Staff looks forward to facilitating member debate on the remaining 10 resolutions that did not pass the online format and getting to work implementing the resolutions that did pass."

Working to rescind state law that tickets a hunter or recreational shooter for leaning a loaded firearm against their vehicle or placing it on their tailgate, encouraging the administration to fill Natural Resources Commission vacancies in a timely manner and updating an archaic statute preventing hunters or anglers from accessing public boat launches due to "hours of use" laws are a few of the resolutions that passed the online format.

"Overall, MUCC was able to creatively and effectively work through conservation policies that affect all of us during these trying times," Peter said. "Conservation has not stopped because of COVID-19, and I look forward to helping this organization, its staff and its members think creatively about the year ahead and the unknown obstacles we will encounter."

MUCC will release more details about an in-person event to debate the remaining resolutions at a later date if recommendations around indoor gatherings relax. Stay tuned to mucc.org and our Facebook page for more details.

Many thanks go out to our members, supporters, donors and conservationists who supported Michigan United Conservation Clubs through this difficult year. For the first time since 1937, we were unable to hold our Annual Convention in-person — an event where policy decisions are made that set the course for the organization for years to come. With some can-do attitude and a whole lot of creative thinking, staff are proud that we were able to still offer a hybrid policy process, and we all look forward to seeing our members debate the remaining resolutions in-person at a later date. – MUCC Staff



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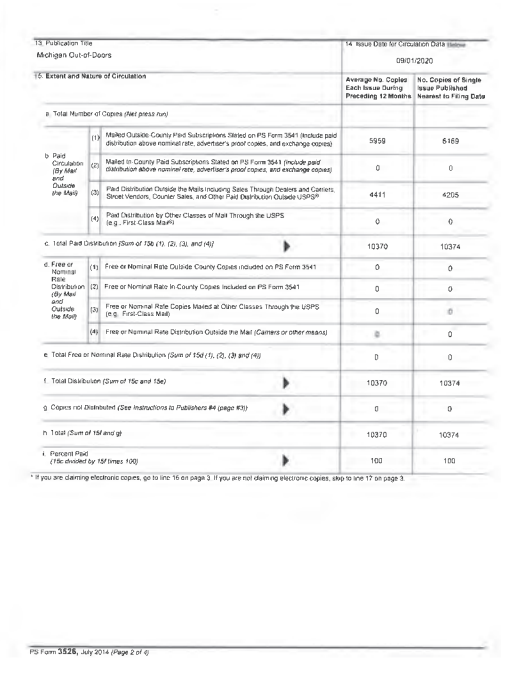

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Hunting, fishing a 'higher cause' for new Michigan Wildlife Council chairman

Sponsored by the Michigan Wildlife Council

Growing up in Michigan's Thumb, Nick Buggia figured he was just having fun, enjoying the outdoors and making memories with his family and friends whenever he went deer or small game hunting.

He never gave much thought to how he was helping preserve the state's outdoor heritage for future generations.

But today, as the recently appointed chairman of the Michigan Wildlife Council, Buggia is very much attuned to the important role he and other hunters and anglers play in conserving the state's wildlife and natural resources.

"As a teenager, you don't really spend much time contemplating the higher cause that you're part of when you're out in the woods and fields," he said. "But now I fully appreciate the fact that hunters are the original conservationists."

And as MWC chairman, Buggia has a platform to spread that message throughout the state.

Informing the general public – and hunters and anglers

The council was created by the Michigan Legislature in 2014 and tasked with increasing public awareness and understanding of how the management, conservation and protection of the state's natural resources are funded; the myriad ways hunter/angler dollars benefit all species for the enjoyment of all state residents and visitors; and the significant contribution of hunting, fishing and trapping to Michigan's economy.

"Those are concepts that not even all sportsmen and sportswomen fully appreciate," Buggia said. "For example, initial Michigan Wildlife Council research found that a sizable percentage of hunters and anglers didn't know that it was their license purchases – not general taxes – that funded the bulk of conservation efforts throughout the state."

In fact, hunting and fishing license sales generate more than $60 million annually that is funneled to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for activities such as habitat improvements and invasive species control.

In addition, through the Pittman-Robertson and the Dingell-Johnson acts, hunting and fishing equipment purchases generate more than $30 million each year for wildlife conservation in Michigan.

And on a broader economic level, a Michigan

United Conservation Clubs study has found that hunting and fishing are an $11.2 billion industry in Michigan that supports 171,000 jobs.

On top of that are the thousands of meals hunters provide to needy families through programs such as Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger.

Promoting sound science

"But hunters and anglers do far more than benefit the state's economy and its conservation efforts financially," Buggia said. "Just consider the intangible contributions that hunting and fishing traditions make to the quality of life for all Michigan families and communities."

Modern hunting and fishing activities – and the concepts that the Michigan Wildlife Council promotes – are rooted in the North American Wildlife Conservation Model, which was developed in the mid-1800s when sportsmen realized they needed to assume responsibility for managing wildlife habitats

and protecting rapidly disappearing wildlife.

The movement gave rise to the system that is widely supported and serves us so well today: regulated hunting and fishing and public lands that government agencies manage using scientifically based practices.

"Today's hunters and anglers are building on a long history of safeguarding wildlife populations," Buggia said. "As a result, everybody in Michigan has an opportunity to enjoy our great outdoors, whether they hunt and fish or not."

Still, vigilance is required to ensure future generations are able to carry on our hunting and fishing traditions, he said.

"We, as sportsmen and sportswomen, should never shy away from discussing with nonhunters our love of nature and the importance of preserving our outdoor heritage," Buggia said, adding, "Fall is a perfect time to reflect on the debt of gratitude Michigan residents owe to hunters and anglers for the abundant wildlife and sporting opportunities that the state can offer today."

New leadership, new members at Michigan Wildlife Council

The Michigan Wildlife Council has both new leadership and new members.

Nick Buggia, 32, was named council chairman in April, following Matt Pedigo's many years of service in that role. Buggia, appointed to the council in 2018, is the Upper Midwestern States manager for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. A Thumb native and an avid outdoorsman, Buggia represents rural areas of the state whose economies are substantially impacted by hunting and fishing.

In June, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer appointed two new members to the nine-person council: Jason Garvon and T. Elliot Shafer.

Garvon, who lives in Brimley, is a biology professor at Lake Superior State University. He serves as an adviser for the university's chapter of Ducks Unlimited and is a former member of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Citizens Advisory Council. On the Michigan Wildlife Council, Garvon represents individuals who have purchased hunting or fishing licenses in Michigan on a regular basis. He succeeds Jim Hammill, whose term expired in March.

Shafer, who lives in Grosse Pointe Woods, is vice president of commercial banking for TCF Bank. He is a member of the Ruffed Grouse Society, Pheasants Forever Initiative, Ducks Unlimited, Huntsman Hunt Club and the Northland Sportsmen's Club. On the council, Shafer represents an individual with a media or marketing background. He succeeds Carol Rose, who resigned to accept an appointment to the Natural Resources Commission.

Strength in Effort

By Shawn Stafford

Public lands have helped mold me into the hunter and person I am today — good, bad or indifferent. I like to think that I lean more towards the good side, but that is, of course, up for discussion. The definition of "good" certainly depends on your measure of success. From a hunting standpoint, it doesn't necessarily mean I'm a highly-skilled killing machine. What I feel were positive gains from some early public land hunting are humility, skill, respect for nature and respect for other hunters.

Those are the factors that led me to additional public land opportunities, which further reinforced those traits. I've hunted public lands in four different states: Michigan, Wisconsin, Colorado and Indiana. All have treated me well and offered varying degrees of heartbreaks and victories. For this article, though, I would like to focus on Michigan as I believe it set the table early on for a fulfilling future.

I grew up hunting and continued to do so through college. However, landing my first job as a gainfully-employed engineer, I found myself away from home and in the greater Detroit metropolitan area. At first, the experience was new and exciting, but there was always this empty feeling I couldn't seem to shake. Looking back now, there were two instances in which my primordial instincts took over and forced me into action. I was on my own with no ties or connections to the area, but yet I wasn't going to let that stop me. I did a little research and managed to find a location that allowed hunting and was open to the public. I couldn't believe it. It's been many years, but I'm almost sure I had found the Proud Lake Recreation Area.

I was nervous as this was my first go on public land, but I wasn't going to let a little anxiety keep me from something I missed and enjoyed so much. I was only going to hunt squirrel, but the quarry

"I was nervous as this was my first go on public land, but I wasn't going to let a little anxiety keep me from something I missed and enjoyed so much."

was the least of my concerns.

Getting some fresh air and stepping out for an hour or two was what I needed. Feeling a little odd about traipsing around on property that I didn't own, I was very tentative at first. However, after a short time, I forgot about all that and lived in the moment.

To say I came home with a limit would be a lie. The puny little squirrel I brought to the table wasn't really even a snack for most of us. The best part was it didn't matter. I was happy knowing I didn't just wait for something to happen. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources was kind enough to give me the opportunity and place to hunt, so why shouldn't I take advantage of it?

The second instance I was referring to was in the dead of winter that same first year after college.

Living in an apartment and being cooped up started to get the best of me. I couldn't take it anymore and convinced one of my roommates we needed to go ice fishing. All of my equipment was back home, so we spent most of the morning seeking out the needed gear, and after several attempts at communicating the type of bait I wanted from the bait shop, we had what we needed. I'm sure the guy at the bait shop was frustrated as I know I was.

Apparently, due to our geographically different upbringings, bee moths were not a term he was familiar with. So he brought me out some teeny, tiny, little, fuzzy things that to this day I don't know what they were. After a couple of back-and-forths, eventually, we were able to agree that what he was selling were wax worms, and that was what I wanted.

All I had to go off of was a free metro park map I had picked up somewhere along the way, which led us to the nearest lake we could access. It turns out that it was Kensington Metropark where we tried our luck on the hard water. After what felt like a spontaneous eternity, we finally made it and drilled a hole. I can't recall whether we caught anything but once again, it wasn't about filling a bucket full. I was on my own, utilizing what I had available to me, to live the outdoorsman's dream. Again, I thank the State of Michigan for providing me with that body of water to not only maintain some sanity during a long winter but to continue in my lifelong pursuit of outdoor experiences.

Fast forward a couple of years, and I found myself living just north of Flint. Once again, in a new area where I had no family, friends, or land connections, I found myself longing for the hunt. By this time, I had become a little more determined and a little more adventurous. I didn't want to scrape the surface; I wanted to go all in. I was working with a couple of likeminded hunters and anglers (one who eventually became my uncle by marriage!), and talking daily with them just kept adding fuel to the fire. Through these discussions and a hugely-nice offer to show me around some of his old stomping grounds, I was introduced to another magical public hunting ground. The fact that I could go to this beautiful place and hunt all I wanted, within legal constraints of course, was just amazing to me. It was near Caro in the thumb region and proved to really be a turning

point for me. Here is where I had some of my best learning experiences with regards to hunting. Let me tell you, most of the lessons came the hard way.

I spent a fair amount of time burning boot leather. The thing with this particular area was it all looked the same. You walked into the woods and each direction you turned looked like what was in your last frame of view. This was my first go-round with big woods hunting. I really didn't know where to start. It all looked the same! How could I possibly pinpoint deer movement or their whereabouts? I'd be lying if I told you I figured it out that first year. That doesn't mean I didn't try, though. I hiked a mile or two in then cut from the pseudo trail until I found an area that looked promising. It took several attempts to find a place that felt worthy of my deer stand. This was lesson No. 1 — finding a spot deer actually wanted to be.

As I previously mentioned, I had bow hunted for years prior, but that doesn't mean I was a master at my trade. Fast forward a few years, I was still no crackerjack. Please note, I practiced religiously with my bow each night. From the perspective of hitting my target, I was quite accurate.

I practiced shooting standing, sitting, from a tree stand and everything in between. Hitting a target and surrounding yourself with deer and executing a killing shot are two completely different things. I vividly remember the first deer that came into my inaugural public land deer set up. It was a lone doe that appeared from nowhere as usual. My excitement got the best of me, and she pegged me preparing to get into a position to shoot. We had a staring contest that seemed to go on forever until she'd decided that something wasn't right about the situation and vacated the area.

Additional lessons that year for the rest of the bow season and into gun season included waiting for the animal to stop or stopping it yourself prior to shooting. Also, don't force the shot. Wait 'till it's right or don't take it at all. Always be patient. Gutshot deer will hunch up after being hit, and they likely won't bleed much. Meat shot (such as a shoulder or leg) will bleed a fair amount initially, but unfortunately, the trail will potentially dry up before it leads to a dead animal.

As far a public land hunting goes explicitly, you will most likely see other people. Just remember they have every much a right to be there as you do. Treat them with courtesy and respect just as you'd like the same reciprocated. While bowhunting just prior to the gun opener, I had a gentleman come strolling through the woods toward my stand carrying a bag of bait (legal at the time). Rather than yell vulgarities at him or get discouraged, I simply waived and got his attention. No words were said; he realized the spot was

taken and turned back the way he had come. Another instance led to me getting a bit turned around on my way out of the woods one morning. I stumbled upon a well-camouflaged bowhunter sitting on the ground waiting for something of the four-legged variety to come by rather than my bipedal frame. Again, realizing I had entered his "personal" space, I nodded, whispered "sorry" and began to pick my way out in another direction.

This does, however, lead me to a critical point I'd like to make: be prepared. The topography where I was hunting was predominantly flat and wooded. As I previously mentioned, it looked the same in every direction from where you stood. I was accustomed to hunting agricultural land where you were always following a fence row, field edge, holler or could see houses or landmarks wherever you were. I got turned around one day while blood trailing a deer. I didn't have a compass, map, GPS or any other navigational tool. I didn't have an emergency kit either. They always say, "don't panic." There is a reason they say that — it's the first thing you're going to want to do.

As the panic tried to set in, I knew enough to ward it off as best I could. Mind you, I wasn't more than a mile or two from the nearest road, but that feeling of not knowing where you are or which direction you need to go is not a pleasant one. I was marking the blood trail with orange tape, so eventually, I could find my last mark and work my way back toward where I had started from and pick up the path out. Since that time, I have a compass, GPS and an emergency kit with me each time I take to the woods.

That first year saw me with an empty freezer but an abundance of knowledge to take into the next season. I was more focused and did a better job of "reading" the land since it all appeared to look the same. This time, I found a very thick area that would be holding deer. Rather than blowing it up, I set my stand on the edge.

I also kept my stand on the east side of the area, so I didn't have to circle upwind of the area alerting all the deer I was there. I was patient this second year, and rather than make a lousy shot, I let several deer walk because the opportunity wasn't there. I was rewarded that season with a doe. It was one of my finest and proudest moments. I had utilized what was available to me and made the very best of it. I learned through trials and errors. I read and researched. I spent time on my feet studying the ground I intended to hunt.

I used a portion of America's extensive public land system to fuel my soul and provide valuable organic protein to fuel my body. It wasn't easy. I didn't even go into detail about the long hikes in, carrying heavy loads to set up stands, taking the stands down at the end of season, the 45-minute drive one way each time I hunted, the downed log across the entrance to the parking area or the extremely-taxing-but-highly-enjoyable drag out when I did finally connect.

I could go on about the trials and tribulations of those early years of Michigan public land hunting (don't get me started about fishing!), but I don't want to downplay how valuable all those experiences were. It was hard, and success was not guaranteed — as with any hunting endeavor.

Perseverance, dedication and desire ultimately won out for me. Those early lessons led the way to many future victories. Please don't shy away from public land as it could turn out to be way more rewarding than you could have imagined. The lessons you will learn along the way will help mold you as a hunter, angler and conservationist.

A Quarter Michigander

By Brandon Butler

The human heart is approximately 75 percent water — making mine mostly made up of Lake Michigan. You could say my heart literally belongs to the Great Lakes State.

Growing up in Northwest Indiana, just miles from the southernmost tip of the "Big Lake," we piped our drinking water from the lakeshore. Also our economy, recreation and identity were tied to our location. A once thriving boomtown based on steel production and ease of shipping, Gary and its surrounding cities drew workers from all corners of the country. My mother's father came from Illinois. Her mother from Kentucky. My father's father from Tennessee. He wed a wonderful woman from Battle Creek. Their 60-year love affair began in Benton Harbor. I guess that makes me a quarter Michigander.

Throughout my childhood, Michigan, and even more so Lake Michigan, played a key role in shaping my love of outdoor pursuits. Stretching nets in waist-deep water for smelt and then frying them on a moonlit beach is a fond memory. Sitting on a rock in between two other people sitting on rocks watching a bobber with a nightcrawler under it waiting desperately for a Coho to bite is another memory I won't soon forget. Anticipating the steelhead and salmon coming into the tributaries and pursing them aggressively for a short period of time with spawn sacks and spoons — I'll never forget these early outdoor experiences.

Yet, life has taken me far. Besides Indiana, I've lived in Colorado, Montana and now, Missouri. And I've traveled to nearly every state in the country in pursuit of fish or game, save Alaska, Hawaii and a few of those little dots in New England. But I am continuously drawn back to Michigan. I'll argue in any bar that Michigan is the best freshwater fishing state in the country, and long before Montana was even a glimmer of political capital in President Benjamin Harrison's eye, Michigan was the best sporting destination in America.

In the "Big Two-Hearted River," one of his timeless tales of adventure in Michigan, Ernest Hemingway so eloquently wrote, "He sat on the logs, smoking, drying in the sun, the sun warm on his back, the river shallow ahead entering the woods, curving into the woods, shallows, light glittering, big water-smooth rocks, cedars along the bank and white birches, the logs warm in the sun, smooth to sit on, without bark, gray to the touch; slowly the feeling of disappointment left him."

Michigan can do this to the best of us. This awe of wilderness Hemingway experienced and shared with us through his character, Nick Adams, is one many outdoors enthusiasts have come to know when traveling into the state's northwoods and onto her pristine rivers.

When it comes to freshwater fishing, I don't know how you could argue anywhere is better than Michigan. The entire state is surrounded by the Great Lakes and is home to countless natural inland lakes and some of the most

beautiful rivers in the country. The hunting, which is steeped in a rich history and culture, is also fantastic. For me, Michigan becomes better the further north you go, with Gaylord being a favorite destination.

As a fella who loves the fall, I can't wait for chilly air, changing leaves and open hunting seasons. Each year, as fall begins to set in, I try to find my way north before all those perfect attributes arrive further south where I live. This year, I was back in Gaylord to fish, hunt and explore the local scene. The trip did not disappoint.

On a frosty, late-September morning, I joined my friends, Nick Green, public information officer for Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and Chris Sebastian, public affairs coordinator for Ducks Unlimited, for an early season ruffed grouse hunt. Nick is the expert. He has two well-trained bird dogs, which are indispensable when the trees are still green and thick with foliage.

A couple of years ago, Nick and I shot sharp-tailed grouse with his dogs in North Dakota. I was eager to hunt behind Calvin and Summit again. As they worked the cover and we walked down an overgrown logging road in the Pigeon River Country State Forest in search of ruffies, my mind wandered back to many of the incredible outdoor experiences I've had in Northern Michigan: carp fishing Beaver Island, steelhead and salmon on the Pere Marquette, brown trout on the Au Sable; The list goes on. Combined, it's these memories mixed with the reality of the state being so rich in outdoor opportunity that keeps drawing me back.

The bird hunting ended up being tough. In two days of busting brush over many miles, the three of us never killed a bird. We flushed plenty but because the leaves are still so thick on the trees, the grouse disappear as soon as you hear the unmistakable beating of their wings as they take flight. I did have one decent shot opportunity, but I missed. Oh, well — it doesn't matter. It was the opportunity to spend time with great friends while marching through the wilderness I sought and found. Nick says the best grouse hunting takes place in late October.

We stayed at Treetops Resort just a couple of miles east of Gaylord. This beautiful destination is home to five golf courses, downhill and cross country skiing and is in close proximity to trout fishing

on the Pigeon River and Sturgeon River. The accommodations are top-notch. General Manager Barry Owens said, "Treetops is a special place. It started in 1947 as small little downhill ski resort, and has grown into a world-class destination for golf, skiing and access to all the surrounding outdoor activities."

I didn't have time to fish like I had hoped during this quick trip, but a number of other people in our party did go out to Lake Michigan to fish Grand Traverse Bay where they caught lake trout and whitefish. It was hard to drive over the Pigeon River multiple times without breaking out a fly rod, but grouse were the goal and I was committed. I know the trout fishing is excellent right by the resort, and I won't go back without wetting a line.

Paul Beachnau, the executive director of the Gaylord Convention and Visitors Bureau, said, "Ernest Hemingway used to hang out in the Pigeon River Country. I think that helps put into perspective how incredible this area is for hunting and fishing."

Gaylord is home to many great restaurants. Two I thoroughly enjoyed are the Big Buck Brewery, where I paired a couple local beers with a nicely-prepared filet mignon and the Alpine Tavern, where I was able to satisfy my craving for fried lake perch. A trip to Jay's Sporting Goods, is another must when visiting Gaylord. This gigantic, independent outdoor retailer has everything you could ever need for hunting and fishing in the area.

Before heading back to the crappie-filled reservoirs of Southern Missouri, I had to stop for a day of fly fishing the Pere Marquette River with my longtime friend, Kevin Morlock, the owner and operator of Indigo Guide Service. The Pere Marquette, commonly referred to as the PM, is one of the premier fishing destinations in the Great Lakes Region. It's the longest free-flowing river in Michigan. The main branch runs uninterrupted for roughly 70 miles through the west-central portion of the state before dumping into Lake Michigan near Ludington.

Spending a week in Michigan during the fall is something I wish I could do every year. The fishing, hunting, scenery, food and just good-old-down-to-Earth people, make the state a special destination. Who knows what the future holds, but I like to think someday I may have a cabin in the upper reaches of the Lower Peninsula. If I do, many of my days will be spent chasing brown trout and ruffed grouse, interrupted by the occasional trip to the water of my heart.

If you would like to hear more about the author's adventures on this recent trip in Michigan, and an exclusive interview with Michigan Out-of-Doors editor, Nick Green, check out the Driftwood Outdoors Podcast on www.driftwoodoutdoors.com or anywhere podcasts are streamed.

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Sporting Collectibles:
Discovering Heritage through Patches

By Greg Marten

Another autumn weekend of hunting grouse and woodcock in Michigan ended too soon, and when I put my field coat into the closet, I looked upon the first decent upland vest that I purchased decades ago. Its blaze orange shoulders are faded now, and I only use it sparingly on warmer days afield. It sports a round, mostly-gold Ruffed Grouse Society patch on the left chest. It was sewn on so many years back that I don't recall exactly when, but seeing it always reminds me of many fine hunts of bygone days with my dad, Dave and my first gun dog, Zoie. I fondly recall the outing with dad a dozen years ago in a Presque Isle County alder thicket when I thought I saw Zoie in the corner of my eye moving about 15 yards off to my left. After turning my head to look fully at her, I was surprised to see a bobcat staring back. In a second, it silently disappeared into the stems.

I have been interested in outdoor sporting patches ever since childhood. My grandfather Harry had a pile of patches from the 1940s and '50s from the Wildwood Hunt Club. Grandpa's patches had various years stitched on them, each featuring a unique design and different color schemes. My brother Ken and I would pour over the patches when visiting our grandparents at their house on the Salt River near Lake St. Clair. Grandpa told us about his uncles, the Verschave brothers, who built and owned the Wildwood in Gratiot Township (now Harper Woods). They took club members out for waterfowl and pheasant hunts on land they owned near the Clinton River's mouth in what was then rural Macomb County. While visiting Uncle George Verschave in the late '90s before his passing, he told me that the famed outdoor TV journalist Mort Neff occasionally worked with him and the Wildwood regulars to film hunts and muskrat trapping features for Michigan Outdoors TV episodes. My brother and I were lucky to inherit the Wildwood Hunt Club patches, and Ken had them mounted and framed for display.

One Christmas, dad gave both Ken and I a pine marten patch from the Michigan Living Resources series from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Not many people spell "Marten" the way we do, so the gifts were dad's way of sharing a unique connection between our last name, his love for the out-of-doors and conservation of natural resources.

The pine marten patch was the 1988-1989 release in a desirable series of annual offerings from the Michigan DNR. In 1975, a Kirtland's warbler was featured on the first patch in the series. The DNR stopped producing and selling these patches in 2016-2017 with the American robin on a yellow background surrounded by a red border. At that time, the DNR reported that the patches were no longer making money for the Nongame Wildlife Fund.

Later in life, I started picking up hunting and fishing patches at flea markets and antique stores. I started to assemble a modest collection. One of my earliest patches was from the Multi Lakes Conservation Association in Commerce Township, where I often shot trap as a younger man.

There are many options available for patch collectors. People can focus or organize their collection efforts in any number of categories such as:

- Outdoor sporting clubs and conservation organizations
- Outdoor sporting events (fishing derbies, state or local shooting contests, environmental clean-ups, etc.)
- MI DNR (successful hunter series, cooperator series, master angler)
- Companies and products (fishing tackle, guns, ammo, etc.)
- Conservation officer patches from various states or divisions
- Scouting patches
- Geographic attractions (parks, hiking trails, lakes, waterfalls, etc.)

Some people collect only one category, while others take them all. My favorite are vintage Michigan outdoor sporting clubs and the Michigan Living Resources patches

Even before the Living Resources patches, in 1972 the DNR produced the first of the highly-sought Successful Deer Hunter patches. It displayed doe and buck silhouettes on a green background with gold letters and trim.

By the mid-80s, Michigan Bear Management Cooperator and, later, Wild Turkey Management patches were introduced as incentives for hunters to share data with wildlife scientists. In 1997, Michigan Successful Deer Hunter patches were rebranded as Deer Management Cooperator patches. For many years now, the annual designs for deer, bear and turkey patches are based upon winning entries of youth design contests hosted by their respective hunters' organizations in cooperation with the DNR.

Some outdoor patches are scarce today because relatively few were made or they are ancient. Vintage patches were sewn onto jackets, vests and caps that have long since been put into the rag pile or donations boxes. Some Michigan clubs and associations are no longer functioning, so their

Left: Patches from the author's collection — most are from MUCC and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Below: A framed collage of six patches from the Wildwood Hunt Club dating from 1948 to 1958 owned by Ken Marten

patches may be relatively hard to find. Indeed, I have never seen a Wildwood Hunt Club patch outside of my family. Part of the fun of collecting is finding a patch from a club or association that you have never heard of or from a location that is meaningful to you.

Other good sources for adding to collections are outdoor sporting shows and conventions. A couple years ago, I met Destry L. Hoffard of Canton, a lifelong patch collector, at the annual Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival outside of Rockwood, where the Detroit River flows into Lake Erie. I purchased a few patches from him. He sometimes sells or trades his doubles. Destry remarked, "It's incredible how many clubs there are or were in this state. I've got something like 300 different (patches) and still find more regularly."

If you are thinking of getting into patch collecting, Destry suggests finding your own niche and learning everything you can about it. He started out as a youth collecting boy scout patches and later developed his collection with hunting and fishing patches, specializing in old Michigan gun clubs.

Of course, many individuals purchase collectibles from online auction sites. Determining value can be a little tricky, and a few collectors say that some of the extremely desired, and as a result expensive, DNR patches have been determined to be replicas rather than originals. "When you first start collecting," Destry suggests, "stay small on the money while you learn. Don't drop a bunch of cash 'till you've decided it's a hobby you really want to stick with." You should be able to purchase common patches for under $10 a piece.

Times and fashions change; there is no denying the appeal of today's popular, modern vinyl stickers. They decorate our vehicles, watercraft, coolers and computers. I like them well, but call me old fashioned when I dig into my collection of sporting patches. Their shapes, texture, embroidered fish and ducks, the script and simple colors on these traditional gems combine to pull me in for a closer look. I have come to realize my grandpa's unintentional lesson is that outdoor sporting patches are artifacts that connect us to our past and our shared heritage. And if well cared for, patches can be cherished today and passed on to others to enjoy tomorrow.

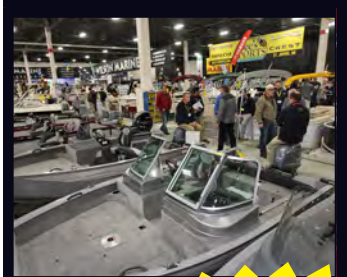
George Verschave and Mort Neff sharing a drink after filming a segment at the Wildwood Hunt Club for Michigan Outdoors TV program. Note the film camera cradled in Neff's arm.

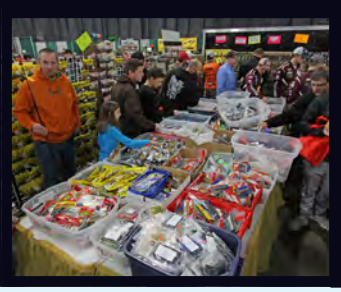
FISHING BOATS

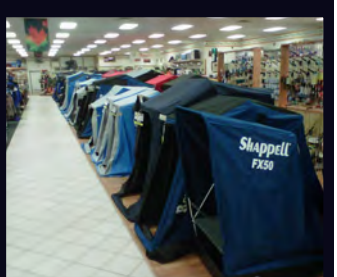
FISHING TRIPS

FISHING TACKLE

ICE FISHING VILLAGE







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Icewater Steelhead

By Jim Bedford

Bret Hartford poses with a winter steelhead he caught using the techniques outlined in this article.

Great Lakes steelhead are wonderful fish. They aggressively take a variety of lures and baits no matter how cold the water is. Ice becomes the principal obstacle to catching winter steelhead because if you can get to the fish and operate your tackle, they will readily strike.

Winter steelheaders probably pay more attention to the weather forecasts than any other group. They are always on the lookout for that warming trend that will shrink the shelf ice on their favorite steelhead river. Prolonged thaws can even trigger runs of fresh fish from the lakes, especially in small rivers and creeks.

While steelhead rarely actively feed during the winter, most anglers drift spawn, wigglers (large mayfly nymphs) and other edible morsels. This technique works, but this is a season when hardware techniques may be more effective, especially if the fish are scattered. Often a good strategy is to fish with lures until you find some steelhead and then drift bait in the prime holes and runs.

Weighted spinners with their flash and vibration seem to issue the wake-up call to cold-water steelhead. These lures get the steelhead's attention from a considerable distance in our typically clear winter rivers and creeks. This can be very important when an ice shelf covers half the hole. Once these migratory rainbows get a spinner in their sight, they will also chase it for a considerable distance.

Typically our streams are fairly clear in the winter, but they may be stained, and the days are often dark. With the sun low in the winter sky, there will also be a fair amount of shade. For these reasons, plus the fact that you are trying to excite these fish into striking, real silver should be the first choice for the blade finish. Silver reflects light much better than nickel or chrome, and this is important where there is not much light available. Of course, in small, clear streams on sunny days, downsizing your spinner and utilizing a brass or copper finish is likely the better choice. Matching the stream conditions with your spinner so that it gets the steelhead's attention without spooking it is the key.

The sweep cast is the most effective anytime when fishing for steelhead and is especially so in the winter. By casting across or quartering downstream, allowing the spinner to sink, and then slowly retrieving, the spinner will stay deep and slowly swing across the current. This presentation gives the steelie a long look at the flashing blade and a chance to hit it without expending much energy.

Spinners are fine searching lures. You can cover a lot of water quickly with them because their flash and sonic attraction will

generate strikes from fish that are a considerable distance from the lure's path. Keep this in mind as you fish and move right along when fishing spinners.

Even though steelhead will frequently hit a spinner hard, there are many times when they will sneak up behind it and inhale the lure. Thus it is important that you learn to feel the resistance of the blade spinning and then set the hook if it doesn't "feel right." Many times a "leaf strike" has turned into a steelhead for me. In small streams, you can also try to watch your spinner. It is pretty cool to see that white flash as a steelie opens wide to inhale your spinner.

Spoons and plugs are also very effective winter steelhead lures. Spoons are fished in a similar manner as spinners and have the advantage of lower water resistance, so they are easier to keep down near the bottom on sweep casts. This is especially true in fast water. As with spinners, metallic finishes combined with fluorescent colors are very effective.

Plugs can also be cast and swept across the current. They have the advantage of diving against the current, and thus you can continue to fish them straight downstream. They can be backed under log jams and ice shelves, really invading the steelhead's territory.

When you know steelhead are present in the run or hole you are fishing, it is pretty hard to beat drifting the "real thing." Eggs can be fished singly, in skein clusters or tied in sacks or bags. Wigglers, the nymph of the Hexagenia mayfly and, surprisingly, waxworms are also outstanding winter steelhead baits. I still haven't figured out why the larva of a terrestrial moth, which steelhead never see naturally in their lifetime, works so well, but it does.

A three-way swivel is commonly used for drift fishing. The reel's mainline is attached to one ring, the leader to another and the dropper for the sinker to the third. Veteran steelheaders prefer

The author poses with a winter steelhead caught using a plug.

to use a two-way swivel and tie their leader to it with an improved clinch or Trilene knot. By leaving the tag end of the knot untrimmed you can crimp on split shot or hollow pencil lead. This saves the need for tying another knot when rerigging, which can be really helpful when your fingers are cold and numb.

Proper sinker weight is critical to successfully drifting bait for icewater steelhead. It needs to be heavy enough to occasionally tap the bottom but not so heavy that it drags and hangs up. Be ready to change the weight to match each run's current speed and depth. It is best to err on the high side rather than hanging up a lot. Near the bottom, rather than on the bottom, is the key phrase. Steelhead look forward and up when resting on the gravel and their size results in their eyes already being six inches above the substrate.

More and more drift anglers are using floats to present their offerings. I believe this technique is especially useful in the winter. For one thing, it decreases hang-ups, and this is important when numb fingers slow the process of rerigging.

Floe ice can make conventional drift fishing impossible, but as long

as you can cast your bobber rig into an opening in the ice, you are in business. Then you "go with the flow" until, hopefully, a steelhead makes your float take a dive. Cold temperatures at night can cause the stream water to cool below 32 degrees and result in anchor ice. Then as the air temperature rises during the day, the water warms slightly and the anchor ice releases and becomes slush on the surface. Steelhead can detect very subtle temperatures rises and often become turned on at this time. If it were not for floats, you would not be able to fish for these active steelies.

Floating ice makes fishing lures difficult but not impossible thanks to the crazy steelhead. I remember a day when the river was mostly covered with moving ice, but if we could get our spinners through it, we caught steelhead and lake-run browns. It was almost if the fish were bored or feeling trapped under the curtain of ice and ready to lash out at anything that appeared below it.

Many anglers use small jigs under their floats, which decreases the need for additional weight. These can be plain fluorescent jigs or dressed with marabou. I favor the latter, they can be used without bait if there is a little surface chop to bounce the jig and bring life to the marabou. The addition of a small spawn sack, wiggler or waxworm almost guarantees they will be attractive to steelhead.

The jig should be set about a foot off the bottom in most cases. There are times when steelhead hit them even better when they are suspended at mid-depth. The floats make it easy to extend your drift through the entire run. Bouncing them along the edge of an ice shelf can be a killer technique.

When fishing for winter steelhead, it is important to use a limp monofilament. My favorite is Trilene XL, but there are many other soft, premium monofilament lines from which to choose. The highly abrasion-resistant monofilament lines are usually very stiff and unwieldy at sub-freezing temperatures. Because you are using a softer line, it is important to check it often for nicks and change it more often.

Ice in the guides is never a

Bob Bryans releases a steelhead he caught while fishing near an ice shelf. Practicing proper catch and release techniques are imperative if anglers do not plan to keep the fish they catch.

problem when the water temperature is above freezing as you simply submerge the rod in the current and melt the ice when needed. In general, I try to avoid fishing when the stream is at 32 degrees or lower and the air is very cold unless, of course, the river is loaded with fish and they're on the bite. Even the hooks will become ice-covered to the point that they have no point to hook a fish. I will admit to thawing the ice off my spinners with my mouth, but this job isn't much fun when you're fishing eggs.

Many years ago, a friend and I were dealing with ice in the guides and 32-degree water. When sucking the ice off his spinner's hook, he made a reflexive arm motion and caught his line and set the hook into his tongue past the barb. It was hospital time, and I wish I could have been a fly on the wall to hear the medical personnel's reactions. He is the only person I know that fair hooked himself! At least we didn't have to throw him back like a snagged fish.

Staying warm is very important if you are going to enjoy your winter steelhead outing. Bootfoot neoprene waders were made to order for ice-water steelheaders. They really insulate you from the cold.

Regular and breathable waders will still do the job but buy them a size larger so you can wear extra socks and lots of layers underneath them. And now, it is time to use bootfoot instead the usual stocking foot models because the frigid water will squeeze around your feet. Layering is the key for your upper body as well. I generally start with polypropylene underwear, then a heavy shirt topped by a zippered sweatshirt with a hood. When walking a fair distance, I open up the sweatshirt and take off the hood and my hat and then close back up as I cool down. When it is snowing or is windy, a breathable, hooded wading raincoat is worn over everything to make you both waterproof and windproof.

I hate wearing gloves when fishing and just warm them in my armpits as necessary. When it is really cold, knit wool gloves with the thumb and forefingers open have worked well for me. This is really the limiting factor for how cold you can fish because you can insulate everything else. It is important to remember that the warmer you keep your core, the easier it will be to keep your hands working.

Whenever you get cold, the solution is to walk or wade to the next hole. Of course, the ultimate way to warding off the chill is to hook a steelhead. I guarantee you will not be cold after battling one of our beautiful lake-run rainbows!

Ever-Changing Deer Regulations: Avoiding Confusion on a Path Towards Consistency

By MUCC Staff

Amidst confusing colloquialisms like "doe with a bow" and "hunter's choice," the complicated biometric models developed by wildlife researchers and more than 100 Deer Management Units (DMUs) in the state, it can be hard to wrap your head around all of the things you need to know to harvest a whitetail without landing yourself in some trouble with a conservation officer.

Changes to Michigan's deer regulations never seem to occur on their "regular" three-year cycle, especially given recent challenges posed by chronic wasting disease and the inclination of our state's leaders to simplify the rules. This means that more often than not, there are rules about deer hunting that have just been proposed, are being vetted or that have just passed. MUCC staff work closely with decision-makers to ensure that our members are well represented in this process. It all starts with the Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC).

The NRC is a seven-member panel tasked with determining the "method and manner of take" of fish and game species in the state. This means that these individuals have the responsibility of harmonizing state statute and administrative code with wildlife research and the desires of hunters to craft the rules that end up in the annual hunting digest. If you picked one up this year, or downloaded it from the DNR website, you may have noticed that there were a number of changes to the deer hunting regulations for the 2020 season. These changes came last summer and are currently in effect, but, three days before the opening day of the 2020 firearm season, the NRC took up a package of rules for the fall 2021 seasons. If you have it handy, you might pull out that hunting digest and flip to page 48, because nobody knows where in the Sam Hill deer management unit (DMU) 022 is without it (Iron and Dickinson counties, in case you were wondering).

As we sit at our desks trying to make sense of these new rules, we thought that it might do us all some good to break down the legalese of the Wildlife Conservation Orders and figure out what this could mean for our 2021 hunting digests. The following changes are proposed in Wildlife Conservation Order Amendment Number 8 of 2020 ("order"), and are broken down here by region:

Statewide

Currently, hunters must purchase antlerless deer licenses for certain Deer Management Units (DMUs) that are restricted on the basis of public and private lands. This has created some confusion for hunters and has not been an effective tool for the DNR to meet management goals. The DNR proposes the creation of a universal antlerless license that would be valid on both public and private lands in every DMU in the Lower Peninsula, as well as those in the South-Central U.P. (currently DMUs 055, 022, 122, 121 and 155). These permits will not require a drawing.

For certain areas of the U.P., the DNR recommends the creation of two new DMUs – one in the "Midwest U.P." and another in the "Mideast U.P." The Midwest U.P. DMU (DMU 352) would encompass DMUs 027, 036, 152 and 252. The Mideast U.P. DMU (DMU 351) would encompass DMUs 021, 349, 249, 149, 017 and 117. The north zone of the U.P. (DMUs 127, 066, 131, 042, 031, 007 and 048) would be closed to the harvest of antlerless deer. This would also rectify issues with the "doe with a bow" provisions for U.P. archery hunters.

If passed, this rule would reduce DNR administration of antlerless deer license drawings from more than 100 individual DMUs to two drawings — greatly reducing the staff time involved.

Upper Peninsula

The order contains a rule to allow crossbows to be used during the late archery season in the U.P. to match rules in the Lower Peninsula. So far, crossbow hunters have not significantly increased deer harvest or caused declines in populations. Proponents of this rule believe that it will make rules clearer and more consistent statewide, while opponents suggest that crossbow use could have a disproportionate effect on U.P. deer, given their tendency to congregate in winter yards. MUCC members voted in 2016 to express neutrality regarding the use of crossbows.

This proposal would also remove the "Hunter's Choice" option for U.P. hunters. This option worked

by placing a three-point antler point restriction (APR) on the deer combination regular license, in addition to the four-point APR on the restricted license. The regular deer license does not have an APR. So, hunters could make the choice of harvesting one deer without APRs or harvesting two deer under APRs. If this rule is passed, it would end the three-point APR on the deer combination regular license in the U.P., making these rules consistent statewide. If this rule is adopted, "Hunter's Choice" will still be effective on Drummond Island (DMU 117).

In addition to harvest rules and tags, the NRC also has the authority to regulate the supplemental and recreational feeding of deer. The DNR proposes a set of rules that limits recreational feeding to 2 gallons per calendar day and removes the permit for supplemental feeding in the U.P.. It is also important to recognize that supplemental and recreational feeding are distinct from baiting, the practice of hunting over feed.

Based on our member-passed resolutions, MUCC believes that the NRC should leave the supplemental feeding rules as they are and more consistently enforce the current permit requirements.

Lower Peninsula

Most of the rules in this package are aimed at clarifying statewide regulations, however, the DNR is also recommending a continuation of the urban deer management zone in Macomb, Oakland and Wayne counties. This unit has an extended archery season in the month of January, and would be renewed indefinitely if this order is passed.

The NRC cannot vote on any of these proposed rules until their meeting in December, but it is likely that they will not make any decisions until Jan. or Feb. 2021.

Again, keep in mind that none of these rules are set in stone — the NRC is likely to make their final decision in January, which means that you still have time to exercise your right and responsibility to weigh in on this process. Members of the NRC want to hear from you and are eager to learn what you think about these changes. As always, MUCC will be present at each and every meeting to represent you as hunters and conservationists of this great state.

On Further Review: Ice Fishing: Methods and Magic, by Steve Griffin

By Steve Griffin

Of course, a book author should not review his or her own book. It's too easy to give it a pass, praising one's own offspring. It's too painful to confront one's own errors and omissions.

Just bad business.

But perhaps you'll bear with me as I re-read my own first book, "Ice Fishing: Methods and Magic." (ICS Books, 1985) It's the first time I've read it since it was published more than 35 years ago.

I promise not to consider elements of style, nor logic nor flow, none of those literary things. About half of the book is stories and essays; I'm not going to talk about them. What intrigues me is what has happened to ice fishing — almost entirely for the better — since 1985.

By 1985, Lowrance Electronics had sold more than one million of the "Little Green Box" FISH LO-K-TOR portable sonar units it had brought to market in 1959. This was the first transistorized sonar to display individual fish and indicate the depths at which they swam, but relatively few of them were used on the ice. Batteries seemed expensive and were burdensome, and cold weather made them sluggish.

By the mid-1980s, my partner Dale had assembled a Heathkit knock-off kit. It reliably indicated bottom depth, but not much additional detail, and to be honest, it wasn't worth its weight plus that of the lantern, garden-tractor or motorcycle battery that powered it if one was walking on the ice. Most of us were. All-terrain vehicles were in their commercial infancy, snowmobiles far less reliable than today. We clipped 'depth finder' weights onto our lures or hooks and lowered them to measure the depth and adjust our presentations. Fish location was a bold guess. (Still fond of the mystery, I still keep a depth weight clipped to my ice fishing coat.)

Today's ice angler has many choices for depth finding. Many sounders, built just for the ice world, can detect an object as small as a panfish jig — and on some, the image will change if the bait is stolen from that lure!

My favorite fish finder has GPS and charting ability, making me as clairvoyant on foot as my summer-bass-brethren in their finest boats. A 9aH battery powers it for a full day and more.

If, for some reason, I need to see more, underwater cameras completely open the under-ice world. Some models are small enough for a coat pocket, others as large and detail-friendly as a tablet computer.

Tip-ups in the mid-1980s came in forms most would recognize today. Most had wooden frames, a few metal, with plastic construction just becoming popular.

Rods and reels for ice fishing? A relative rarity. We mainly made or bought simple fiberglass rods with line-winding pegs or simple plastic reels. Spinning reels didn't hold up on the ice. Today, reliable reels are available at all price points, while straight-drop reels, similar to the steelheader's center pin, are preferred by many ice fans.

Today, a reliable spinning reel on a sensitive graphite rod is a couple of 20-dollar bills away, and few ice anglers don't have one or two in their bucket. But in 1985, although my book had a section on spin-fishing through the ice, that discussion was a scant seven paragraphs long.

(Early graphite, by the way, was then just catching on. It seemed very attractive to cats; several fishing buddies lamented the short in-house life of their new and relatively expensive graphite rods.)

My book's panfish chapter led off with a discussion of fishing with bobbers, the state of the art. Peg in place a float to hold your bait at the depth you guess holds active fish and, at a wiggling sign of a bite, set the hook and bring in the catch hand-over-hand, the (fiberglass)

rod, seldom part of the fight. Toss the retrieved line downwind to minimize chances of a frustrating tangle. Repeat as able.

Of tear-drop lures, I wrote, "If limited to a few, I'd pack tear-drops in red, bright orange, chartreuse and white. I'd keep trying different colors until I found what produced the best on that particular day." The tear-drop shaped jigs of the 1980s still catch fish, but a wide range of shapes has joined them, paint finishes (include glo and UV) and even new materials, super-heavy tungsten prominent among them. Yes, I now carry hundreds of panfish jigs in many shapes besides the tear-drop.

New gear today is often the product of labs and foward-thinking technology. But it wasn't that way in the past. In my book, I tell of Art Best, then of Sebewaing along Saginaw Bay, who in his Detroit shop had begun hammering out his version of the flattened-metal hooks Russian-speaking Bay ice anglers had tried to keep to themselves. After World War II, Best moved to the Bay to run his growing Best Tackle Company full-time, before selling it in 1963. The brand is still represented on the ice, by the way.

Tip-up lines 35 years ago comprised black nylon, heavy monofilament or braided Dacron. Leaders, particularly for toothy northern pike, were thick mono or stiff steel. Now we have gel-spun super lines, braid, fluorocarbon and even tie-able steel leaders; you can have strength without giving up subtlety. Those lines, along with monofilament nylon, are specially formulated for the demands of ice fishing.

Power augers today are vastly lighter, faster, more powerful and more reliable than in 1985. Hand augers? Razor-sharp drills have

made our old cup-shaped augers little more than a memory of frustration. Together they've made practical today's run-and-gun, highly mobile ice fishing.

The ice angler of 1985 had three main clothing styles: heavy but hearty military surplus boots, pants and coats; deer hunting togs, mostly red or red-plaid; or one-piece snowmobile suits. Waterproof, breathable Gore-Tex was just catching on. Today? Bib and parka outfits are explicitly made for the sport. As wind-proof as our portable shelters, some are made of the same material as them. Many bear life-saving ice picks for self-extraction if one falls through; some have flotation incorporated into the clothing itself.

Long underwear took a big warm leap forward when then-new Under Armor and other brands perfected synthetic materials that wicked away moisture without taking warmth with it. My book in 1985 argued wool the best underwear material; I still like it, but often opt for the lighter, less itchy polypro.

Shelter me? In 1985, it was make-your-own. For portable fishing, plans were available for creating your own wrap-around, open-air wind-break or a Conestoga-style enclosure, plywood at each end and canvas overhead. Some anglers drilled holes partway through the ice, set posts in them, and erected canvas wraps

Many ice anglers sure of their hotspots built and lugged out heavy, outhouse-style shacks. One guy spotlighted in "Ice Fishing" proudly showed me how he'd made an ice shanty from 14 discarded storm doors; the base was the top of a chest freezer!

A few years after my book – and then his – was published, Dave Genz, considered the grandfather of modern ice fishing, popularized his Fish Trap portable shelter; when I fished with him in the late 1980s, he described it as a bass boat for the ice. Today, flip-over shelters, along with other pop-up and portable coops, are de rigueur. We no longer haunt the same holes all day but meet the fish where they fin.

Dave Genz's first Ice Traps were do-it-yourself garage experiments that helped modernize the sport of ice fishing. Now, if you make your own ice fishing gear, it's probably because you enjoy tinkering. In 1985, it was about the only way to obtain some items.

And so, the review of my 35-year-old book has left me nostalgic for the fishing partners long-gone and the people who informed my book. We were amused by the homespun approach we brought to ice fishing and thrilled by the options we enjoy today.

From my "Ice Fishing":

"… maybe that's what I like best about ice fishing. It's a straightforward sport. You can get just as fancy with your fishing gear as you like, but ice fishing remains a relatively simple game."

So, pick your preference point on the fancy/simple methods spectrum – and savor the magic of ice fishing.

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DIVERSE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS PROMOTE HEALTHY WILDLIFE AND ECOSYSTEMS

Although the COVID-19 pandemic severely limited the 2020 field season, it provided a valuable opportunity to analyze program data that has been collected since On the Ground's (OTG) inception in 2013. We regularly monitor volunteer numbers, volunteer hours dedicated to wildlife habitat improvement, overall acreage impacts and the number of projects completed. However, further data analysis has provided even more insight into the role OTG has had in wildlife conservation in Michigan over the past eight years.

With a total of 3,076 acres of Michigan public land impacted by more than 3,108 volunteers, the OTG program is known for the impressive scope of its work. The program has hosted more than 150 wildlife habitat improvement projects across Michigan that span from the Upper Peninsula's remote forests to the suburbs of Southeast Michigan. Each habitat improvement event is designed and hosted in partnership with the local Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife professionals, local conservation clubs and local residents.

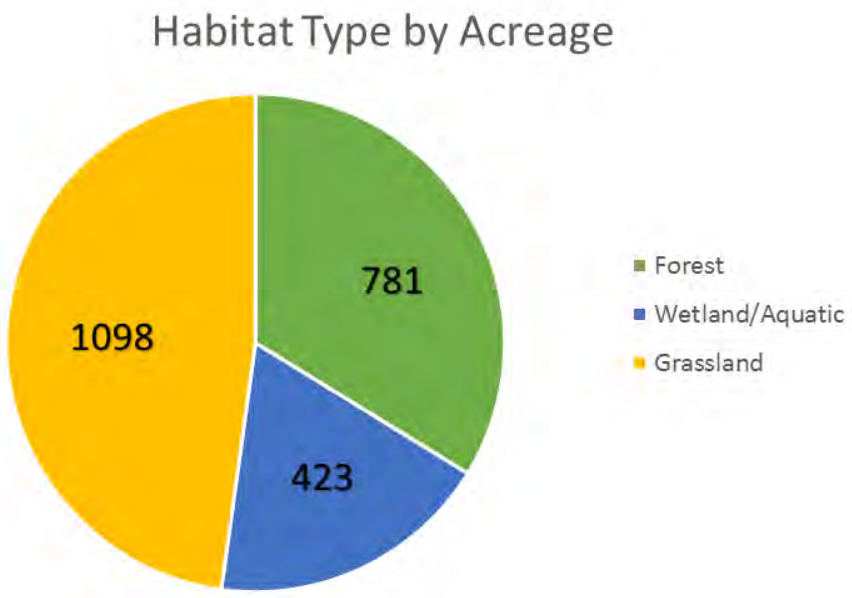
Keeping the unique ecosystem and management goals of the land and resources in mind, each project is designed to have a lasting impact beyond the one-day event. The OTG program has improved or assisted in the restoration of habitat in a variety of habitat types that include diverse forests, grasslands, rivers and wetlands that are home to an abundance of Michigan wildlife.

Acreage

Michigan boasts 4.6 million acres of state-managed public land, and it is managed by the Michigan DNR to be utilized and enjoyed by the Michiganders that own it. This land is home to countless natural wonders, scenic views and, of course, much of Michigan's iconic wildlife.

Of the 3,076 acres improved, 1,098 acres are grassland habitat, 781 acres are forest habitat and 423 acres are wetland and other aquatic habitats. An additional 739 acres of habitat improved by the OTG program is not categorized because the associated habitat type is unknown due to limited data collection in the program's early years.

The acres impacted are dispersed throughout the state of Michigan. The OTG program has improved wildlife habitats in 48 counties (approximately 58% of Michigan's 83 counties), and the most frequently visited counties



for wildlife habitat improvement events include Otsego, Saginaw, Clinton, Ingham and Allegan.

Forests

Wildlife volunteers with the OTG program have improved at least 781 acres of forest habitat since the program began. Aside from being home to some of the most beloved Michigan wildlife species and providing us with oxygen, forests also play an important role in water purification, erosion control, carbon sequestration, wind damage protection and are the source of a robust timber industry.

Much of the habitat work the OTG has completed in Michigan's forests has involved native tree plantings, invasive plant species removal and brush pile building. Tree species like white pine, red pine, red oak and crab apple are frequently planted to enhance wildlife habitat. Mast-producing trees and shrubs that bear fruit or nuts provide wildlife with supplemental foraging material and cover. These native trees' benefits can reach species that range from white-tailed deer and wild turkeys to songbirds and pollinators.

Conifers like pines and spruce trees are also planted frequently to enhance habitat. These trees not only provide foraging material with their seeds, but their dense foliage provides ideal nesting conditions for many species. Additionally, these conifers' year-round needles can provide wildlife with cover from predators and thermal protection throughout the winter months.

Small game species like hares and ruffed grouse are also benefited directly by creating small game brush piles. When trees are felled, bucked and limbed, the pieces are assembled by volunteers to create piles of brush with a wide, sturdy base built from trunks and large limbs and tops built from the softer, foliage-covered limbs. Coined "rabbitat" by MUCC, these brush piles are created to enhance small game species' habitat. Many snakes and insects also benefit from the presence of these brush piles, thus contributing to the entire local food chain's health. These are often built near forest edges or where young forest is regenerating to provide supplemental cover for wildlife.

Aside from planting native trees and building brush piles, OTG volunteers have also completed extensive work removing invasive vegetation from Michigan forests. In forests, invasive honeysuckle, black locust and garlic mustard are the most common invasive species the program has assisted the DNR with managing. These plant species are non-native and invasive and often take over the habitat where they have been introduced. As these plants spread and grow, their ability to outcompete and displace native flora that benefits local

wildlife increases and becomes even more difficult to manage. By working to mitigate these invasive species through mechanical treatment techniques, volunteers have helped restore and enhance forests across Michigan. If they are not left as they were felled following removal, the woody invasive species are often assembled into small brush piles to benefit local wildlife as they decompose.

Grasslands

Once widespread throughout Michigan's Lower Peninsula, many remaining grasslands are scattered in small pockets throughout their natural range. Although diminished in size, their ecological value is still abundant.

Known for swaying native grasses and wildflowers of plentiful hues, grassland habitat types offer far more benefits than their beauty. Their ability to improve water quality, provide erosion control, perform carbon sequestration and provide habitat for wildlife that range from game species to pollinators are just a few of the ecosystem services that make grasslands so valuable.

Volunteers with the OTG program have impacted 1,098 acres of grassland habitat across the Lower Peninsula. The habitat improvement projects associated with grasslands include invasive flora removal and the planting of native grasses and wildflowers. Invasive flora like autumn olive is particularly aggressive in grassland habitat, and the OTG program has worked to remove an abundance of the species to open up the landscape for the re-establishment of native grass and flower species.

Although frequently noted for their aesthetic appeal and their value to butterflies, bees, moths and other pollinators, healthy grasslands are home to a plethora of diverse wildlife. Such species include wild turkey, ring-necked pheasants, white-tailed deer and songbirds.

Wetlands and Rivers

It could be argued that nothing is more critical to the overall health of Michigan's Great Lakes than the quality of its rivers and wetlands. Although many watersheds in Michigan are facing new threats from "forever chemicals" like PFAS and other pollutants, the ecosystems surrounding our rivers and wetlands continue to provide much-needed services to wildlife and humans alike. Such services include but are not limited to erosion control, nutrient uptake, flood control and wildlife habitat.

The wildlife that rely on Michigan wetlands and rivers have greatly benefited from the work completed by OTG volunteers. Although the primary events associated with this habitat type involve litter removal, the OTG program has also impacted habitat within wetlands and rivers by installing fish-spawning structures, creating additional nest habitat for wood ducks by placing nest boxes and

removing encroaching vegetation from dike structures to improve access and stability.

Since the creation of the new On the Water (OTW) program in 2019, the OTG program has not hosted any river clean-ups. However, the OTW program has hosted an abundance of river clean-ups and aquatic invasive species removal projects since it was started that have enhanced the quality of the watersheds within which they took place. Through the OTG and OTW programs, thousands of pounds of trash have been removed from the rivers and thousands of pounds more of invasive aquatic vegetation has also been pulled from wetlands, rivers and lakes around the state.

Whether we are improving habitat for a specific species by placing spawning structures or nest boxes, improving dike structures to ensure safe hunter access to an area or working to remove litter and invasive species for the benefit of the entire watershed, the OTG and OTW programs have had a vast impact on aquatic ecosystems across Michigan. Such efforts are a great achievement for fish, wildlife and humans, alike.

About OTG

OTG is funded through a memorandum of agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Division and hosts projects that improve wildlife conservation on public land. Through this program, hunters, anglers, trappers and outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds have the opportunity to donate their time for the benefit of the species they enjoy. The work completed by volunteers and wildlife professionals showcases that Michiganders are true conservationists and demonstrates the strong conservation ethic that unites all of us. To learn more about the OTG program and how to get involved, visit mucc.org/on-the-ground or facebook.com/muccotg.

THE CAMPFIRE

By Max Bass
MUCC Camp Director

Winter is now upon us, and that means a few different things. It means that the long hours of sunlight are long gone. It means that we can expect cold weather here in Michigan. It also means that we are one season closer to the summer of 2021 and the start of the Michigan Out-of-Doors Youth Camp!

Each year brings all of us new challenges, and this year will be no different. Getting camp back up and running after a year off will most certainly be a challenge, but it will be gratifying as well. Our education team is working closely with our facilities committee to figure out what improvements we can make for this upcoming summer. Once the weather warms up, we will get the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center ready for this upcoming summer. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates about future camp clean-up days.

We had some new plans for our 2020 camp season that we never saw come to fruition. For 2021, we are planning on bringing these new plans to camp. We are incredibly excited to introduce an overnight camping trip for all of our campers. Only our Stewards in Training campers would get an opportunity to camp out in the past, but we plan to offer a night under the stars to all of our campers in 2021. This will not include an intense backpacking trip but rather a simple night around a fire and under the stars for all of our campers. Our camp is attended by campers from a large range of backgrounds, and for many of them, camp is filled with a lot of firsts — first time fishing, shooting, hiking or seeing stars. Having an opportunity to sleep in a tent and get a taste of camping is crucial to connecting with our land.

This summer, we will be running five weeks of camp at the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center. Our residential programs run for one week: Sunday afternoon through Friday morning. Our camp will run this year starting June 27 and ending August 6, 2021. We do not run any programs the week of July 4.

We are excited to continue our online camp registration through CampDoc. Registration will open Monday, February 1, 2021, so be ready to get your

camper all signed up! Check out our website www.mucccamp.org to see all of our dates and programs.

We have some phenomenal clubs and partners here at MUCC. While not all of our clubs agree on some things, camp is something that all of our clubs can agree on and support! If you are a member of one of our MUCC affiliate clubs, talk to them and see if they are interested in sponsoring the children of their members to come to camp this summer. All of our club-sponsored campers get a $50 discount on their registration. If your club does not sponsor campers or you cannot find a local affiliate club and are looking for a scholarship, please reach out to our Camp Director, Max Bass, at mbass@mucc.org to find out more about our scholarship opportunities. We have several clubs that love camp and love to sponsor campers but cannot always find kids to sponsor. On top of the incredible support we receive from our clubs, the Riley Foundation, in partnership with SCI-Novi, sponsors 80 campers each summer to come and experience the great outdoors through the Riley Wilderness Youth Camp Scholarship.

We are also in the process of recruiting our staff for this upcoming summer. If you love being outdoors and working with kids, we have some great opportunities. We are looking for an assistant director, waterfront director, health director, facility manager, camp cook, kitchen assistant, program assistant, range officers and camp counselors/conservation educators. All of the positions come with room and board for six weeks, along with a weekly stipend. If you or someone you know is looking for one of the most rewarding seasonal jobs, send a resume over to mbass@mucc.org.

CONSERVATION *Through* EDUCATION

A Service Term to Remember

By Shaun McKeon
MUCC Education Director

Each year, MUCC partners with the conservation organization Huron Pines to host an AmeriCorps member to serve our organization and the nation in ways that will help benefit conservation. The service term is a 10-month commitment usually made by young adults to gain experience in their field and make a lasting impact on their host location. AmeriCorps members serve in several different capacities: they help with disaster relief, community education, literacy or the environment. The AmeriCorps program began in 1994, and since that time, nearly one million members have served across the country.

MUCC has been a host site off and on over the last several years. The AmeriCorps member serves their time with our organization in the role of engagement specialist. In this position, the AmeriCorps member has the opportunity to serve with our conservation education programs and our field programs, including On the Ground and On the Water.

This years' service term ran from February through the end of November. Our member was Joe Dewan. Joe is an East Lansing native with an undergraduate degree in environmental studies and sustainability from Michigan State University. After spending a summer working for Trout Unlimited in Washington D.C., Joe knew he had a passion for conservation and made the decision to join MUCC to serve the conservation community of Michigan.

In a typical year, our AmeriCorps member would have the opportunity to work with nearly 10,000 students around the state at various sports shows, outdoor education days and during our summer camp program. They would also assist the field team in planning and implementing habitat improvement projects around the state and working with volunteers to conduct wildlife projects. However, 2020 was not a typical year.

After about six weeks of service, the plans for Joe's term had a significant change. COVID-19 put a halt to all normal MUCC operations, and we had to cancel all of the events we had planned from March until the end of May.

During these three months, Joe spent time seeking out ways he could contribute to MUCC as an organization and went above and beyond the basic requirements of his service term.

Joe has a positive outlook on life and soon became the person tasked with sharing a bit of good news at each of our staff meetings. Whether it was news about family good fortune or updates about a mallard nest he was monitoring in his home garden, Joe was always the closer for our staff meeting to leave people with a smile.

As restrictions changed and policies evolved, we realized that although we weren't allowed to hold group events, one thing we could still do to improve public lands was to remove trash and litter from state game areas around Lansing. After giving Joe a few pointers on locations that needed a helping hand, Joe took to this task with a passion I have never seen from anyone. Once a week for the last 46 weeks, Joe has ventured off to a public land spot and spent the day removing trash. He has covered multiple counties and more than a dozen state game areas, all with a smile on his face and a kind word for other public land users.

As summer rolled around and outdoor restrictions loosened, we were able to restart holding habitat projects. Joe joined forces with our On the Water program and spent his weekends traversing the state, leading volunteers to improve aquatic habitat. Joe spent his summer traveling from the suburbs of Detroit to the shores of Lake Superior, across to the Dunes of Lake Michigan and back to mid-Michigan. Joe has been busy removing invasive species, picking up litter and educating volunteers on the importance of freshwater in their local watersheds.

With fall came the restart of On the Ground, and by this time, Joe had gained plenty of experience in event planning and volunteer management. He led groups in tree-planting projects and grassland restoration to finish out his service term.

While Joe was learning the ins and outs of being our engagement specialist, he also experienced several firsts, which is another part of serving as an AmeriCorps member. While serving with us, he learned how to age a deer using its jawbone. He is now familiar with the many different waterfowl species that call our state home, and he even spent some time on the trap range learning to shoot a shotgun.

As an AmeriCorps member, Joe helped with stream monitoring on the Au Sable River, became a certified instructor for several environmental education programs for kids and spent some time building a bridge to help with relief efforts after the floods in Mid-Michigan.

Over the last ten months, Joe has become the unsung hero on public lands here in Michigan, and for that, I am extremely grateful. Joe has been reliable, hardworking, positive and willing to learn, which is about all a supervisor can hope from a new employee. I want to extend a sincere thanks to Joe for his service to conservation over the last year and wish him the best of luck as he leaves MUCC to take the next step in his conservation career. From all of us here at MUCC, thank you for your service, Joe.

Throwback: OCTOBER 1988

In each issue of Michigan Out-of-Doors we will be hand-picking an article from our archives that we think is a good fit for the season. We hope you enjoy reading these throwbacks as much as we do.

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

By Richard Sapp

by Richard Sapp

On a night as crisp as a Washington State apple, we stood in the harvested corn field waiting, quiet, stamping our feet to keep the frost out of our toes. We were waiting, for the sound of the dog, hunting, waiting under half a moon as hard as a heavenly strob, the night as clear as spring water.

We were waiting, the four of us on that frosty November night, for Tom's hound to bay treed. Old Gauntlet is a silent tracker, leggy, muscular. We would have to wait until it chip bayed under the tree. It is mostly white with large irregular patches of brown, and we were waiting for it, four grown men standing around outside and freezing under a cold moon.

It was coon hunting straight out of Faulkner, but a thousand miles north. Drinking black tea from a thermos and waiting, just hanging around in the dark. Tom, a part-time carpenter, trapper, and building contractor, is a full-time coon hunter — or would be if the law allowed it. At least, he is thinking coon hunting all the time. When I met him and his brothers before the hunt, they fed me raccoon stroganoff. (Whenever anyone asks you, in the middle of taking a second helping, just what it is you think you're eating, you know you're in for a surprise.)

These men hunt coons for profits, they say — skinning the carcasses, stretching the pelts over heavy wire frames, drying them, and selling them at auctions. Coon hunting is an important part of their annual

incomes, they say.

"They say…" They say they do it for profit, but it is more matter of the heart, I think. I imagine if they balanced their costs against their income, they'd give it up, but they wouldn't want to do that.

Because successful coon hunting is important to them, I was a bit surprised when they urged me to bring my bow. Tom, who carries the .22 rifle, normally dispatches treed raccoons quickly, efficiently, humanely.

Still, as the moon climbed higher in the sky, we waited patiently, moving from field to field, allowing Gauntlet to work the edges, the treelines, the creek bottoms, the patches of standing corn the farmers had missed or left intentionally for raccoons and deer. We waited and there was nothing but cold and a sky full ofintense moonlight.

Suddenly, a hoarse baying rang out far down the field. It was as if the brothers had been turned to pillars of salt. They froze, analyzing Gauntlet's baying, only their fingers moving, groping for the switches to their torches. "Treed!" And just as suddenly we were off through the corn slapping crisp against our arms. Climbing the fence, leaping the brook, through the briars, half running, half tripping to keep up with the light.

Many people wonder that raccoon hunting is a popular and profitable activity in space-age America. They wonder because unless they were country dwellers (and most of us are not), they never encounter the nocturnal coon hunter. Unless they know breeds of hunting dogs (and most of us do not), they do not recognize or know the difference between a redbone or a Walker or a Plott.

It isn't necessary to use dogs to hunt raccoon, but it is rare when you don't. Raccoons can be stalked and called, but people who love coon hunting invariably love the "sound of hounds"—night music, they call it. They love the shuffling from one foot to another, maybe smoking quietly or savoring a chew of tobacco or a thermos cup of coffee while they wait for a strike bark to tell them a hound's on a hot trail.

"It was silent in the country, beautiful, I would say, except that it is cliche. Then we heard it again. The hoarse, coughing chop of Gauntlet on a treed coon."

Tom knew his hound was striking a hot trail, one over which a raccoon had recently waddled. How he knew or understood this I couldn't discern, because his treeing Walker only bayed treed, barked with a strong, hoarse coughing that would make your grandmother send you to bed and turn the vaporizer on you after she greased your chest and back.

Working one dog only, there was none of the sociable competition or ribbing that usually occurs when raccoon hunters run their dogs in packs. Now that all the states regulate raccoon hunting, many dog lovers only run the "little bear" for the sport. Once they tree a raccoon and compare notes on their dog's performance, the fun is over. An excited bluetick leaping three feet in the air at the bae of a tree, resting its front feet as high up as it can reach, and then reaching down to the bottom of its chest to haul up a hoarse and mournful howl is a pleasure to hear and behold.

On our first strike, Tom sensed the result in advance: "Den tree," he muttered. " Bet this is a den tree." We scanned the trunk and its neighbors in the woodlot while Gauntlet continued to to bay beside us. Nothing. Some hollow branch served this coon as home, and Tom pulled the dog off. Den trees are 'never molested. It's a rule of the chase and, besides, coon hunters hope these trees will host raccoons year after year.

In the next field we waited again, hoping no game warden mistook us for deer poachers. It was silent in the country, beautiful, I would say, except that it is cliche.

Then we heard it again. The hoarse, coughing chop of Gauntlet on a treed coon. This time, Tom took off at a trot more sure than before, as if again he sensed something, unconsciously, something he couldn't have explained perhaps except to another coon hunter. Something called him and his brothers in the hound's chopping bay. They had bought this hound when most of the rest of the civilized world was peacefully snug in a bed.

This time a ringtail looked down on us through his masked face high up in a basswood. "Okay," Tom nodded, watching the coon climb higher and higher.

"Let's see what that bow can do."

I unlimbered at his invitation, glad for the chance to pull and stretch after hours of cold stiffened my back, arms and hands. It was a difficult shot, at least 20 yards straight up at a spot no larger than a silver dollar, but that was what I was there for.

Raccoons are tough. They are survivors. Like white-tailed deer, their numbers seem to be increasing as they adapt to man and his alteration of the environment. Raccoons tend to mate midwinter and bear their young a couple months later. By the fall, the kittens are on their own and in less than a year are bearing their own litters.

There are raccoon hunters in every state of the nation. You may locate them through your local chapter of the American Kennel Club, the United Kennel Club, the American Coon Hunters Association, or the Professional Coon Hunters Association. Another way to learn about modern raccoon hunting is through special-interest magazines which cater to participants. Full Cry and the American Cooner's Magazine are the two principal publications in the field. Should these possibilities fail you, a local conservation officer, sporting goods store manager, or animal shelter should be excellent sources for contacts.

AmeriCorps Service During a Pandemic

By Joe Dewan
MUCC AmeriCorps Member

My AmeriCorps service with Michigan United Conservation Clubs(MUCC) began in February of 2020. I was a recent college graduate with a degree in environmental studies and sustainability from Michigan State University, but I did not have much field experience. I was excited to work with the MUCC field team and assist with the terrestrial and aquatic habitat programs, On the Ground and On the Water, respectively. We had an entire field season of volunteer events planned, but after the COVID-19 pandemic hit the United States in March, we had to cancel all scheduled field season events for March, April, May and June.

MUCC Volunteer Habitat Coordinator Makhayla LaButte created the Public Land Clean-up Challenge at the beginning of April, encouraging MUCC members to stay active during the quarantine and safely get out to their local state game area to pick up trash. I decided to follow Makhayla's lead. With the field season canceled and all programs on pause, I was searching for any way to get outside and work, and picking up trash on public land seemed to be the most logical thing to do. I tried to get out a few times a month, and throughout my AmeriCorps service, I picked up trash at state parks, on state forest land, and at eight different state game areas.

This project allowed me to visit public land that I had never explored previously. For example, while I have spent many days paddling past the Portland State Game Area on the Grand River, I had never visited until this June when I went to pick up trash from a few of the access sites. Unfortunately on my first visit I realized that many of the access sites were in serious need of attention. The worst of which was the access site at Tupper Lake and Sanders Road. Previous visitors had left behind so much trash that it was starting to pile up right along the trail. Several tires and mattresses stood out as some of the larger items amongst the garbage. After my first visit, I reported the location as an illegal dumpsite in the Michigan Adopt-A-Forest database. On that first trip, I was able to remove seven bags of trash and one bag of recyclable materials. When I returned for my second visit, I hauled away eight bags of trash and one bag of recyclable materials, but was not able to remove everything and therefore was unable to delist the site from the database.

On September 3, 2020, I made my third and final visit to the site. This time, I was fortunate to be joined by three volunteers from the Michigan State University Outdoors Club. In just a few hours, we filled up an entire dumpster with all of the remaining garbage, including five mattresses, eight large contractor bags of trash and plenty of other large miscellaneous items.

The COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly changed my AmeriCorps service term, but not entirely for the worst. In total, I removed 71 bags of garbage and 21 bags of recyclable materials from public land that is meant for recreation. Serving with MUCC provided me the opportunity to continue making a contribution to Michigan public lands even in the face of a pandemic. It is critical now more than ever to instill the principles of stewardship and Leave No Trace to maintain our public lands for future generations. the principles of stewardship and leaving no trace is critical in the efforts to maintain public lands.

Michigan United Conservation Clubs

OUR HISTORY

Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) is the largest statewide conservation organization in the nation. With more than 200 affiliated clubs and 40,000 members, MUCC has represented millions of conservationists since 1937. Whether it's the halls of the Capitol or on your favorite stream, MUCC is the insider for your outdoor traditions.

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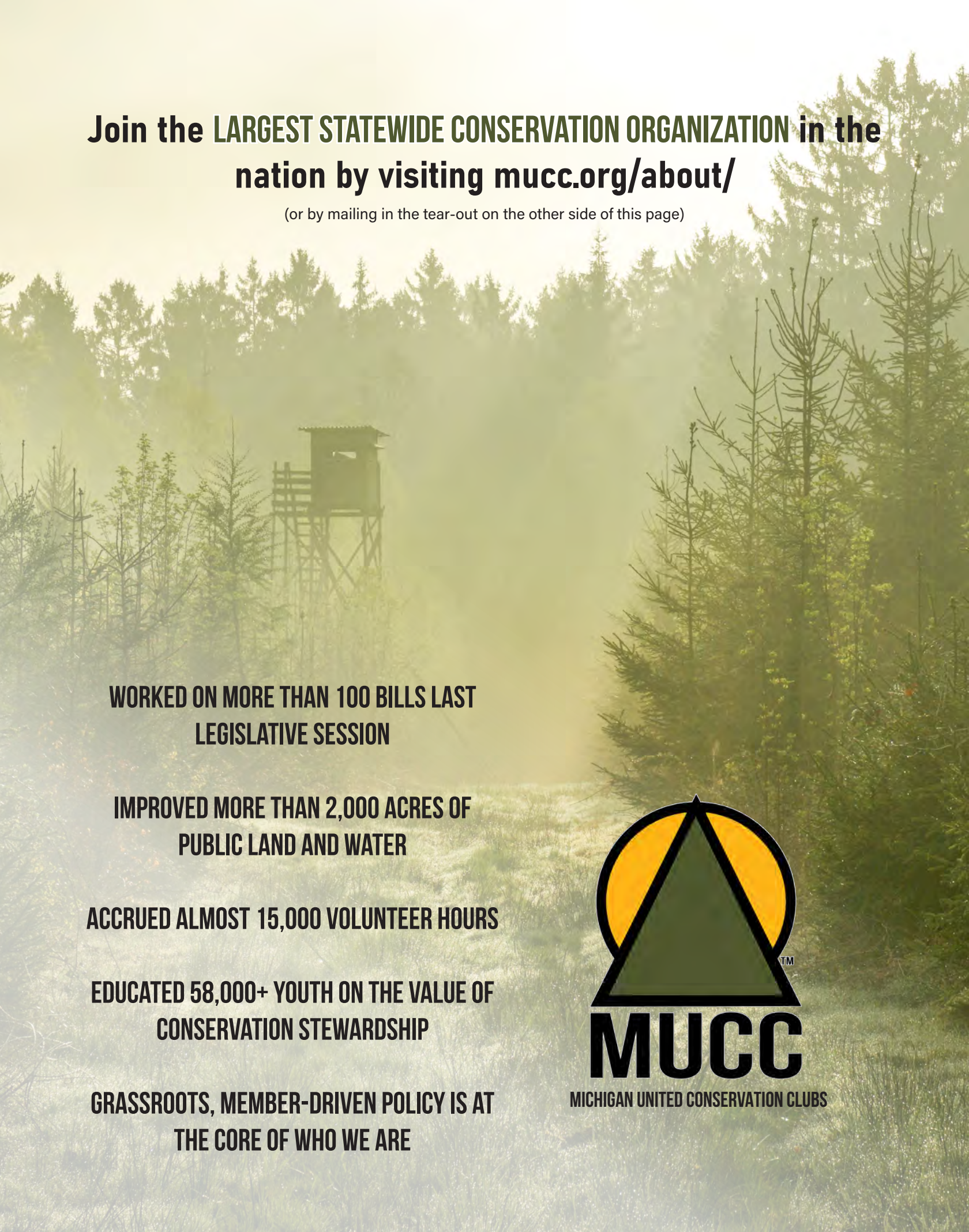

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