Summer 2020
www.michiganoutofdoors.com

michigan OUT-of-DOORS

MICHIGAN'S PREMIUM OUTDOOR JOURNAL SINCE 1947

Public Lands in Well-Washed Public Hands

DUCK TACOS AND PICKLED HEART | COVID-19 AND CONSERVATION: SPLINTERING SYSTEMS
LEGENDS OF CONSERVATION: KEITH CHARTERS | HEX: WORTH THE MILES

$5.99 US | Summer 2020
Please Display Until Sept. 1
0 2>
7 25274 65461 1

MUCC

Official Publication of Michigan United Conservation Clubs


OTG
ON THE GROUND
MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS
CONSERVATION
IN ACTION.
FIND A VOLUNTEER WILDLIFE HABITAT PROJECT NEAR YOU AND SIGN UP AT
www.mucc.org/on-the-ground

LEM™

FRESH FROM THE FIELD TO YOUR TABLE

JAY'S STOCKS A WIDE ASSORTMENT OF LEM GRINDERS, MIXERS AND VACUUM SEALERS ....WITH A LARGE SELECTION OF VAC BAGS TO GO WITH THEM!

#12 BIG BITE MEAT GRINDER
SKU: 17801
$427.99

8.5INCH MEAT SLICER
SKU: 1164
$116.99

5 TRAY DEHYDRATOR
SKU: 1152
$139.99

MAXVAC 500 SEALER
SKU: 1253
$278.99

VAC BAGS

1390	2 PACK 11"X16" ROLLS	$19.99
1391	2 PACK 14"X16" ROLLS	$32.99
1389	2 PACK 8"X20" ROLLS	$19.99
1382	COMBO PACK	$64.99
1388	GALLON 28CT	$19.99
1386	PINT 28CT	$9.99
1230	PINT 6X9 100CT	$24.99
1387	QUART 44CT	$19.99

lemproducts.com

JAY'S SPORTING GOODS

www.JaysSportingGoods.com

CLARE
8800 S. Clare Ave
Clare, MI 48617
(989) 386-3475

GAYLORD
1151 S. Otsego Ave
Gaylord, MI 49735
(989) 705-1339

HOURS
Mon-Thurs 9am-8pm
Friday 9am-9pm
Saturday 9am-8pm
Sunday 12noon-5pm
CLOSED ALL MAJOR HOLIDAYS

michigan
OUT-of-DOORS
VOLUME 74, ISSUE 2

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.

CONTENTS

STAFF REPORTS & MISC.

BASECAMP

Nick Green, Editor

WELCOME TO MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS

MICHIGAN'S PREMIUM OUTDOOR JOURNAL

The value of Michigan's public lands was cast into the spotlight in late March when the novel coronavirus sparked "stay home, stay safe" mandates.

For many of us, things probably didn't change much in terms of our outdoor pursuits. With the exception of a short ban on motor boats (MUCC can be thanked for quelling that), many of the outdoor endeavors we need to keep our sanity remained available.

However, to the state's majority that don't read this magazine and might not have their finger on the pulse of Michigan's natural resources, the "stay home, stay safe" orders were probably the catalyst for a feeling of hopelessness and condemnation.

Feeling lost, many new Michiganders ventured out onto our State Game Areas, State Forests, trails and waterways. Turkey license sales skyrocketed for the first time in more than a decade. And, if folks were lucky, they were able to find the heralded morel mushroom — I know I put a few in the frying pan.

Folks unlike us seemed to also enjoy the rich, natural beauty that our state provides after years of staying inside in front of their screens or partaking in the rat race to that next raise or promotion.

This pandemic devastated our state. And it likely still will through this magazine's shelf life. However, many in Michigan have a reinvigorated sense of what our outdoors is, why it is important and why it needs to be protected.

For folks like us — hunters, anglers and trappers — we need to be cognizant of these different, new users and embrace them. We need to shepherd them through what it means to be stewards of Michigan's natural beauty and the wildlife that lives here. We need to patiently remind them that those of us in camo or with rod and reel or who set trap lines in the coldest of winter storms are the keepers of this fire. We are the funders of conservation.

While many don't understand how federal excise taxes on firearms or fishing gear work, they can certainly appreciate that the purchases we make pump millions of dollars for conservation into Michigan. Furthermore, it behooves die-hards like us to remind, in a polite, positive manner, other users of our natural resources that license dollars fund bird watching towers, tree plantings, wetland management endeavors, habitat restoration, walking paths, invasive species removal and so much more.

Editor Nick Green fishes from his duck boat on a Central Michigan Lake. Photo: Abraham Downer

Our outdoors are for everyone to enjoy. The public lands we are all indebted to for our sanity, our food and our well-being shouldn't be devalued. And they should be a point that brings us all together.

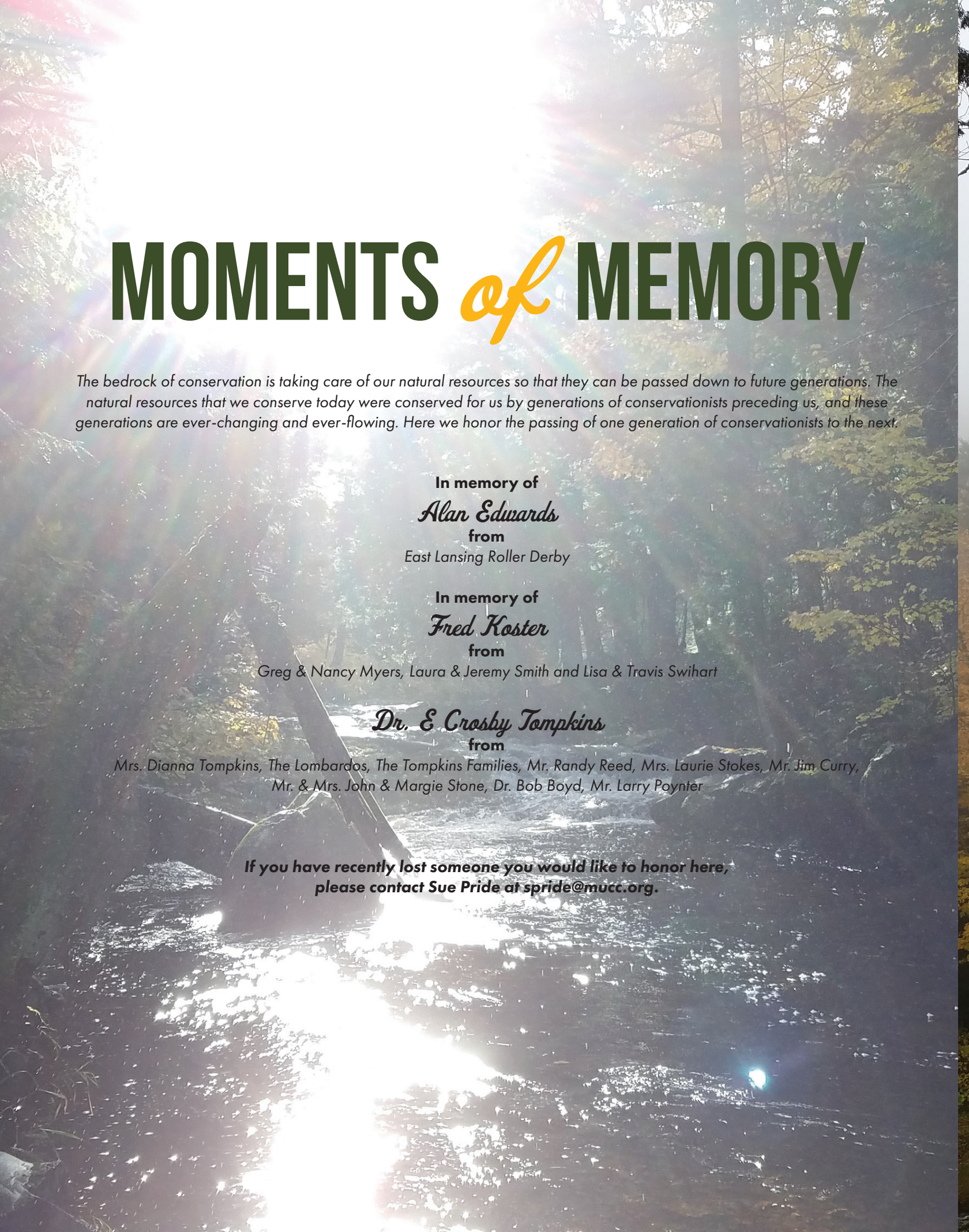
If we learned anything from the cornonavirus pandemic, it is that our will to better things does not subside — no matter the hurdle we face. Like the outdoor world, we need to change, evolve and remember our history so as to not repeat the worse parts of it.

For those of you who were expecting limits of trout on stringers, big bucks and walleye sandwiches, this issue might seem strange. This summer, we took a deep dive into the conservation stewardship and ethic that we all share — whether we know it or not.

We tackled the pandemic's devastating effect on what the conservation world will look like moving forward, and we showed how you can give a little piece of yourself back to the resource.

Like most of you, I long for the cool, crisp autumn days spent in a deer stand, trailing my dogs in search of ruffed grouse or watching mallards circle the sky overhead. For now, we have to remember, though, why we have these beautiful places to enjoy. We need to remember that they are here for everyone. Our public lands are in well-washed public hands.

Yours in Conservation,



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

Alan Edwards

from

East Lansing Roller Derby

In memory of

Fred Koster

from

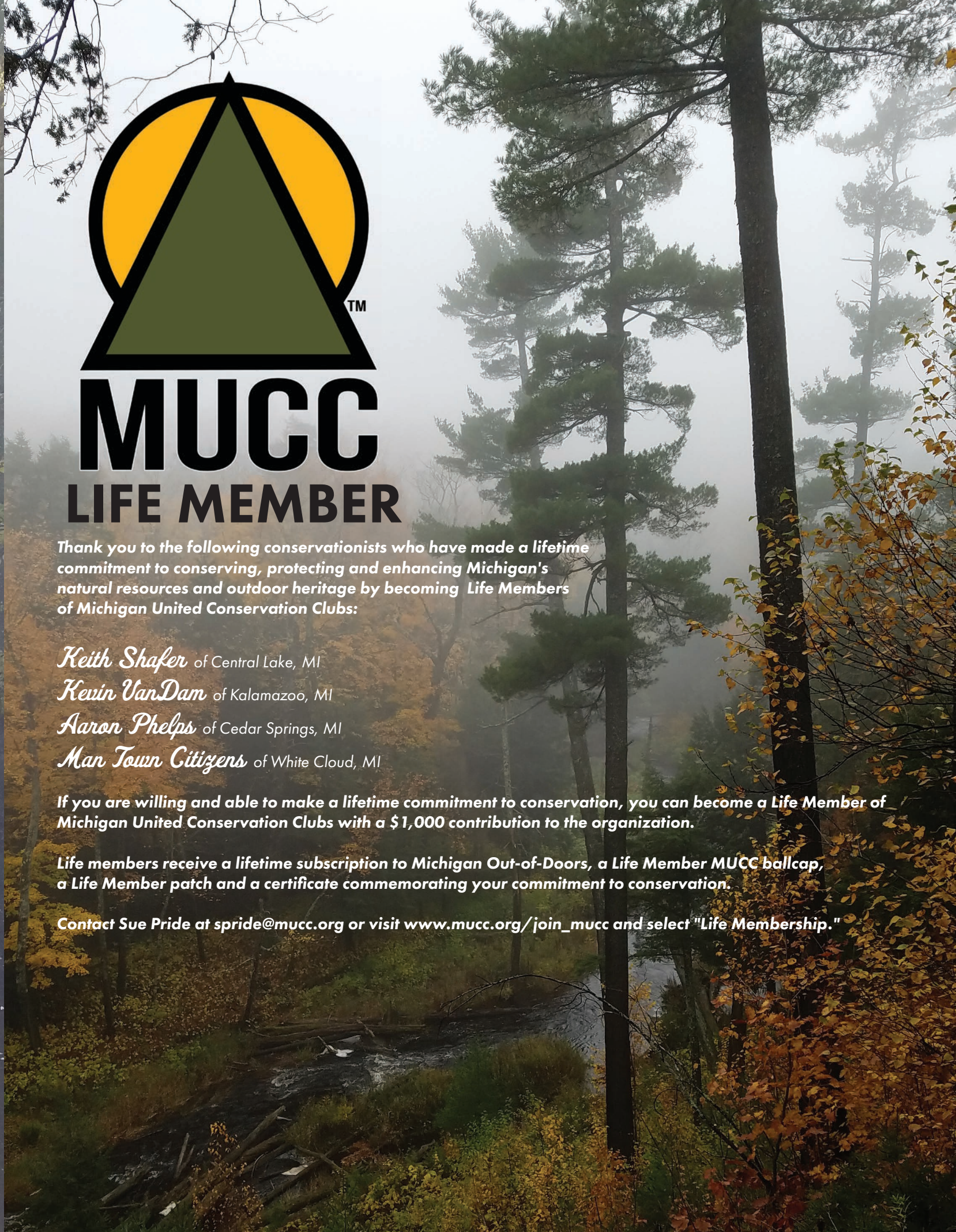
Greg & Nancy Myers, Laura & Jeremy Smith and Lisa & Travis Swihart

Dr. E Crosby Tompkins

from

Mrs. Dianna Tompkins, The Lombardos, The Tompkins Families, Mr. Randy Reed, Mrs. Laurie Stokes, Mr. Jim Curry, Mr. & Mrs. John & Margie Stone, Dr. Bob Boyd, Mr. Larry Poynter

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:

Keith Shafer of Central Lake, MI
Kevin VanDam of Kalamazoo, MI
Aaron Phelps of Cedar Springs, MI
Man Town Citizens of White Cloud, 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.

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."

PUBLISHER
AMY TROTTER

EDITOR
NICK GREEN
editor@michiganoutofdoors.com

ADVERTISING
NICK GREEN
edtior@michiganoutofdoors.com

Michigan Out-of-Doors (ISSN 0026-2382) is the official publication of Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), 2101 Wood St., Lansing MI 48912, and is published quarterly. Telephone: 517.371.1041. Receipt of this publication is through membership in MUCC. For membership information, call 1.800.777.6720. Single copies available to the public for $5.99 each. Periodicals postage paid at Lansing, Michigan, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Michigan Out-of-Doors, PO Box 30235, Lansing MI 48909. All advertising communications should be sent to PO Box 30235. Views expressed by freelance writers are their own and do not necessarily express those of Michigan Out-of-Doors or Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS
Since 1937
MUCC
Uniting Citizens to Conserve, Protect and Enhance Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoor Heritage
PO Box 30235 Lansing, MI 48909 | 800.777.6720 P | www.mucc.org

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.

MUCC STAFF

AMY TROTTER
Executive Director
atrotter@mucc.org

KIRK RILEY
Deputy Director
kriley@mucc.org

MORGAN (WARDA) JENNINGS
Wildlife Co-op Coordinator
mjennings@mucc.org

LOGAN SCHULTZ
Systems Manager
lschultz@mucc.org

MAKHAYLA LABUTTE
Habitat Volunteer Coordinator
mlabutte@mucc.org

SHAUN MCKEON
Education Director
smckeon@mucc.org

SUE PRIDE
Membership Relations
spride@mucc.org

MAX BASS
Camp Director, Educator
mbass@mucc.org

IAN FITZGERALD
Policy and Special Events Assistant
ifitzgerald@mucc.org

EMMA NEHAN
On the Water Coordinator
eneehan@mucc.org

NICK GREEN
Public Information Officer
ngreen@mucc.org

JOE DEWAN
Huron Pines AmeriCorps Member
americorps@mucc.org

COVID-19, Lawsuits: MUCC Today and Yesterday

Director's Desk

Amy Trotter, *MUCC Executive Director*

My days, as of this writing, have started with one or two media interviews or phone calls from my basement storage room while still in my pajamas. Usually, I am balancing online school, recess, being a short-order cook and childcare while working from home. Sometimes, I end the day with virtual happy hours with friends, family or my fellow conservation colleagues at similar organizations across the country.

These are the weird days of working remotely during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Who knows where we will be at the time you read this? Hopefully, we will be doing the work of conservation with fewer ZOOM meetings.

MUCC closed its doors to the public on March 23 and shifted to remote work among our 13 staff members across Southern Michigan. But, MUCC has never stopped working for you!

Back in the old "Tom Washington days," which our members and nonmembers love to reminisce about, no one could have imagined this organization functioning during a "stay home, stay safe" order from the state. We had large printing presses, a dark room for developing pictures and nearly 50 staff (not to mention several animals for our Wildlife Encounters program we traveled across the state with) all at our headquarters at 2101 Wood Street in Lansing; but, no website. Tom was also known for his physically-large presence — a "mountain of a man" with a booming voice that helped hone the state's reputation as a leader in protecting natural resources.

Today's MUCC thrives on technology and electronic communications, even as we have maintained our traditional premier outdoor journal, Michigan Out-of-Doors, for the last 73 years. During the shutdown, we communicated breaking news via email and social media, and TRACKS magazine was released free online for April and May for the thousands of closed classrooms needing materials to share. We have hosted online challenges to keep people engaged in the outdoors and conservation. And our staff and board members have adopted ZOOM calls as the only way to do business.

Compared to Tom Washington, I would consider myself, at 5-feet, 1-inch, less physically-dominating but just as demanding of respect from those in Lansing who seek to undermine our natural resources or our outdoor heritage. But my approach is much more in line with diplomacy and coalition-building than my well-known predecessor.

But sometimes, a watchdog needs to bite. And just like the old days, we did.

On April 19, MUCC filed an initial complaint in United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan alleging that Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Department of Natural Resources Director Daniel Eichinger's application of Executive Order 2020-42 to prohibit motorboat use was unconstitutional.

Judge Paul Maloney acknowledged that the boating ban "confusion puts members of MUCC in a precarious situation" and set a formal hearing for April 29; however, by April 24, Gov. Whitmer announced that she was rescinding the motorized boating ban.

Charter guide, avid angler and owner of Teachin' Fishin' Lance Valentine said MUCC's actions reinforce the organization's worth and value to the angling community. Valentine was one of the first industry leaders to call for action from MUCC.

"Anglers need a group like MUCC to lead the charge in Lansing and be the watchdog over the DNR, legislature and governor's office," Valentine said. "My livelihood is at stake, and I feel better knowing someone has anglers' best interest at heart when we can't be there."

Nearly 500 of you are new to our organization since our last magazine published. We welcome you to a diverse group of hunters, anglers, trappers and conservationists that put their money and their Saturdays where their mouths are to be part of something bigger than themselves. In this issue of Michigan Out-of-Doors, you will learn so much about all the things we do for conservation in Michigan, and hopefully, you will share what you learn with friends and family — because the sportsmen and women in Michigan need a strong MUCC. And as the nation's largest statewide conservation nonprofit, that means members and donations.

For those of you returning to us — welcome —you will find our organization is much leaner now than it used to be. MUCC no longer owns Michigan Out-of-Doors TV, we don't maintain a legal hotline or employ lawyers, Wildlife Encounters is gone, and while we still attend and help to promote Outdoorama, it's not ours to stress over. We may have had disagreements among friends in the past, but there is no one else watching and working for you come hell or high water — even through the newest plague upon our planet.

Since 1937, we have been standing up for our members, for our natural resources and for our outdoor heritage. And with your help, I hope that will continue long into the future.

Yours in Conservation,

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.

January 26 to February 8, 2020

A big catch

CO Todd Thorn checked some ice anglers at Hawk Island in Lansing and encountered a subject who could not produce a license and was providing false identification information.

The angler became argumentative and wouldn't give CO Thorn his real name. CO Thorn placed the subject under arrest for fishing without a license.

As he walked the man back to his patrol truck and off the ice, the man stated CO Thorn had "captured a good one." He told CO Thorn that he would have ran on him if CO Thorn wasn't wearing ice cleats.

CO Thorn found an identification card in the angler's pocket and learned he had three felony warrants, two misdemeanor warrants, and a civil warrant for child support.

The felony warrants were for obstructing police and assaulting a pregnant woman.

The man was ticketed and lodged at the Ingham County Jail until he could be picked up by Mecosta County to answer to his charges.

Time flies when you're hunting

COs Joseph Deppen and Brad Silorey received a baiting complaint in Macomb County.

The COs responded to the area and found the hunter in his stand with his firearm still loaded well after shooting hours had ended.

The hunter claimed he fell asleep in his hunting stand. The hunter was also hunting over a large quantity of bait.

The hunter said, "I thought Governor Granholm repealed the baiting ban."

The COs pointed out that former Governor Granholm left office in the mid to late 2000's and she did not repeal the baiting ban in 2019 or 2020; neither did current Governor Gretchen Whitmer.

When questioned about his hunting license, the hunter was unable to produce his deer combination license. The hunter was cited for hunting after hours, hunting over bait, and hunting without license.

Make sure to read the signs

CO Anna Cullen received a complaint from Muskegon County Dispatch referencing several subjects who were ice fishing on private property in southern Muskegon County.

The property is well posted and gated in multiple locations. CO Cullen, along with an area officer, responded to the location and were escorted to where the men were fishing.

Unavoidably, the anglers saw CO Cullen's truck during the escort and attempted to flee from the ice.

Noticing this, CO Cullen rushed to their location and pursued them on foot through the woods.

The men, listening to CO Cullen's commands, hesitantly stopped their escape.

The anglers all admitted that they knew they were trespassing, and even walked by several "No Trespassing" signs upon their entry.

Enforcement action was taken with all three individuals, and their fish were seized.

Snowmobiles have stop signs too

COs Zachary Painter and Ethen Mapes worked a late-night snowmobile patrol in Gogebic and Ontonagon Counties. The COs were

targeting careless operation and drunk drivers.

COs Painter and Mapes stopped a large group of snowmobilers who all had failed to stop at a stop sign, some not even slowing down.

COs Painter and Mapes conducted standardized field sobriety tests (SFSTs) on two of the snowmobilers.

CO Painter arrested one of the snowmobilers for operating a snowmobile while intoxicated.

CO Mapes wrote two citations and gave multiple verbal warnings to the group for carelessly operating snowmobiles.

While CO Painter was lodging the intoxicated snowmobiler in Gogebic County, CO Mapes patrolled the White Pine area, where he stopped a group of seven snowmobilers for failing to stop at a stop sign.

CO Mapes conducted SFSTs on one of the snowmobilers and found them to be impaired and over the legal limit.

CO Mapes arrested the snowmobiler for operating a snowmobile while intoxicated and issued one other snowmobiler a citation for careless operation.

Gloves off, off of the rink

CO Josiah Killingbeck was on snowmobile patrol when he was passed by a sled that was displaying an expired registration.

CO Killingbeck was able to contact the group and, upon stopping the operator of the snowmobile with the expired registration, the subject took his helmet off and threw it on the ground along with his gloves.

CO Killingbeck was able to calm the upset subject down, who said that he was up here with friends riding and had jumped on a sled to go for a quick ride.

The subject said that he knew the sled was displaying an expired registration but figured no law enforcement would be out on a Sunday morning.

CO Killingbeck educated the subject on snowmobile regulations and a citation was issued for the violation.

Big trucks can mean big problems

While patrolling rural county roads, CO Freeborn noticed a propane truck that appeared to be stuck trying to get up a driveway.

CO Freeborn contacted the driver who appeared to be exhausted from attempting to get the truck unstuck.

The driver advised he had been stuck for over three hours and that he attempted to call his company to advise he was stuck, but his phone lost service part way through the call and was unable to call out.

Due to the location of where he was stuck, he was 15 miles from the nearest town and CO Freeborn was the first vehicle he had seen since he had been stuck.

CO Freeborn allowed the driver to use his phone and cell booster so the driver could make a call. A tow truck arrived on scene and pulled out the truck.

No PFDs should not float your boat

While on patrol in Ionia County, CO Jeremy Beavers checked for waterfowl hunting activity in the Ionia State Recreation Area. During his patrol, CO Beavers checked Steven's Point and observed two subjects in a boat on the Grand River.

CO Beavers watched as the subjects came to shore, noticing the boat did not have current registration.

Contact was made and the subjects stated they were goose hunting but did not have any luck.

CO Beavers checked their hunting equipment and then identified the owner of the boat. CO Beavers told the subject his boat's registration was expired.

The subject stated he did not think he needed registration with just a trolling motor.

CO Beavers informed that electric motorboats need to be registered as well.

CO Beavers then asked to see his personal flotation devices (PFDs) and the subject stated he did not have any on board. The subject was given a warning for the registration and cited for failing to provide PFDs.

Level heads prevail

CO Nicholas Ingersoll received a call from Monroe County Sheriff's Department of a snowmobile that struck a residence in Monroe.

CO Ingersoll along with the Monroe County Sheriff's Department responded to the scene where the rider had collided with a rock, ejecting him from his snowmobile.

The snowmobile had continued and collided with the residence after the rider was ejected.

The snowmobile rider and the homeowner were able to deal with the damage to the residence civilly.

While talking with the rider, CO Ingersoll noticed that the snowmobile was not registered and did not have a trail permit.

CO Ingersoll also advised the rider that his actions were careless, and that Monroe County is closed to snowmobile use on the county roadways.

CO Ingersoll issued the rider a citation for not having a trail permit and issued warnings for the rest.

The rider learned a valuable lesson that night and he advised CO Ingersoll that he would not be riding on the roadways again.

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

MIKE AVERY'S OUTDOOR MAGAZINE RADIO

MICHIGAN'S #1 OUTDOOR RADIO SHOW!

For more than 25 years Mike Avery has informed and entertained hunters and anglers across Michigan. His experience and common sense philosophy have made Outdoor Magazine the Number One outdoor radio show in Michigan.

Be sure to listen to Mike Avery's Outdoor Magazine on one of the following radio stations each week!

WAAM	ANN ARBOR	1600 AM	WMLQ	MANISTEE	97.7 FM
WZTK	ALPENA	105.7 FM	WDMJ	MARQUETTE	1320 AM
WBCK	BATTLE CREEK	95.3 FM	WKBZ	MUSKEGON	1090 AM
WKYO	CARO	1360 AM	WNBY	NEWBERRY	1450 AM
WCBY	CHEBOYGAN	1240 AM	WPHM	PORT HURON	1380 AM
WCBY-FM	CHEBOYGAN	100.7 FM	WSGW	SAGINAW	790 AM
WWCK	FLINT	1570 AM	WSGW-FM	SAGINAW	100.5 FM
WTWS	HOUGHTON LAKE	92.1 FM	WKNW	SAULT ST. MARIE	1400 AM
WUPS	HOUGHTON LAKE	98.5 FM	WSJM	ST. JOE	94.9 FM
WMIQ	IRON MOUNTAIN	1450 AM	WIOS	TAWAS	1480 AM
WIAN	ISHPEMING	1240 AM	WIOS-FM	TAWAS	106.9 FM
WILS	LANSING	1320 AM	WTCM	TRAVERSE CITY	580 AM
WLDN	LUDINGTON	98.7 FM			

www.MikeAveryOutdoors.com

Check us out on Facebook:
facebook.com/OutdoorMagazine

SCAN FOR RADIO APP

OTG

ON THE GROUND

MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

Improving Michigan's Public Lands Since 2013

Impacts

2,245
Acres Improved

3,066
Volunteers

14,555
Volunteer Hours

MUCC's award-winning On the Ground (OTG) program is in its eighth year, with multiple projects planned across all ages and experience levels throughout the state. 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.

About 3,000 volunteers have improved fish and game habitat through weekend projects that involve building brush piles, 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.

In June, we hope to be building a wildlife-viewing platform at the Rose Lake State Game Area (SGA) (6/12). July finds us improving aquatic habitat on the Manistee River (7/25), and in August, OTG heads to Pigeon River Country for additional habitat improvement efforts (project TBD; 8/22). Please note that these events are subject to be rescheduled or canceled depending on the COVID-19 restrictions.

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

Canceled Events Leave Shortfall in Conservation Funding Nationwide

By Drew YoungeDyke
Manager of Sporting Communications for the National Wildlife Federation and Board of Directors, 2% for Conservation

Amid the chaos and uncertainty of the COVID-19 quarantine, one significant impact has mostly flown under the radar: the loss of conservation funding due to canceled events like banquets and sport shows. While the priority was, is and should be on preventing the loss of human life, justifying the stay at home orders and bans of large gatherings, conservation organizations will be struggling with the fallout for the foreseeable future. Individual conservationists can mitigate the damage, though.

I recently spoke with Jared Frasier, executive director of 2% for Conservation. 2% for Conservation is a national nonprofit based in Missoula, Montana, which certifies businesses which donate at least 1% of their profits and 1% of their time to benefit conservation organizations working on recruitment and retention, wildlife and habitat improvement, access and opportunity, and education and outreach. Certified businesses include national brands like First Lite, Hunt To Eat (which both support the National Wildlife Federation), Sitka Gear and Stone Glacier, and local companies, including Michigan-based Flint Ridge Rifles. In this position, Frasier has frequent contact with both conservation organizations and outdoor industry partners throughout the country.

The COVID-19 quarantine went into effect right in the heart of conservation banquet season, when local chapters of national conservation organizations and independent local conservation groups host the gatherings that often raise a significant portion of what funds either their local conservation projects or the national organization's mission. It also occurred amid the sport show season, when many of these organizations rent booth space and thousands of hunters and anglers buy or renew their memberships. The loss of both of these sources of revenue for conservation organizations means that there is less they have to fund the on-the-ground conservation work they do for wildlife.

The outdoor industry is taking a hit, too, as many of the retail outlets which sell their products are either shut down completely or receiving dramatically-reduced traffic. Additionally, the conservation banquets are a source of marketing as they donate products to conservation organizations to raffle. When the banquets are canceled, the companies which have donated products are out either the wholesale or discounted cost of the product without the marketing return. To the credit of the companies certified by 2% for Conservation, though, Frasier said he has received no reports of any of the companies asking for their products to be returned.

"We're talking about almost a million dollars that 2% brands are leaving on the table, specifically around canceled banquets," Frasier said.

The state agencies also take a hit from these canceled banquets

Volunteers from Consumers Energy remove invasive honeysuckle during an MUCC On the Ground project at the Rose Lake State Game Area near Lansing.

Volunteers participate in an On the Ground event at the Shiawassee River State Game Area near St. Charles.

because, often, the conservation dollars raised go to projects completed in partnership with the state agency. It might be a collaborative wildlife habitat or fisheries project or the purchase of private land wildlife habitat or fisheries access, which is later donated or sold to the state to become public land. In some cases, the volunteer hours or funds provided by the project count towards the state's match to receive its full allocation for Pittman-Robertson funding from the sale of hunting and firearms equipment. If the banquets don't raise the conservation organization's funds to partner in the project, then the project doesn't happen, and the match isn't there, potentially costing the state millions that would be put to use conserving wildlife and habitat.

Using his local community of Bozeman as an example, Frasier noted that banquets could average $30,000 to $55,000 in revenue. "Now let's take that and multiply it across all the events not happening… We're looking at stupid numbers. I mean numbers that sound fake," he said. "Roughly a third to half of all dollars that go to conservation work in the United States are not coming in."

There are some things that we, as individual conservationists, can do to help, though. Understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in different ways both medically and financially, Frasier recommends taking these actions only to the extent that your budget allows.

1) If you bought a ticket to a conservation banquet or event that was canceled, don't ask for a refund. The conservation organization is likely still going to be out the cost of renting the venue and items it already had to purchase, so letting them keep the cost of your ticket can help them cover some of that expense. If the ticket also included your membership for the year, stay a member, and let the organization keep your membership dues.

2) If you planned to attend and purchase a ticket at the door, donate that amount to the conservation organization or purchase or renew your membership to the organization online. This also applies to sport shows; if you normally attend, for instance, the Ultimate Sport Show in Grand Rapids and usually renew your Michigan United Conservation Clubs membership at their booth there, go online instead and renew your membership on their website.

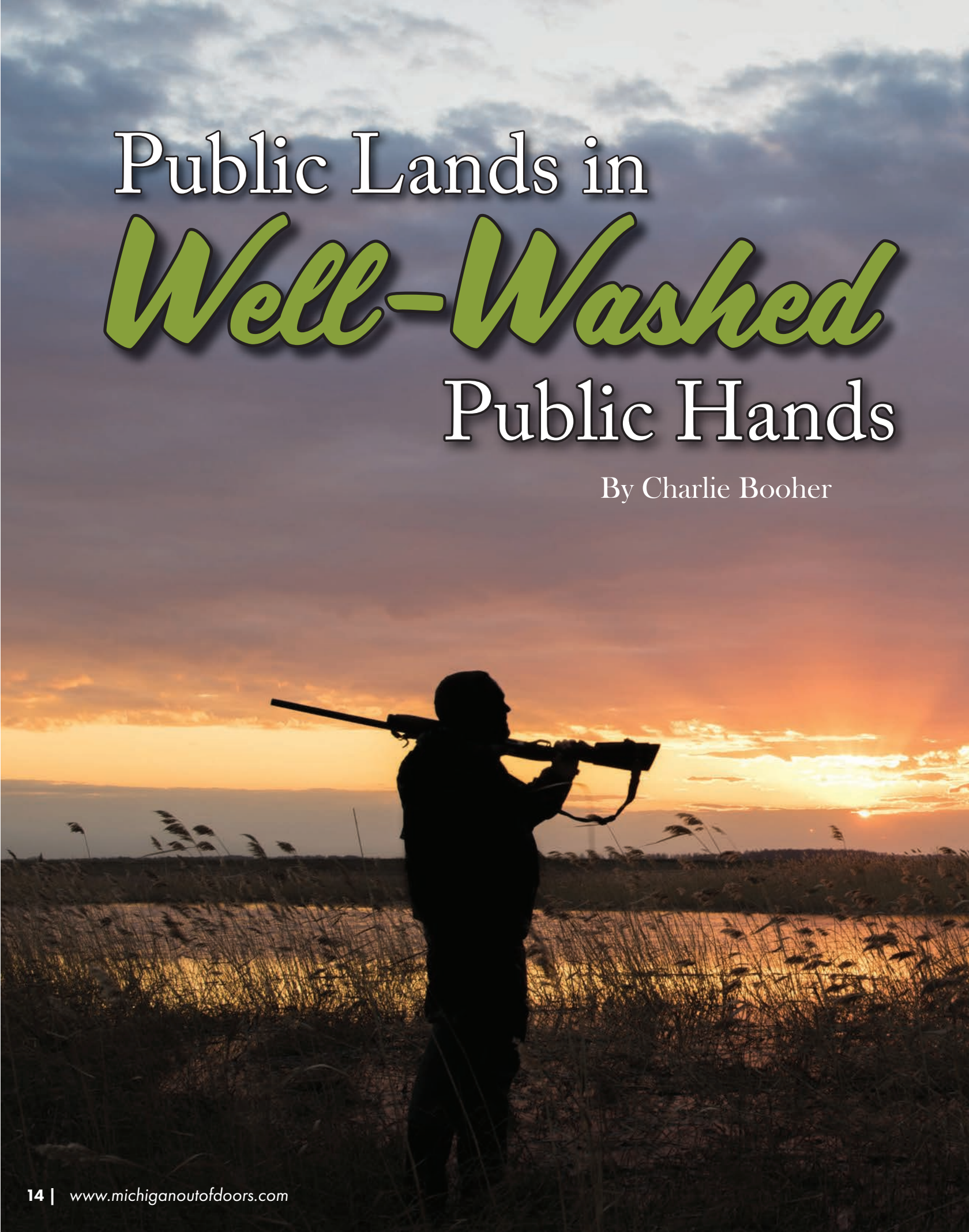
3) Estimate the total amount you were going to budget for the event and donate that to the organization. Do you normally buy a few drinks, buy a few raffle tickets and bid on a few auction items at the conservation banquet? Do you normally travel from out of town to the sport show, rent a motel and eat dinner out? Consider estimating the amount you would have spent on gas, food, lodging and the event itself, or a percentage of it, and donate that amount to the conservation organization.

In addition to these three levels of donation you can provide to conservation organizations struggling from the cancellation of events, don't be shy about doing it. 2% for Conservation is tracking the hashtag #HelpTheEvents to encourage others to take similar action. It's not about bragging about the donation you're making; it's about encouraging other conservationists to step up, too. Being a conservationist takes more than buying hunting and fishing licenses and equipment that get taxed for the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds. Those are the bare minimum actions required by law to participate in our pursuits through systems set up generations ago. Being a conservationist takes more. Now, when organizations small and large need it most, is when we have the opportunity to step up and earn the title of conservationist.

If your conservation organization has had to cancel a fundraising event due to COVID-19, you can report it to 2% for Conservation for inclusion in their estimate of total losses on the "Contact" page at www.fishandwildlife.org.

Public Lands in Well-Washed Public Hands

By Charlie Booher



As of this writing in early April, the world is fundamentally different from just a few weeks ago. Schools are canceled, parents are working from home and people are practicing social distancing on a scale bigger than we have ever seen in our lifetimes. While there are a number of concerns for human health and public safety, there are things that make this time more bearable — notably places to go outside that are free and open to all of us. From city parks and trails to national forest lands and wilderness areas, the wild places of this country are areas where we can all go to escape the monotony of our homes and apartments. They are places for our kids to play, for us to escape and for everyone to enjoy.

In this time, I have had the privilege to recreate on local, state and federal lands — places that would not exist without the foresight of those who came before us. Walking on well-maintained trails, rabbit hunting on state game areas and looking for sheds in local conservancies would not be possible without significant financial support from multiple authorities. As I travel to these places on foot and by car, I notice my familiar haunts are as full as I have ever seen them. People appear to be using public lands — keeping six feet apart — at rates that far exceed normal visitation.

It is in these times that the importance of our public lands shines through.

I am immensely grateful to live in a county, a state and a country where some of our leaders emphasize and prioritize public lands at the local, state and federal levels.

Before all of this got started, I voted in a local election where a number of millages were up for renewal. Where I attend school in Ingham County, citizens have voted in huge proportions to continue a millage of nearly $3.5 million annually to provide for improved parks, trails and public places. On March 10 of this year, more than 55,000 people (of a total near 75,000) voted to prioritize the maintenance of county trails and parks. In the next three years, this will connect existing trails and create a contiguous route through many of our parks and conservancies. I have spent a great deal of time in these places over the last few weeks, and I anticipate spending even more time there in the coming months, so I am continually grateful to those who had the foresight and willingness to set these places aside.

While these local measures are excellent and impactful for me, they only benefit my close neighbors and I. There are a number of programs that exist for all of the people in Michigan and in the United States. As I walked and hunted in these times, I could not help but notice the signs that kept appearing — simple reminders of the programs and accounts that allow people like me to use lands held in the public trust. Here in Michigan, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) appear throughout. Both of these programs are unique in that they utilize royalties from the development of public oil and gas resources for public land acquisition and improvement.

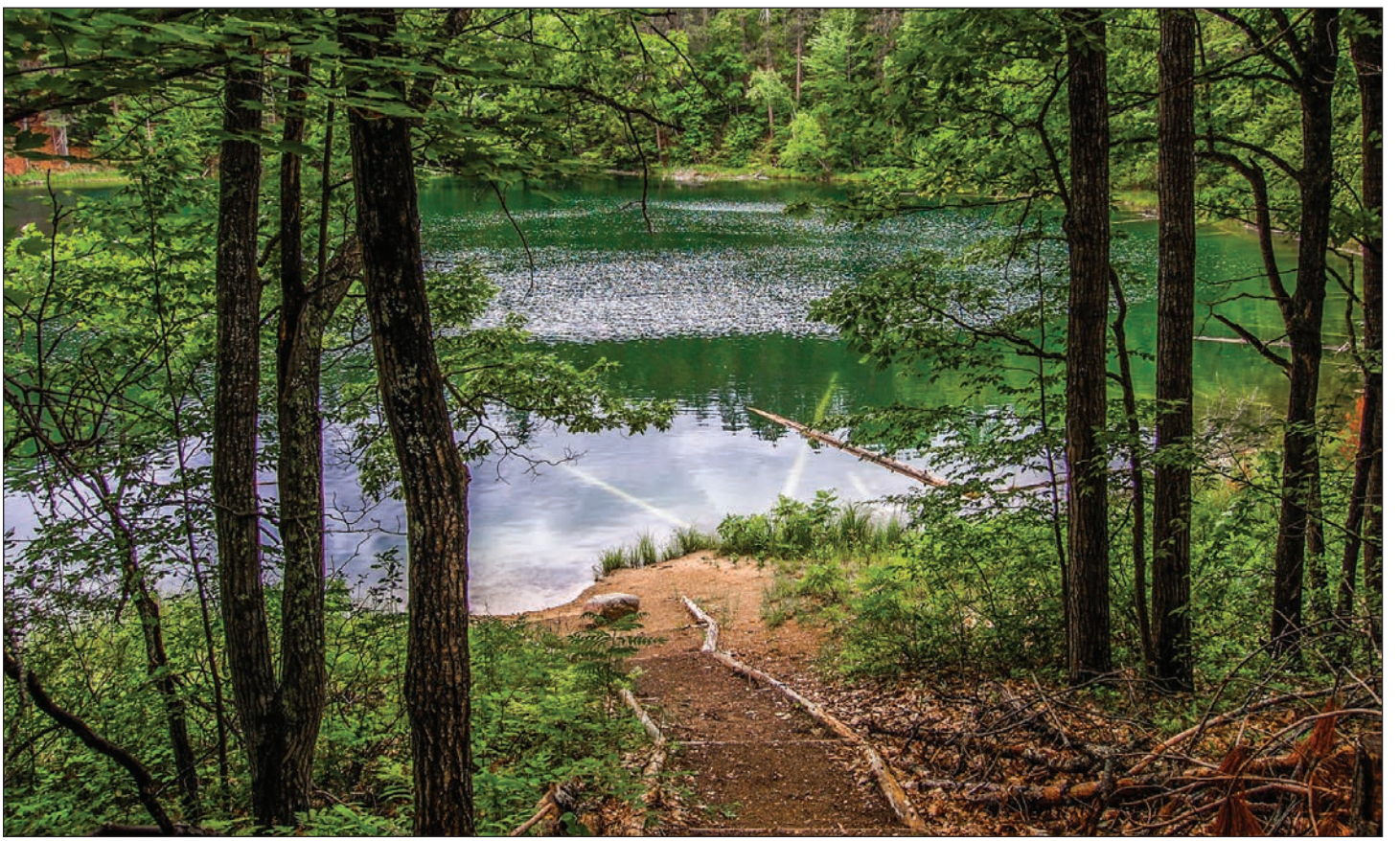
More than one hundred years ago, the "Pine Barrens Country" that a young Ernest Hemingway called "wild as the devil" and "the greatest I've ever been in" became the Pigeon River Country State Forest. Today, it is home to one of the largest free-roaming elk herds in the eastern United States and is the largest block of contiguous undeveloped land in the Lower Peninsula. This public land provides innumerable opportunities for recreation, but it is also the birthplace of one of Michigan's great tools for conservation.

In 1976, this state land was ensnared in a great debate over the development of oil, gas and mineral reserves. These practices would undoubtedly change the state of this ecosystem, but growing tension in the Middle East led U.S. leaders to increasingly tap into domestic energy resources.

At this time, the leaders of Michigan United Conservation Clubs, along with other organizations, organized to ensure that there would be a mechanism for these extractive industries to provide for outdoor recreation and to safeguard Michigan's natural resources. Thus, out of these negotiations, the MNRTF was born.

To this day, Michigan is the only state in the country with such a program. Since its inception, the

A trail through the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRCSF) leads to this scenic view. In 1976, the PRCSF was ensnared in debate over the development of oil, gas and mineral reserves. It became the birthplace of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. Photo courtesy of Michigan Department of Natural Resources.



fund has contributed more than $1.1 billion to more than 2,300 projects in every one of Michigan's 83 counties. These unique funds are used every year to provide better access to Michigan's public lands, making the trust fund one of the greatest tools for conservation and providing for so many of the opportunities that I have had and will have during this time of social isolation.

Federal funding through the LWCF also compliments these state and local dollars. Established by Congress in 1964, LWCF was a majorly-popular, bipartisan commitment to protect natural areas and water resources and to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation to all Americans.

Every year, this fund uses royalties from offshore oil and gas development to buy land for outdoor recreation. LWCF has provided money to help conserve some of Michigan's most special places and create access for hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities. To date, Michigan has received nearly $342.4 million from LWCF, funding projects at the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, within the Huron, Ottawa and Hiawatha National Forests and along the North Country National Scenic Trail. Over this 50-year history, LWCF has funded land projects in every state and has supported over 41,000 state and local park projects. All told, nearly $19 billion has been appropriated from this fund since its creation — monies well spent to practice conservation and maintain our strong outdoor heritage. These funds provided countless hours of outdoor recreation for me during the time of social distancing, in places that will be maintained in the public trust in perpetuity because of these funds.

I certainly hope that by the time you are reading this we are in a different stage of this global pandemic — one in which we might return to restaurants, bars and our offices. When we do return, please think about the places that we so often take for granted. Go enjoy them when you have the time. And remember, when they are under threat, do whatever you can to support and defend them. Call your member of the state legislature to support robust funding of the MNRTF or email your Member of Congress and express your support for full funding of LWCF. MUCC continually advocates for all of these programs through advocacy work at the local, state and federal levels, as well as memberships in important coalitions that gather diverse stakeholders on behalf of this cause.

As conservationists, we benefit from these programs every day, and we must continue to create and protect them for the sake of our future.

The Natural Resources Trust Fund allocated more than $750,000 to aid in infrastructural development of Hawk Island County Park in Ingham County.

The Power of Partnership in Conservation

By Makhayla LaButte

At first glance, it might appear that we all may have a separate stake in the effort to conserve and protect Michigan's natural resources. It's quite natural to assume that birders and bird hunters couldn't be farther apart on the spectrum when measuring conservation goals, or that anglers and kayakers share little more than the water they recreate on in common. However, to take such a narrow view towards the conservation of Michigan's natural resources not only creates an unnecessary, harmful rift between different user groups, but it becomes detrimental to the health of the very resources we claim to love by leading to inaction and disengagement.

Even if we were to separate ourselves as consumptive and non-consumptive users (in other words, hunters, anglers and trappers and non-hunters, anglers and trappers), we would still have an abundance of common ground to stand on. Where one individual views the restoration of native grasslands as a win for popular game birds like ring-necked pheasants and wild turkeys, another may see the revival of native floral species that benefit pollinators, songbirds and contributes to air and water quality improvements. Both of these perspectives are correct. So why do many people view them as separate accomplishments?

The truth is that successful conservation stems from the combined input and effort of unique and independent stake-holders that often have different priorities. However, like all great conservation success stories, both large and small, it takes collaboration and compromise to reach a common goal.

The On the Ground (OTG) program is an excellent example of the power that comes from diverse partnerships in conservation. OTG is Michigan United Conservation Clubs' (MUCC) volunteer wildlife habitat improvement program. This program is funded through a Memorandum of Agreement with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Division.

Through this program, more than 3,000 volunteers have improved wildlife habitat on public land during weekend projects that involve building brush piles, removing invasive trees, restoring grassland habitat through native flower and grass plantings, installing fish-spawning structures, hinge-cutting trees for deer and snowshoe hare, installing wood duck nest boxes, regenerating aspen stands, performing river clean-ups and planting a variety of trees for wildlife food and cover. The OTG program provides outdoor enthusiasts of all kinds the opportunity to practice good stewardship of their public lands and give back to the resources that have provided them with so much. The work completed by MUCC volunteers and DNR wildlife professionals shows the general public that Michiganders are true conservationists. We benefit a wide variety of game and non-game wildlife species, enhance local

ecosystems and demonstrate how hunting license dollars are put to use.

As many are aware, the OTG program's volunteer events are rarely easy or convenient. They require driving to distant and often obscure locations, performing manual labor and, sometimes, even braving the elements. All this is done in the name of conservation. Volunteerism is one of the most selfless acts an individual can participate in, and the OTG program seems to bring out the most dedicated and passionate outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen that Michigan has to offer.

When being interviewed for a Michigan Out-of-Doors TV episode showcasing the OTG program this February, one of OTG's veteran volunteers and an avid outdoorsman, Wayne Hanson, discussed why he has been involved with the program since its inception in 2013. "I spend all that money buying licenses, so I have to come out and take care of my land," Wayne said, referring to the public land the project was being completed on. "[OTG] is a good way to get out and meet people you might not associate with when you're out hunting, and it's a good way to see how your hunting dollars are being spent."

To achieve its conservation mission, OTG partners with the DNR and groups like

Metro-West Steelheaders, Steelhead Manifesto, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Ruffed Grouse Society, the National Wildlife Federation and MI Birds; business and media partners such Mike Avery Outdoor Magazine, Consumers Energy and the Michigan Wildlife Council; and numerous local conservation clubs, land conservancies, conservation districts, college environmental clubs, local school districts and youth groups. As you can imagine, each of these stakeholders brings unique goals and ideas regarding conservation to the table. And the diversity of its volunteers is what makes the OTG program so successful.

During OTG projects, hunters, anglers, trappers, birders, hikers, kayakers, foragers, naturalists and countless other conservationists of all ages join forces to improve wildlife habitat on public land that helps sustain their way of life. Oftentimes, volunteers bring family and friends to projects and use the day to connect with fellow conservationists. In order to continue the legacy of conservation, including one's family and friends in conservation-minded activities is critical. Teaching them to hunt, fish or trap are all important components of preserving our outdoor heritage, but teaching them to give back to their natural resources is paramount.

It is not uncommon to hear hunters and non-hunters engage in exciting discussions, sharing stories and a passion for Michigan's wild places that remind us all that conservation is as diverse and complex as the individuals who participate in it.

Even after 151 habitat improvement projects impacting more than 2,200 acres, the OTG program is proudest of its role as a unifying force for the entire conservation community. Since 2013, this program has grown from six pilot projects with the DNR and local conservation club chapters to a statewide example of the strong unity between various natural resource user groups and the conservation ethic that unites all of us.

As we move into a future filled with uncertainty regarding the health of many of our natural resources and a declining hunting community, it is more important than ever before that we invite our fellow conservationists to play an active role in the caretaking of our natural resources. Today, I encourage you to extend a welcoming hand to your fellow conservationists, new and old, consumptive and non-consumptive, and take part in volunteer opportunities that benefit the wildlife, lands and the waters you love.

A large thank you goes out to the many volunteers and conservation partners the OTG program has had the privilege of improving wildlife habitat on public land with — from the remote wilderness of the Upper Peninsula to the bustling suburbs of Southeast Michigan, and all points in between.

Are you interested in getting involved? Visit mucc.org/on-the-ground, facebook.com/muccotg or contact MUCC Habitat Volunteer Coordinator Makhayla LaButte via email at mlabutte@mucc.org.

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.

OUR MISSION

Uniting citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage.

OUR FUTURE

MUCC protects our natural resources while educating the next generation of conservation stewards.

WHY SHOULD I JOIN MUCC?

- Receive one year of MUCC's official publication, Michigan Out-of-Doors.
- Support MUCC's education programs.
- Support efforts to conserve Michigan's natural resources.
- Support efforts to pass policy based on sound science.

☐ Yes! I'd like to become a member of MUCC!

Mail this to:
2101 Wood St., Lansing, MI 48912

Date _____

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Membership Categories

All members will receive a subscription to Michigan Out-of-Doors magazine.

☐ 1 Year _____ $35

☐ 2 Years _____ $60

☐ Life Membership (per person) _____ $1,000

Method of Payment

☐ Check enclosed (payable to MUCC)

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

_____
Card No.

_____
CVC Exp. Date

_____
Signature

Please call 1.800.777.6720
or visit www.mucc.org to sign up online

The Venture

By Robert Kennedy

The hot meal of fire-roasted pheasant and sliced potatoes cooked in a cast iron pan after a long day of fishing had left me feeling full and happy. I laid on the bank of the Two Hearted River in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The sun was slowly dipping below the slow-moving current of the river, and the tops of the white pines emerged like small mountain peaks against the tranquil skyline. My breath became more visible as the chill began to set in; I reflected on the day and all the treasures and experiences I was able to witness — my soul was at peace.

I began the overnight venture many weeks prior by researching possible locations to chase trout throughout the Upper Peninsula. With Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) stocking records, public land access points and historical forum data, I drew up a plan to hit as many rivers as possible in a short amount of time. It was to be a nearly 300-mile drive and would take 48 hours to accomplish the trip. Determined, I set my sights and hit the busy highway headed north.

As I covered countless miles driving, I reflected on my goal of landing some UP steelhead. With it being the opening weekend of walleye season and trout opener, I knew the pressure in the area would be focused on other streams. I had many rivers I wanted to try, and the anticipation of traversing ground with little fishing pressure made me giddy. Even though I didn't know if the time I put into the research would pay off, I knew it would be a captivating venture — no matter the results of my stringer.

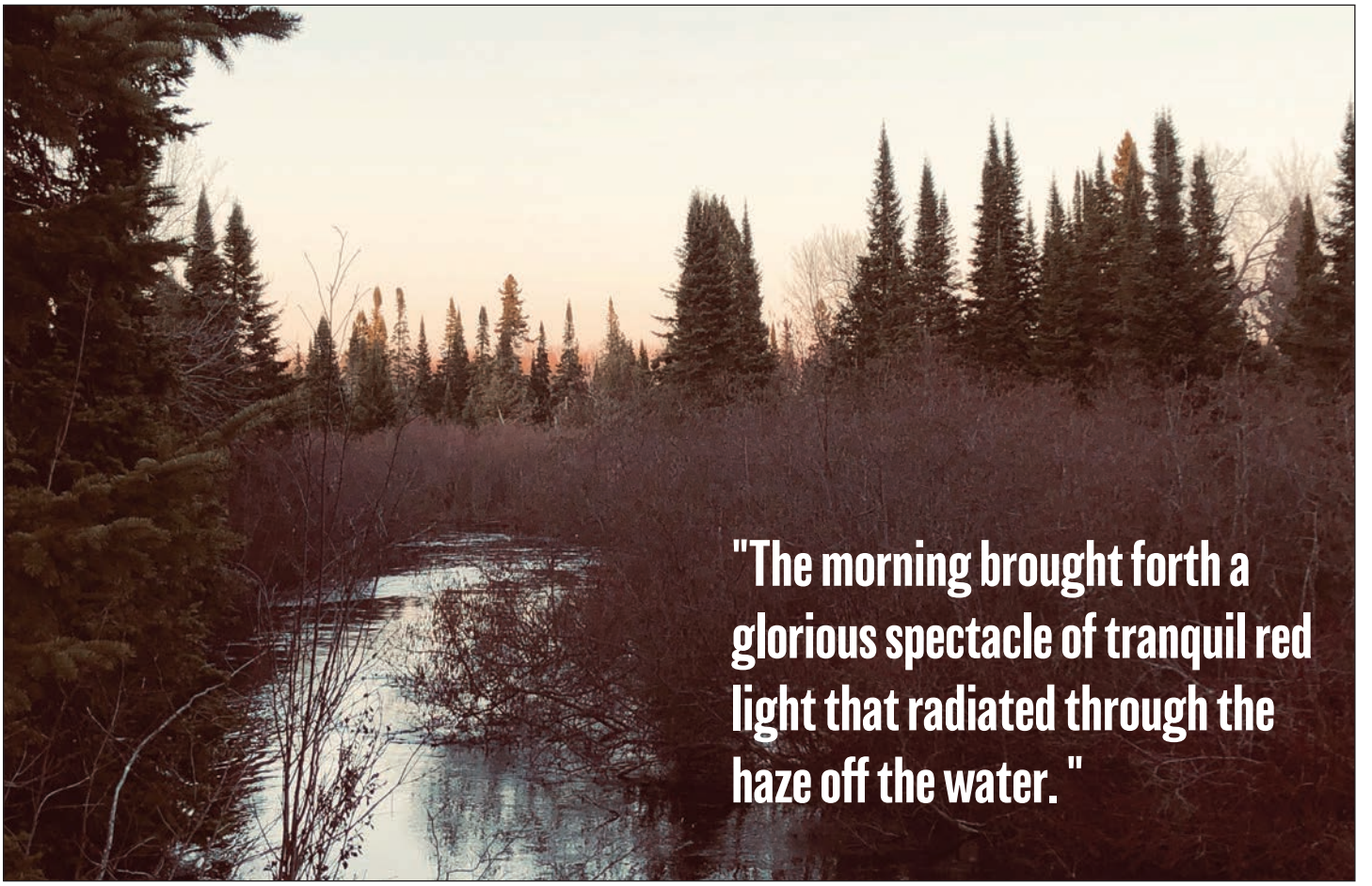
I was immediately surprised to find a few vehicles parked along the dusty dirt road near the bridge crossing at the first river I stopped at. A little deterred, I still put my waders on and began brush-busting through the alders. I found a small opening along the bank and began to fish listening to the drumming of the grouse in the distance. The male ruffed grouse's slow, low drumming accelerated in speed as he searched for a mate. It was the only thing that kept me entertained while working that section of the river. The spot was a bust, and so were the next two creeks and rivers I ventured to before reaching my overnight destination.

Overlooking the Two Hearted from a bluff, I decided to fish for a short time without any results, and as it was getting close to dark, I decided to start supper. The roadkill pheasant I had picked up two days prior with some redskin potatoes, garlic, butter and asparagus all cooked over the fire. It was a gourmet meal with a scenic background. My expectations for the day to land a steelhead had come up short, but my outlook and spirit were still high as I absorbed all of the beauty and the glory of creation that surrounded me.

Curling up in my sleeping bag in the darkness of my truck cab, I could feel the chill of the brisk spring air on my face as it was the only exposed part of my body. Being tightly wrapped up like a

"Many men go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after."

Henry David Thoreau



monarch caterpillar in a cocoon, I gave thanks for the experiences of the day. No fish were had, but being engrossed in nature left a lasting imprint in my mind.

The morning brought forth a glorious spectacle of tranquil red light that radiated through the haze off the water. I absorbed it all as I brewed a cup of hot coffee with my Jetboil and ate a protein bar for breakfast. Reinvigorated by the display of the landscape and food in my stomach, I packed up and headed to a different location with a change of plans. Steelhead had let me down the day prior, but the opportunities for brook trout remained.

Perched on the bank of a tributary of Lake Superior, I began trudging upstream into the copper-stained water. Miles of streams were covered within the course of half a day. During the time of traversing swamps, stands of alders, log jams and mature stands of white pines, only one trout was witnessed chasing my spinner as I slowly retrieved it through the current. Despite the glory of nature and serene settings that were witnessed, discouragement began taking hold.

There was one last stop remaining as I began my drive back south towards home and all the responsibilities that waited for me there. At the final fishing spot, with the sun fully overhead, I began fishing and searched for pockets of shade along the bank across from me where I anticipated the trout to be hiding from the heat of the sun.

The first couple hundred yards yielded nothing other than familiarities of hours prior, but then an oddity happened. Creeping along the bank shore, I noticed it shallowing with the creek bottom structure transitioning from sand into gravel, and on the edge of the shade, I could see a sizable trout. The sun shined through the tea-stained water radiating on the gravel, making it appear as though they were nuggets of copper — and there, in all its glory, lay a steelhead carrying on its breeding cycle.

Not only was it just one steelhead but countless numbers that were partaking in their natural reproductive cycle. The creek that was no wider than a one-lane road was host to a minimum of 100 fish within a 100-yard stretch of stream. I had stumbled upon a spectacle that many people never witness.

With the intention in mind to catch brook trout in the creek, I had not taken into consideration that it was a tributary of Lake Michigan. Being unable to use my nine-foot steelhead rod due to the narrowness of the stream and the multitude of alders, I elected to try and catch just one on my five-foot light action rod and reel combination.

I stayed downstream of the fish so I didn't spook them and slowly lowered my feet into the water where I sat on the bank shore. I removed my spinner that had been used for the brook trout and replaced it with a small, pink bead pegged two finger widths

away from my size-10 hook. With one split shot on the line nearly two feet above my bead, I began to awkwardly cast and drift my set up through the pod of fish that hung out downstream of the female trying to spawn.

After a few drifts through the fish, I had my first hook up on a nice steelhead. The male easily bent my rod completely over as it ran downstream past me — only to break my line off within seconds. I replaced my bead and hook and continued the previous process. I was able to hook a few more fish with the same results until I finally hooked into an 18-inch steelhead. My undersized rod and reel setup was perfect for battling this smaller fish. He went flying through the air acrobatically multiple times and made the drag of my reel sing. I took my time with the battle savoring the moment, and as I slowly brought him towards me within arms reach, I flipped him on to the bank shore where I celebrated my accomplishment. I felt no shame pumping my fists in the air out of joy for a fish of this caliber and the tribulations that came with it.

I promptly put him out of his misery and then sat back and stared at the trophy. He was a radiant silver with a shimmering hue of purple scattered throughout. He was the cherry on top of the adventure, and it was going to make a delicious meal for me. Though I was elated at the accomplishment, it was during this moment the words of Henry David Thoreau came to me: "Many men go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after."

I was elated to catch the fish. I knew before setting out on my solo trip that exploring new waters can prove difficult. However, the full intent of the excursion was to find peace in a world full of chaos. Covering hundreds of miles while absorbing countless natural spectacles on a stream's edge or around a campfire was the main course of the odyssey. With our lives continuously being structured around modernization, we can slowly lose sight of the consistencies that surround us. Engrossing ourselves in the wilderness can help us rediscover those consistencies as well as find peace, heal souls and rejuvenate our being. A single trout was caught on the trip, but the memory and an everlasting impression can never be erased.

Getting off the Sidelines

My First Real Experience with MUCC

By Jack Ammerman

My wife cleaned out a drawer from an old desk the other day and handed me a slip of paper. "I guess it's safe to throw this away," she said. I looked and saw that it was a Michigan United Conservation Clubs membership card from 1991. I know that I had been a member as far back as the mid-80s, but those membership cards are long gone and didn't get tucked away in a drawer and forgotten. The timing of finding this card couldn't have been better. I had just returned from my first real involvement with MUCC.

At the time, a statewide organization that I belong to was reconsidering their involvement with MUCC. It wasn't a financial decision — it was a matter of being a longtime affiliate member but not doing anything with that affiliation. One might argue that the financial help to MUCC is "doing something," but that is a whole other story. There were also discussions put forth that the policies that MUCC has don't align with our organization's values. I had read too many Michigan Out-of-Doors magazines to know that this couldn't be further from the truth, so I decided to make a call to the MUCC office to verify my thoughts.

I spoke with Ian Fitzgerald, the MUCC Policy Assistant, and told him of the concerns. It wasn't a long call, but by the time the call was complete, my email box was loaded with examples of MUCC policies that supported my organization's interests. It was great ammunition to help me argue the case that affiliation with MUCC is absolutely in my organization's best interest.

Mr. Fitzgerald urged me to attend an upcoming MUCC Conservation Policy Board meeting (CPB). After giving it some thought, I realized that there was one true way to show my organization how strongly I felt that we needed to maintain affiliation – I would volunteer to be the point man and also be very active with MUCC.

My organization's governing board approved the move, and I was committed. A Board of Directors Trustee volunteered to attend as well, which made me feel better about walking into a large meeting with a bunch of strangers!

The day of the policy board meeting came and I made the two-hour drive, arriving ten minutes before the committee meetings began. I signed in and took one of each of the handouts that were available. I started to look for some guy named Ian Fitzgerald. He smiled when I introduced myself and gave me the rundown on what was in store for the day. I looked around and saw that there were many tables with signs posted of the various MUCC committees. The Sport Shooting/Ranges Committee table was nearby, and Ian suggested that we might want to sit in on that. A fellow with a name tag sat at the end of that table, and I introduced myself. He was Dave Van Lopik, the committee chairman.

I could see the pleasure on Dave's face because we were interested in his committee. I didn't want to dominate the conversation, but I had a million questions about the MUCC policy process, how his committee works, what his committee had accomplished and what his committee looks to do in the future. Dave answered all my questions with great patience and made me feel like I truly belonged. He asked if I had any goals or ideas and said that he'd be happy to work with me. Being new to this side of MUCC, I was just happy to be learning the way things work!

Some committees were crowded and busy, while others were rather quiet and sparse. Since deer hunting regulations had major changes the past year, there was a lot of action at the Wildlife Committee table. I vowed that I would visit that committee next time if things worked out for me.

After the two hours of committee meetings, the CPB meeting began. During this meeting, MUCC members presented policy proposals that they desired to have MUCC take up as positions. If a policy proposal gets approved at one of these quarterly meetings, it is then presented at the MUCC Annual Convention for approval or denial by the membership.

The first policy presenter got up and read his proposal, and the audience was asked for comments. A motion was made to approve, and the voting members of the CPB voted to advance the proposal on to the Annual Convention

Several proposals later, there was a call for discussion on a particular proposal, and I saw a discrepancy. I raised my hand and pointed it out. What happened next seemed to me to be a mess. People were offering amendments, volunteering language changes and several votes were taken. To say that I was just a tad self-conscious is an understatement. Without me speaking up, there's no doubt that this man's proposal would have been advanced. Instead, it was voted down, and he vowed to reword it and bring it to the next meeting for reconsideration.

The rest of the meeting was rather uneventful, with all the other proposals being accepted for advancement. When the meeting was adjourned, I casually spoke with a voting member of the policy board and told him that I felt bad about speaking up. Without hesitation, he said, "Oh no! These people want their proposals to be right. They would rather see it happen here than at the Annual Convention where it may not pass. He has time to reword it and get it right. If you think about it, you did him a favor. Don't ever hesitate to speak up."

With that, I realized I had left the sidelines and was now squarely in the arena. There wasn't a person that I spoke with (and I talked to a lot of people) that didn't welcome me or even thank me for participating. MUCC is not a good ol' boys club. The members truly have a say in the way things work. I drove home with my mind reeling as to how I can help MUCC in the future. It's apparent to me now that the sidelines are okay, but if you really want to help MUCC advance, getting involved is the way to go. It's as easy as driving to a meeting and introducing yourself. The rest takes care of itself.

The Pinery

By Blake Sherburne

The Pinery is what I grew up calling the State Forest land along the Manistee River upstream from Mesick, Michigan. At one time, like much of Northern Michigan, the Pinery was covered in large white pines. After they were logged off, the area was also called "The Choppins," but the Pinery is the name that stuck. My family has lived within sight of the Pinery for well over 100 years, and family lore tells of being able to watch brush fires roll along the logged-off river banks from their front windows.

The land was once owned by Consumers Energy and was purchased when the company was looking for good sites to build hydroelectric dams. In a wonderful bit of foresight, the land was then either deeded to or sold to the State of Michigan.

I feel like I half grew up on this piece of land, being only half-grown up as I am. My dad took me fishing on the Manistee, which flows through that state land. We also fished the creeks that flow into the river all throughout the area. I started camping out there as a small child when my paternal grandparents took me as part of their horse camp weekend. My cousins, sister and I rode the couple of miles from my grandparents' farm in a wagon pulled by my grandfather's team of draft horses. Occasionally, while driving my truck out to that same spot, I think of my grandpa's "gees" and "haws" that were his commands to the team at each turn. I had my first cup of coffee, campfire coffee no less, that weekend, and we stood on a high bank along the river and watched a fantastic thunderstorm roll in from the west before we retreated to our tents in a mostly futile attempt to stay dry.

In my teens, the Pinery became a place to sow wild oats. My parents, likewise the parents of all my closest friends, somehow were brave enough to take a grunt (thanks, Google) of teenagers out to the camping spots along the river to camp for the weekend. Starting at the age of 13, we were set free for several weekends every summer, trusted to prepare our own meals, deal with strangers who drove through our camps and not drown ourselves. If it was warm enough, we did not leave the water for entire days, gathering firewood by flashlight every evening because we were often too short-sighted to round it up before we had spent the day wearing ourselves out.

In my adulthood, the Pinery has become a place to fish, camp, walk the dogs, bird and squirrel hunt, and sometimes just jump in the

truck and go two-tracking down the same trails I have traversed thousands of times. Occasionally, my son comes along now, and he gets to get out of his car seat and sit in the front like a big boy while we idle through mud puddles and crunch through acorns, keeping an eye out for deer and squirrels.

Mesick is amongst the poorest towns in Michigan, and sometimes, the Pinery looks like it. It is not terrible, but with hundreds of unmarked campsites and no real supervision, the litter occasionally starts to pile up. Items that are a little expensive to get rid of, like tires and household appliances, show up along the trails and campsites each year. Popular party places tend to gather trash, too. Beer cans also mysteriously appear along the two-tracks like morels in April.

My dad is a saint and dragged me along bird hunting and fishing in the Pinery. We often pulled the boat over to log jams or the bank to grab a returnable can or bottle — he called them "dimes" due to Michigan's 10-cent deposit law, which he always revered as one of the best rules the state ever instituted. Most days that we spent small game hunting, we came home with the game pouches of our vests filled with as much garbage as game.

A year ago, one of the original camping buddies turned life-long friend, Kenny, my wife, my son and I decided to do our part in that we would make a trip out onto state land with the sole intent of picking up trash. We removed an entire truckload of trash, including three old CRT televisions and the waste from someone's bathroom remodel, from the Pinery and took it to the dump. We decided to do it again this spring, but social distancing surrounding the novel coronavirus would not allow anyone outside of my family unit to accompany us. So, my wife and I took our children out to do the dirty work.

I knew of a couple sites that needed some attention. One held an abandoned tent that I thought someone had cleaned up, but last bird season, I noticed that it had just collapsed and was not visible from any of the main trails. We also focused on one of the gravel boat launches where canoeists and boaters seem to abandon their empty liquor bottles, beer cans and fast food cups. Odd how these items seem to be light enough to carry in, but once they are empty, too heavy to carry out. Beer can- and trash-spotting from the truck became a game, and my kids enjoyed being able to ride slowly around the two-tracks out of their car seats. My daughter is only two, and the look on her face when I put the truck back into gear without buckling her back in for the first time was priceless. My son is four now and was already making comments about trash on the ground before we took this trip, so I think we are headed in the right direction.

Anyone who has or has had young children knows that any activity involving them takes approximately 800 times longer than it should. Once my children figured out what we were doing, hopping out to grab a beer can took about as long as it would have taken my wife and me to do all the clean-up we were able to get to by

"Their unbridled enthusiasm to jump out of the truck to pick up some piece of trash that someone was thoughtless enough to pitch out their window shamed me a bit."

ourselves, but that was beside the point. I mitigated some of the lost time by telling my children that if the offending trash was on my side of the truck, I was the one to get out and get it. If they spotted something on their side, they got to get out and grab it. Still, we were not able to get to all of the ground that I wanted to cover.

The point, I think, was taken. We came home with about 30 beer cans, uncounted wine and liquor bottles, vehicle parts from around the more serious mudholes, fast food cups, junk food wrappers, miscellaneous other garbage and a busted tent, complete with a foam mattress. So far, neither of the children have come down with poison ivy, tetanus or COVID-19, and I think they even learned a valuable lesson while having an absolute blast with mom and dad, cruising around in the Pinery, which is something I love to do anyway. I maybe, more importantly, am not embarrassed to admit that I learned a valuable lesson from them, too. Their unbridled enthusiasm to jump out of the truck to pick up some piece of trash that someone was thoughtless enough to pitch out their window shamed me a bit. I am sure I am not alone when I acknowledge that I have driven by garbage while having the thought — you know, I should stop and pick that up. The zeal with which my babies picked up other people's trash made me vow to keep a few grocery bags (the poor man's garbage bag) in my truck for those days when I just feel like going for a ride.

When we got home, I made a social media post that was generally just me patting myself on the back. What I did not expect, though, was the attention locally that our family garnered. I am thinking of making the third annual Pinery clean-up day a social media event, complete with invites and a request for small donations to get rid of said trash, including the items, like tires, that require a little more care.

Tomorrow, my family and I are going to venture out in the Pinery to go sucker fishing. I am going to take a garbage bag along, and I am going to take different routes in and out. Hopefully, my wonderful babies will continue to inspire me to hop out of the truck every once in a while to pick up something that should not be there, and I hope you will do the same. We may not be able to stop some from sullying those places that we love, but we can jump out of the truck to grab the occasional dime or fast food cup — and that may just be enough.

GUN RANGE

TRAINING & EVENTS

RETAIL GUN & ACCESSORIES

CENTERSHOT
GUN RANGE/TRAINING

MUCC EVENTS

Contact: *rob@rmillerelectric.com - austin@centershotgunrange.com*

Hosting a fund raiser for MUCC? Centershot will supply the firearms at cost. Hosting a fund raiser for an MUCC affiliate club? Centershot will entertain supplying the firearms at 10% over cost.

TRAINING

Questions: *training@centershotgunrange.com*

Training opportunities from absolute beginner through advanced. Multiple class opportunities available. Don't see what you are looking for, ask us, you may be surprised at what resources we have available. Sign up at centershotgunrange.com training registration.

STORE

Questions: *austin@centershotgunrange.com*

Centershot offers a true try-it-before-you-buy-it program. Every firearm we own is for rent and for sale with the sale price going down after each rental. Ammo is very competitively priced every day. Give us a shot at bulk purchases. Shop 24/7 by going to centershotgunrange.com, click the shop online cartridge at the top right corner.

MEMBERSHIP

Questions: *info@centershotgunrange.com*

Multiple membership levels available, visit centershotgunrange.com and click on the membership tab top right corner.

COMPANY OR GROUP OUTINGS

Contact: *range@centershotgunrange.com*
info@centershotgunrange.com

Muzzleloader Package $310.00, 4 lanes, 4 firearms, 400 rounds and more. Gatling Gun Package $580.00 8 lanes, 8 firearms, 800 rounds and more. Custom outings available upon request.

Phone: 616-371-SHOT (7468)
2638 142nd Ave, Dorr, MI 49323
Exit 68 - 7 miles West of 131

Monday: Closed
Tuesday-Saturday: 10am-8pm
Sunday: 12pm-6pm

CentershotGunRange.com

The Wild Harvest Initiative®:

Building Natural Allies through Wild Foods

By Shane Mahoney

Public attitude surveys remind us that the large majority of Americans supports recreational hunting. Indeed, since the 1950s, such surveys have consistently reported that more than 75 percent of American citizens, in general, support the activity, especially if a primary objective and motivation is to secure food. This stable trend in support is certainly remarkable given the vast social changes that have occurred over this long period of time. Yet, regardless of this general support, hunting (and fishing) license sales continue to decline across the United States and Canada. This is true despite significant efforts and financial investment from public and private entities to encourage recruitment and retention of new and existing participants, respectively.

In some instances, such declines in participation have actually worsened in recent years. In Michigan, for example, in the 1970s and '80s, and even into the early '90s, annual hunter numbers held steady at about 1.2 million participants. But, by 2018, only about 675,000 Michigan state residents annually purchased a hunting license. Participation in recreational fishing has also declined in Michigan, though the decline is not yet as dramatic. Between 2013 and 2018, fishing license sales dropped by 5%, while hunting license sales decreased by an alarming 18%.

The most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Five Year Survey on Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife-Associated Recreation shows a net loss of roughly 2.2 million US hunters between 2011 and 2016 alone. Furthermore, the average age of hunters has significantly increased in recent years, forecasting continuing and escalated rates of decline into the future. These declines pose an ever-growing threat, not just to hunting itself, but to wildlife conservation, since the current system relies disproportionately on hunter and angler dollars to fund state wildlife conservation programs in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada as well. If these trends continue, and unless alternative funding models are developed, hunting and conservation all across North America face precarious futures.

Given all of this, we must ask ourselves: Why, if the public is so supportive of hunting, do so few – less than 5 percent of citizens – choose to participate in the activity? Moreover, if most people truly support hunting, why do aggressive anti-hunting campaigns flourish? Indeed, why have some hunters gained public notoriety simply for being hunters? We all recognize that public acceptance is critical to hunting's future; and certainly it is important that people respond positively when asked directly about their opinions of wild animal harvest.

But clearly this is not enough. What is required is for citizens to show their support for hunting in everyday life and discourse. This is what is so obviously missing when debates over hunting arise. Seemingly, asking citizens in a survey about whether they support hunting is one thing; but expecting them to publicly support it otherwise is quite something else. Hunting's proponents need to be aware of this distinction.

It seems apparent to me that hunting needs to be re-normalized in modern society. That, essentially, is our challenge. But, like it or not, the hunting community has frequently encouraged just the opposite. By making sometimes excessive arguments concerning hunting's importance to conservation – in order to defend the activity – and by appearing to disregard other conservation contributors, these arguments have tended to exceptionalize hunting and alienate some erstwhile allies. Exceptionalizing hunting could be the forerunner to ghettoizing the activity, leaving only its resident participants to defend it. Clearly, as hunter numbers fall, this will not be enough and, clearly, this is the situation we increasingly find hunting in today.

Of course, we cannot expect nor aspire to convert all non-hunters to become sportsmen and women. However, I believe there are many who would participate if given a better understanding of the health and nutritional benefits of hunting. And for the majority who would remain non-hunters, I believe we can do better than simply keeping them away from the so-called anti-hunting camp. I believe we can make some of them allies. But hunters must take the lead in developing these relationships and, to do so, must learn to communicate more effectively. And this does not just mean ceasing to post inappropriate images of dead, bloodied, and disfigured animals, although this is certainly a step in the right direction.

Frequently, hunting organizations and their leadership refer to attacking hunting's opponents as an effective way forward. While this might make some people feel good, it will do little to build broad-based support with the public, will likely have the opposite effect, and should be discouraged. It is, at very best, a short-sighted strategy and, at its worst, potentially very damaging for hunting in the longer run. Communicating effectively does require speaking with passion and conviction, of course; but without becoming defensive or demeaning of others. The target audience for hunting's messages are the citizens who are currently supportive of the activity or who openly and honestly question the relevance of hunting – not committed anti-hunting groups.

Keeping in mind who our real audience is and having and expressing the right attitudes are critical components of effective communication. Hunters are called to be conservation leaders, and as leaders, must maintain an even keel in the face of skepticism, or even hostility; and hunters must consistently demonstrate a willingness to listen to those whose opinions differ from our own. Perhaps most importantly, effective communication requires that the hunting leadership be prepared, not only with the right attitudes, but also with the right arguments. Hunters need to be realistic, as well as passionate. Fewer people today participate in recreational wild harvest and there is limited awareness of the benefits it provides to society at large. Hunting is no longer mainstream and hunters need to acknowledge this as we try to build support for the activity. Today, sportsmen and women have to explain not just why hunting matters to them, but why it should matter to non-hunters, as well – whether or not those individuals ever choose to participate. And this may be a difficult sell.

Remember, as hunters, we are incentivized users; and that is the basis of our North American system of wildlife management. What we need are incentivized allies who share our belief that hunting is of wider value than to the individual harvester alone, and that its benefits extend well beyond the dollars amassed from licenses sold or taxes paid. These financial contributions alone will not convince the public that hunting is relevant in a wider sense; and recent public opinion surveys confirm this. And why is that argument losing its effectiveness, if it really ever had any? Well, it appears to the broad public as self-serving: hunters pay to protect what they want to pursue. Big deal.

We need society to understand that hunting is not just good for hunters, but for everyone. We need to lead with a new narrative, one that will again normalize hunting in modern society. To accomplish this, we need to find something that matters to everyone, hunters included – something like healthy food. We need to establish a basis for discussion that is inclusive, not exclusionary.

One significant attempt to do so is the Wild Harvest Initiative®, launched by Conservation Visions and supported by a widening group of state agencies, outdoor industry leaders, individual philanthropists, and NGOS. A research and advocacy program designed to capture society's increasing focus on healthy living, the Wild Harvest Initiative® is evaluating the combined economic, conservation, and social benefits of recreational wild animal harvests in American and Canadian societies. By establishing the amount of wild meat and fish secured and shared by recreational harvesters in both countries, this work is exploring the sustainable use of wildlife in the much wider contexts of rural economies, human health, fitness, and food security. The Initiative will deliver a new story of wildlife use to the general public, one that emphasizes social concerns for healthy lifestyles and the mounting evidence of the importance of nature experiences to human well-being. By doing so, it will demonstrate the natural alliance between hunting and angling and prominent social trends, including the Locavore Movement, organic eating, homesteading, and "green living."

As humans, we are inclined to protect and maintain that which has value to us personally. While concerns for wildlife management, cultural traditions, conservation, and public and private land use policies are certainly relevant to some individuals, food and health matter greatly to every human being. Why not build the big tent? Why not move with social change, instead of always trying to confront it?

We need to reframe the debate about the modern relevance of recreational hunting and angling – that much is clear. It is also clear that hunters and anglers need natural allies, people who can readily understand their perspectives but who may not participate in these activities directly. But who might these allies be? The Wild Harvest Initiative® will align hunting and angling with other natural resource use traditions such as berry-picking, wild fruit gathering, wild mushroom foraging, and medicinal plant and firewood gathering. These activities are commonly practiced by millions of citizens and are widely accepted as appropriate uses of nature's products. Through its communication efforts, the Wild Harvest Initiative® will present hunting and angling as philosophically consistent with these accepted practices, helping build natural social connections of mutual support. Hunters and anglers need to communicate a straightforward message to a wider, empathetic public constituency. Fortunately, when it comes to valuing the outdoors, benefiting directly from nature and harvesting wild products, hunters and anglers are not alone. They are joined by millions of people who harvest nature in other ways and who, like hunters and anglers, delight in sharing their natural bounty with family, friends, and colleagues.

Hunters have to move beyond preaching to the choir. That has been evident for decades. We must all become not just advocates, but ambassadors for our wild harvest traditions. We must learn to connect with the broader community of natural resource harvesters and effectively exchange ideas with an even broader community of beneficiaries. By shifting our message toward health and food security, we have an opportunity to secure hunting's future in our lifetime, and that's no small thing. There may not be many more lifetimes to do so.

Top Left: Participants in a Learn to Hunt event co-sponsored by MUCC learn to clean a deer. Left: Chef Dan Nelson demonstrates how to clean a turkey for MUCC's Gourmet Gone Wild Program.

From Duck Tacos to Pickled Heart:

By Chris Lamphere

It's hard to return to 'boring' foods after trying wild game

There's a special feeling that comes with harvesting wild game meat, then transforming it into a culinary masterpiece that even the most discerning foodie would appreciate.

It's not just the feeling of exhilaration one gets at the conclusion of a successful hunt, or even the full, satisfying feeling one gets after eating a delicious meal … it's something else — something, perhaps, more significant than the sum of its parts.

Russ Mason, DNR Executive in Residence and Adjunct Professor at the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, believes the growing interest that people have in knowing where their food comes from could be capitalized upon by those who are trying to increase hunter participation rates.

As a result of various historical factors, Mason said hunting interest has, in recent years, been somewhat parochial, with people choosing a preferred game species and rarely venturing outside their comfort zone. However, recent surveys indicate that interest may be shifting to a more holistic level — a throwback to the hunter/gatherer ethos of early man.

"It's kind of retro, when you think about it," Mason said. "There's something to be said for holistic participation. You see the complexity of the ecosystem. There are a bazillion things to try, and you can never say you've mastered them all."

While past programs aiming to tie food preparation with hunting didn't lead to a quantifiable increase in hunter participation or retention, Mason said he doesn't think the idea should be abandoned outright.

"It was a good idea," Mason said. "The time just wasn't right."

One of the reasons why such an initiative might prove effective in the future is the propensity among younger hunters to place a lot of value on the overall "experience" of hunting, rather than solely the end result, Mason said.

"What you're offering is an immersive experience," Mason said. "And each hunting season is potentially a different immersive experience."

Blake Sherburne has been hunting all his life but didn't get into preparing his own wild game dishes until the advent of the foodie movement.

"It's just another way to enjoy the food," Sherburne said. "And with the internet, it's all at your fingertips." Sherburne said it seems like dishes from his grandparents' generation are becoming more in vogue today as hunters grow adventurous in the types of meats and organs they'll try out.

For instance, you rarely see pickled heart, liver or tongue offered in most restaurants nowadays, but those are exactly the types of dishes that Sherburne and others have developed a taste for.

"I almost never buy plain chicken breast anymore," Sherburne said. "White chicken is like Wonder Bread to me."

Abraham Downer concurs that without the subtle variety and flavor packed in wild game meats, meals are "kind of boring."

"I absolutely prefer wild game to store-bought now," Downer said. "It's something just a little bit different and special."

A professional cook and sous chef for many years, Downer started experimenting with wild game by substituting harvested meat into traditional dishes.

"Find a dish you like, then find a wild game species that will fit into that recipe," Downer said. "It's really not that big of a stretch."

Downer said wild meats have characteristics that make them well suited for particular kinds of dishes. For instance, grouse is a lot like chicken, whereas venison and duck can easily be used as a substitute for beef steak. "It's really simple to do," Downer said. "And you enjoy it that much more, plus you have a whole story behind it."

Recipes on page 38

Downer and Sherburne agreed to share some their favorite recipes with Michigan Out-of-Doors

Duck Tacos — Recipe by Downer

Who doesn't like tacos? No one I've ever met. These are so simple to make, and it is hands down the dish that I get the most requests to make. You aren't doing too much to the meat. You are just providing the perfect medium to deliver the duck to your palate with a couple of bright flavors that accentuate the duck rather than mask it.

Ingredients (serves 2-3)

Breasts from 1 mallard duck or equivalent amount of breast meat
1 tbsp coriander
1 tbsp cumin
1 tbsp paprika
¼ cup olive oil
1 bunch cilantro
1 radish
½ cup onion diced
1 lime

You can cook the duck any way you prefer. My favorite is to roast a whole duck on a charcoal grill with oil salt and pepper until medium-rare, then carve the breasts off and cube them. But you could also do a quick marinade and pan sear the breasts. I like to make a mixture of equal parts cumin, coriander, paprika and oil, then add to a freezer bag with the breasts and let sit for an hour or two. Season with salt and pepper before searing in oil until medium-rare. How you choose to cook the meat is entirely up to you, and you really can't go wrong. Just remember to keep it on the rarer side.

The most important thing about this dish is the tortilla. I know, really? The tortilla? Yes. A properly fried tortilla shell can make or break a taco — literally. I prefer to use a basting brush and spread a little olive oil on a yellow corn tortilla before placing it in a pre-heated cast iron pan on medium heat. You will want to have them brown just slightly on each side. If they bubble up, that is ok, just pop the bubble and press the tortilla into the pan with a spatula. Load up each taco with some duck meat, a pinch of course salt and garnish with cilantro, onion, radish and a lime wedge. Some folks will like a dash of hot sauce on theirs; I prefer Cholula, but again, I would suggest trying these and taste the duck with the other flavors before dousing in hot sauce.

Ginger Venison — Recipe by Downer

Soy, ginger, and garlic are the base for so many Asian recipes. However, they can mask the flavor of some meat. Wild game is special to all of us, and I, for one, like to be able to taste it in my dishes and not cover it up with a bunch of heavy seasoning. Luckily, venison is distinct enough that it can stand up to these bold flavors. You can omit the Sambal (chili garlic paste) if you don't like things too spicy. If you can't find Sambal, you could also substitute a small pinch of red chili flakes or a squirt of Sriracha.

Ingredients (serves 4-6)

3-4 lbs. venison loin in 1" cubes
Cornstarch for dredging
Sesame seeds
Green onion
1 lime
2 cups jasmine rice cooked

The ginger sauce:
4 garlic cloves minced
1 medium-size knob of ginger minced
2 tsp sesame oil
½ cup tamari or soy sauce (I prefer low sodium tamari)
½ cup brown stock (beef or venison if you have it)
¼ cup rice wine vinegar
¼ cup honey
2 tbsp hoisin sauce
2 tbsp Sambal or other garlic chili paste
2 tbsp brown sugar

Mix ingredients for the sauce in a small mixing bowl and set aside. Heat an oil of your choice (vegetable or peanut oil works well) in a cast iron pan over medium/high heat. You will want about a quarter-inch of oil filling the pan. I like to refrigerate my venison and pull it out right before I dredge it. This allows you a better chance to get a crispy outside without overcooking the inside. Dredge venison cubes in corn starch and shake free any excess (I drop small handfuls into a sieve and shake). Gently add your venison to the pan. Let fry on one side and then begin to roll the pieces around to get an even coloring. This should only take a minute or two. Remove the venison and set aside. Drain the oil from the pan and add in the sauce. Let simmer and reduce the sauce slightly. The sugars will help aid in thickening. Do not let it reduce too much, though, as it will burn the glaze. Once slightly reduced, add the venison back in and let the glaze coat the meat briefly. Serve over jasmine rice and garnish with sesame seeds and green onions. I like to micro-plane or zest some lime on to the dish as well.

Pheasant Marsala — Recipe by Downer

I can remember cooking chicken marsala in more restaurants then I care to forget. However, there is a reason that this classic dish has stood the test of time. It's straightforward, doesn't require a lot of ingredients, yet results in a buttery and savory bird that is sure to please anyone. I like to breast the pheasant out and then make a stock from the carcasses to use in the dish. Any basic stock recipe will suffice.

Ingredients (serves 2-3)

2 pheasants (breasted)
Flour to dredge
1 cup mushrooms halved (any mushroom will do, but of course I prefer morels.)
4 medium cloves of garlic sliced
½ cup dry marsala cooking wine
½ cup pheasant stock
Salt to taste
1 pint cherry tomatoes
1/2 lb. Green beans
Unsalted butter as needed
Olive oil as needed

First, filet the breasts from two pheasants. Use a meat hammer or a wide, heavy sauté pan to pound out the breast filets until they are even, but not falling apart. Be careful here: pheasants are not like domestic chickens and have much thinner filets. You just want the meat to lay and cook evenly in the pan. I like to leave the meat out for a little bit while I get everything else ready. This allows the meat to come up to room temperature a bit, which I prefer when cooking this dish.

Heat several tablespoons of butter in a cast iron pan over medium heat. While the butter is beginning to froth, dredge your pheasant breasts in the flour and add to the pan. Brown on both sides and remove. Do not crowd the pan with too much meat at a time. This will cause the pan to cool, and you will not get a good sear.

Once you finish browning the breasts, pour out the excess fat and add a few fresh pads of butter. Add the mushrooms, garlic and a pinch of salt. Sauté for a few minutes until the mushrooms are cooked and garlic just begins to turn golden. Add the stock and marsala wine and let reduce while scraping any of the brown cooked bits that have stuck to the bottom of the pan. Taste the sauce and add more salt if necessary. Add the pheasant back to the sauce and remove from the heat to keep warm or serve the sauce over the finished breasts. I like to mix with blanched green beans and some cherry tomatoes that have been blistered under the broiler with some olive oil and salt.

For Sherburne's pickled heart recipe, please see 'One Last Cast' on page 96.

Building Conservation Ethics

By Zach Snyder

We set out on a Sunday afternoon to get out of the house and give my wife a little bit of a parenting break during COVID-19 restrictions. I packed the basics one would typically take for a short hike with a four-year-old child: some snacks and a couple of drinks. Riley, of course, filled her backpack with toys, a couple of books and even more snacks — a girl after my own heart.

Living in the Downriver area, the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area tends to be our go-to for hiking and getting out into the woods. So naturally, that's where we ended up. The day was exceptionally windy, so a dike hike would not have been very enjoyable for either of us. Instead, we took to one of the lightly-wooded field areas adjacent to a large creek and marshlands.

With hopes of finding a shed antler or two, we started walking along. Riley noticed and pointed out tracks and scat from various animals. She asked, "what kind of animal made that?" if she didn't already know. Along the way, we saw the all-too-common random garbage blowing around. As always, I keep a couple of garbage bags in my pack. I pulled one out, and as we continued along, we proceeded to fill it up with what we had found — beer and liquor bottles, fast-food wrappers, etc.

Unfortunately, a lot of what we picked up that day, and on many other cleanups, came from fellow outdoorsmen. Buck bombs, doe in estrus, shotgun shells, hand warmer wrappers and fishing tackle packaging; all items left behind from an outdoors person who was no doubt out enjoying the beauty that the outdoors has to offer, but subsequently leaving it just a little bit worse for the next person to come along. We can be better than that, and we should be better than that.

We decided to take a break behind a couple of large dirt mounds — a temporary refuge from the wind — likely remnants of a previous farm or habitat work. We had some snacks, Riley played with a couple of the toys she had brought, I read one of her books to her and we just kind of hung out there for a bit. We just laid still in the windswept grass, watching the birds, listening to the strong west wind rip above our little chunk of dirt. Riley climbed to the top of the mound, leaning into the wind, excitedly shouting about how this was the "windiest wind" she had ever seen. While sitting there, I asked her why we pick up garbage when we're outside. She replied, "Because people leave it there and never pick it up, and that's littering". She is wise beyond her years, and that untouched enthusiasm to make things better was inspiring.

Eventually, we had to head back to the truck. Riley and I continued to point out various tracks and game sign to one another and picked up whatever garbage we found. By the time we reached the truck, the bag I was carrying was pretty full. Riley was carrying a feather she had found and couple rocks that she thought were cool. As is typically my luck, we did not find any sheds. But, a couple of hours afield with a little girl that seemed to be gaining an understanding

While sitting there, I asked her why we pick up garbage when we're outside. She replied, "Because people leave it there and never pick it up, and that's littering."

of the importance of taking care of and respecting the natural world is a fair trade in my book.

Being an avid hunter and angler, I would love for my children to become as passionate about those activities as I am. But too often in the outdoor community, I see people waiting entirely too long to get their kids involved in the outdoors. Short of a little fishing, many times a young person's first foray into the outdoors isn't until they are old enough to tag along on a hunt or maybe come along to deer camp. That's fine and all; but in my opinion, the seeds of conservation can, and should be, sown at a much younger age through fun, lower-pressure activities.

I believe that if we start off by simply working to instill a love and appreciation for all thing's nature, with proper examples and the right encouragement, the passion for the outdoors will kind of fall into place. It's about exposure: just get them out there, go for a hike, go mushroom hunting, look for sheds, go bird watching, whatever. It all starts with exposure and teaching them that the natural world is ours to protect and manage. Teach them to pack it out, even if they weren't the one who packed it in. By doing so, we will be setting ourselves up to bring more stewards and conservationists into the fray, not just occasional hunters or anglers with no real knowledge or concern for the bigger picture.

Looking back, whether he knew it or not at the time, I have my father to thank for instilling a conservation mindset in me. I honestly do not remember a time while growing up where we went on a fishing trip or spent time in the woods that we didn't pack out or burn up the trash we came across during our outing. Setting examples like that has been something that stuck with me throughout my life and is now one that my wife and I strive to set for our own children — and, honestly, anyone else who is paying attention.

TRACKS
MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

Subscribe to
TRACKS Magazine today!

Individual Membership- $20/year
Classroom Subscription- $4/student/year
*Minimum 10 Magazines

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Check One:

Classroom _____ *(No. of Students) _____

Individual _____

Payment:

Visa Mastercard Discover

Card No. _____

Check* Payable to MUCC

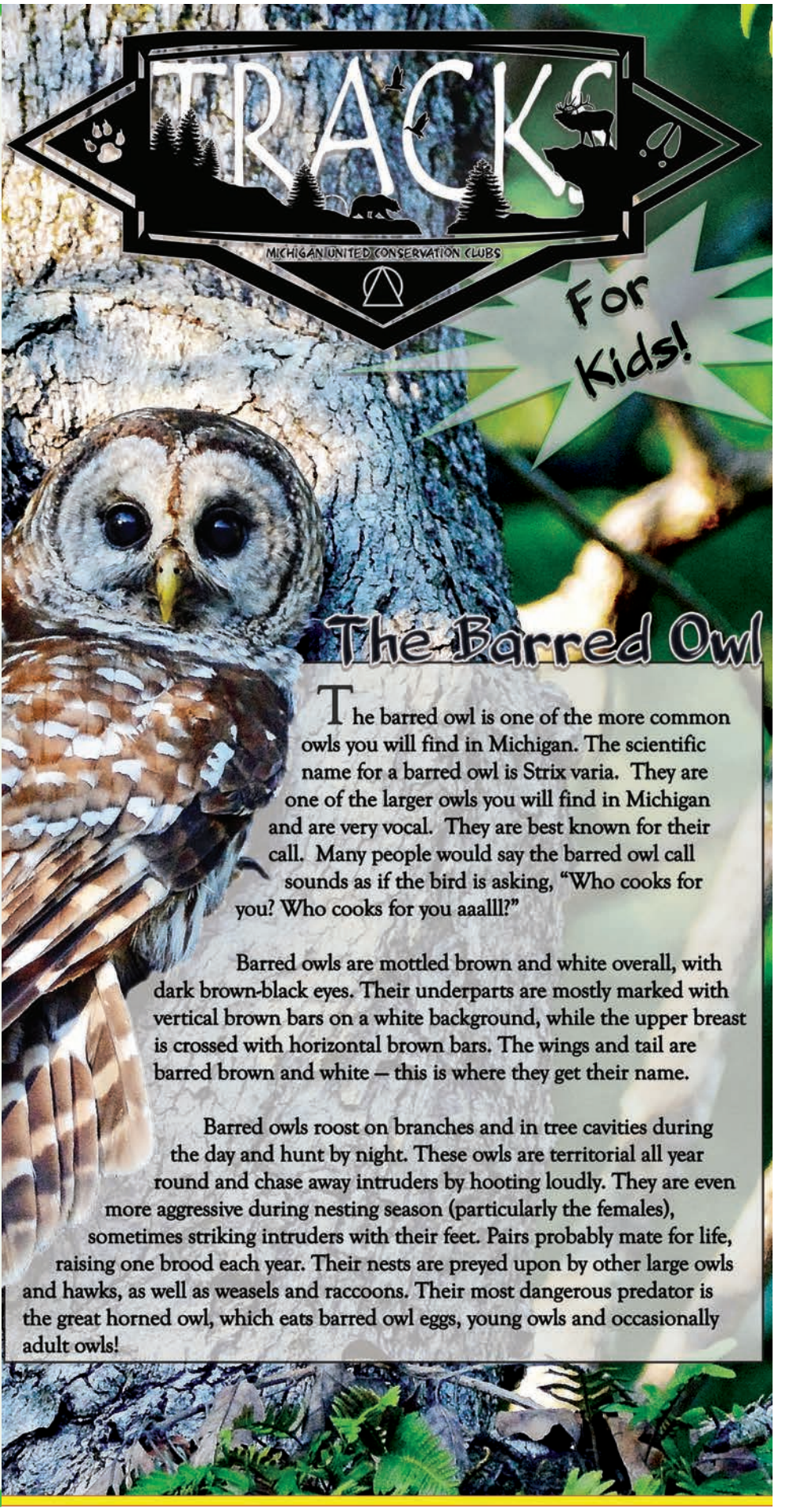
TRACKS Magazine is a publication of Michigan United Conservation Clubs. Issues are released Oct. through May each school year.

Mail to:
Tracks c/o MUCC
P.O. Box 30235 | Lansing, MI 48909
or call (517)371-1041
www.mucc.org

MUCC

TRACKS
MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

For Kids!



The Barred Owl

The barred owl is one of the more common owls you will find in Michigan. The scientific name for a barred owl is Strix varia. They are one of the larger owls you will find in Michigan and are very vocal. They are best known for their call. Many people would say the barred owl call sounds as if the bird is asking, "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you aaalll?"

Barred owls are mottled brown and white overall, with dark brown-black eyes. Their underparts are mostly marked with vertical brown bars on a white background, while the upper breast is crossed with horizontal brown bars. The wings and tail are barred brown and white – this is where they get their name.

Barred owls roost on branches and in tree cavities during the day and hunt by night. These owls are territorial all year round and chase away intruders by hooting loudly. They are even more aggressive during nesting season (particularly the females), sometimes striking intruders with their feet. Pairs probably mate for life, raising one brood each year. Their nests are preyed upon by other large owls and hawks, as well as weasels and raccoons. Their most dangerous predator is the great horned owl, which eats barred owl eggs, young owls and occasionally adult owls!

Land Managment

By Shawn Stafford

Having been geographically affiliated with Michigan, whether for work, the location of my first home purchase, marriage or recreation, I have come to appreciate the Great Lake State. Not being a native Michigander, I have fallen in love with the outdoor sports and activities that the state has to offer. With that being said, the convergence of several factors in my life presented me with an opportunity to purchase my own little piece of heaven in the mitten state last year. Over the next couple thousand or so words, I'd like to take you on a trip explaining how I landed on this piece of property and what my plans are to turn it into my own wildlife mecca.

Being a lifelong hunter and angler, owning my own land has always been a dream. Don't read into this negatively, though, as I'm a huge proponent of public lands and our access to them. Without public lands, I can tell you I would have missed out on a majority of my outdoor experiences up to this point. However, there is also a desire to own your personal playground and the challenge of making it everything you hope it could be. For me, I had to set some criteria and be patient for the right moment to make my move. The property I was to purchase had to offer good hunting opportunities, be three hours or less of a drive from my home, needed to offer all-around family recreational fun and it needed to be in an area that would offer some investment value in the event I wished to sell at some point.

Believe it or not, it took a lot of looking at real estate websites, cross-referencing listings with onX Hunt (onxmaps.com) to look at property lines and aerial shots, then get driving distances and times. I made several road trips and had multiple discussions with various agents, and I was getting frustrated.

Eventually, though, I found the right number of acres, at the right price, in an area with many lakes, good schools, solid deer densities, open ground for food plots, swamp and heavy timber for bedding and a nice creek running right through the center of the property. This all translated to fall deer hunting, spring turkey hunting, summer camping and swimming in the creek. Since that time, I've also hunted squirrels, seen many ducks and have a racoon population that I'd like to try my hand at curbing by learning to trap.

The other "must" I alluded to is on top of the activities that the property itself offers — it puts me within 30 minutes of public beaches on Lake Michigan and right in the midst of several other all-sport

"Being a lifelong hunter and angler, owning my own land has always been a dream."

lakes which I can use to keep everyone in the family happy while maintaining the property as a base camp.

Going through the detail and thought process about purchasing this particular property wasn't so you would think that I'm boasting about the perfect piece of heaven. Rather, it was to make sure that if you're ever in this situation, you consider all facets. If not all facets, at least the ones that matter most to you.

Perhaps you only care about giant bucks? Or maybe you want to be right on a lake? Maybe you wanted to be up north in the rifle zone? UP? Adjacent to public land? The point is, decide what you want out of your property and be diligent in your search.

So now that I have some dirt to stand on, what's next? This isn't my first soiree as a landowner. However, my previous lands were in agriculture country, and portions of them were commercially farmed as was the majority of land around them. My Michigan property is going to be different. There are no corn or beans on the property and not much within several miles. There are, however, lots of woods and a fairly large, open field. Some may see this as a problem, but I like to think of it as more of an opportunity. I can turn my place into a location that wildlife really wants to be with respect to other land offerings in the same general vicinity.

As bad as I wanted to, I didn't immediately jump in feet first. I'm still fighting the urge and forcing myself to take a systematic approach to land management and habitat improvement. I spent the end of the summer, the first fall and even some of this early-spring getting to know the place by laying down some boot leather, observing the animals and watching the foliage transition through seasons. I've still been pouring through my onX Hunt app matching what I saw on the ground with what can be seen from the air. I've been documenting existing and potential stand locations and the types of terrain and vegetation I'd seen. I also used the outdoor show season this past winter to go and talk to some experts.

After speaking with multiple seed vendors and habitat improvement consultants, I was drawn to Newell Phebus and Double Tine Innovations (doubletine.com). Newell and his team took the time to listen and understand what my objectives were and had multiple options for me to choose from. I also liked the fact that they are based within reasonable proximity to my property, so their seeds and understanding of the area should be beneficial to my cause. Their

knowledge far exceeded mine on the subject of creating an ideal location for wildlife to flourish, so I took the chance to quiz Newell. Specific to my situation, I have one large open area that I intend to pack full of various goodies. Unfortunately, it gets very wet in the spring.

This is where consulting a professional comes in handy. Newell gave me a couple of recommendations, including DTI's Shady Buffet, because it handles moist soil and full sun (please note, as the name indicates, it is also recommended for shady woodland plots). The other option he suggested was going with their Fall Forage annual because I can plant it in my fields when they dry out in the summer and be ready to go for the fall hunting season.

Another thing that I didn't take into account that Newell brought to my attention was dividing my food plots with some thicker offerings such as Upland and Antler Blend or Pods and Blooms. This will not only separate the plots, but it will give bedding cover for multiple species and a wider variety of food options for all types of native wildlife. Lastly, I recently sent my soil sample off to have it analyzed. The results will tell me what, if anything, I need to do to better prep the soil, such as add lime. It will also allow Double Tine Innovations to adjust their recommendations if I run into pH issues.

I have an area earmarked for the addition of some mast-producing trees. These will help expand and transform the area by giving some variety to the wildlife. After speaking with several tree producers, chestnut and persimmon appear to be the best choices for me. (I have to admit I was excited to hear them recommend the persimmon as I'm a big fan of persimmon pudding.) With today's hybrids, planting trees may not be the long-term investment you might think. Some of the chestnuts and persimmons I'm researching bear fruit in only two to five years. Granted, this isn't instant gratification, but if you're investing in your property and potentially the future of hunting (think getting kids involved), then two to five years isn't that big of a deal. The other allure to planting trees is the timing of their fruits. While you want to provide a year-round smorgasbord for your wildlife, let's face it, you also want to harvest some deer this fall. Different varieties of

An existing blind faces what could be a very promising area. With a little hard work, this will be a fantastic location for Stafford's secluded food plot.

Game on!

Are you looking to take your outdoor experience to the next level? We can help! GreenStone offers a variety of loan options for recreational land of any size. Contact your local branch office to learn more!

800-444-3276

GreenStone®
FARM CREDIT SERVICES

www.greenstonefcs.com

EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

A creek bisects the property providing water for wildlife and will offer plenty of exploration opportunities for Stafford's children in the coming years.

trees start dropping in August and continue into December. Imagine being able to target specific groves at specific times, knowing that the deer will be there because, quite simply, the food they crave is there and readily available.

This has been my dream. Moving forward is all a part of the plan that is yet to be executed. This is where the rubber hits the road and sweat equity begins. I could hire a land consultant and manager to do it for me. Which honestly, if it fit into my budget, I absolutely would. Instead, I'll be running and gunning on my own, which will give an even greater sense of satisfaction when it's all said and done.

I've once again utilized onX Hunt to lay out my strategy, calculate area sizes and denote land features. My next steps will be to spray the weeds in the large food plot area and a couple of weeks later work up the ground to prepare the seedbed. I'm also contemplating how I would like to establish the small, wooded food plot, clear a spot for a camp and even clear an area for some additional mast-producing trees to further diversify my offerings.

During the outdoor show, I came across one company that specializes in doing exactly that. Their machine was onsite and quite impressive. Of course, their work doesn't come free, which is completely understandable. It ends up being all dependent on the time and money I have to invest. I could rent a bobcat, break out a chainsaw, potentially get ahold of somebody with the ability to brush hog and piece it all together trying to save a buck. Of course, this would take me quite a while to accomplish — likely years. These are the details that will unfold as the seasons progress. Once these areas are cleared, then it will be time for round two of spraying and prepping the ground for the "hidden" food plot and getting the new trees in the ground. Whew!! Who's still with me?

The thing with my land and my plan is that it's all part of the journey. I've learned so much up to this point and will continue to do so until I'm no longer here. We do it because it's fun and gratifying. We do it to share unforgettable moments with friends and loved ones. We do it because we love the land and animals. Don't lose sight of these things; in the end, they are what really matter.

If you've been on the fence about purchasing your own land or making improvements to land you already own, I hope I've motivated you. If you were looking for a place to start, hopefully I've got you pointed in the right direction. Use your resources, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Most importantly, don't wait — make it happen!

Fall Forage from Double Tine Innovations was one of the recommended seeds for Stafford's needs. Stafford hopes his crop looks this good in the fall.

Q & A with Newell Phebus

While researching 'Land Management,' Stafford was able to spend some time talking with various seed suppliers and property managers. Newell Phebus, the owner of Double Tine Innovations (doubletine.com), took some time to answer many of Stafford's questions.

What are the keys to successful habitat improvement for wildlife?

Knowing in what areas your property might be deficient is critical. If you have adequate cover, do you lack food? If you have sufficient food, do you have sufficient cover to hold the deer you're attracting? There's a balancing act between bedding, food and water that every property needs, and figuring out what areas need improvement is the ticket. In most situations, creating a bedding sanctuary where no deer will ever see, hear or smell you has been the best habitat improvement we have implemented.

Does that differ from just wanting to draw more deer come hunting season?

Against what many others say, I am creating my property to hold deer all season. I am trying to create bedding areas and fawning cover to hold does. I'm trying to give those deer high-quality food sources from woody browse, native forbs and food plots. Giving these deer everything they need means they don't have to leave. Does can feel safe from predation; they are producing the most milk for their fawns. Bucks are getting the protein and calcium needs they need to provide antler growth. Note: Obviously, deer have an extensive home range, but offering everything they need on one parcel with very little stress will always appeal to mature deer.

Do you have an easy checklist of things to do when planting a food plot?

If we are developing a new plot, we are spraying when our weeds hit 6 inches in the spring. After a week or two, we will work up the soil. Three to four weeks later, we will spray any new vegetation that is coming up. Around one week later, we will broadcast our seed and culti-pack it in. We try to time our seed and fertilizer within 24 hours before a rain. This is a generic answer for those who broadcast their seed with a hand seeder and have smaller food plots, which is around 75 percent of property managers. We always encourage anyone to contact us to set up the proper planting plan for the specific plot you're planting.

What are the biggest mistakes you see?

Biggest food plot mistake: Planting seed varieties at the wrong time or improper seed rate.
Biggest hunting mistake: Putting too much pressure on your woods. Creating a property that involves hunting the outside edges rather than the interior is what we aim to do.

What did your best plot or habitat management stories do that caused them to be so successful?

Creating secluded pockets of food and bedding have been a game changer for small-acreage hunters. One of our own properties, which is 10 acres in total, has produced opportunities at 140-plus-inch deer every season for the past four seasons. We've implemented Defender Screen borders for tree stand entry, tall growing plots such as sunflowers and sorghum to separate plots to create less stress and continuous buck movement, pockets of Native Grass to provide bedding close to the food sources and away from our stand locations so we aren't bumping deer. The biggest bucks may not always be bedding on our parcel, but when the rut comes, they know exactly where the does are going to be.

Why food plots?

In the Midwest, we see a high level of ag production. In most situations, the food sources are gone during the most important times of the year. Having diversity is critical. Brassicas are phenomenal for late-season, and cereal grains and clovers are great early and mid-season food sources. If you're in a dense timber location with little ag, developing a food plot may be a game-changer for your property. Hiring a forester for select timber harvest or a clear cut may be a great option. Food plots are just one of many habitat improvements a property manager can make to increase deer movement and nutrition.

COVID-19 and Conservation:

Splintering Systems

By Charlie Booher

The world is in the midst of a public health emergency, but the health of the conservation community is failing, too.

This is a tragedy that has not been seen in our lifetimes, and we hope that it will never repeat itself. During this crisis, many pundits talk about "returning to normal," but it is becoming clear that normalcy will be redefined in the coming months and years. As our society wades through drastic changes, the field of wildlife management will inevitably be altered in fundamental ways.

The system we have in the United States was built, in large part, during the 1930s, and it hasn't changed very much since. As a "user-pay" system, it relies on people buying firearms and hunting and fishing licenses to support state wildlife agencies — organizations that manage, conserve and protect a wide range of fish and wildlife species, not just those that are hunted or fished for. However, without the active, annual participation of these consumptive users, the system begins to run dry.

It isn't lean. It isn't responsive. It isn't working. We've known that for a while now — the stress of the COVID-19 outbreak hasn't created flaws in the system as much as it has exacerbated them. These stressors exist at the state level through a reliance on license sales and state general funding deficits and at the federal level through uncertainty related to excise tax collection. This issue extends far beyond what is known colloquially as the "hook and bullet" crowd, and it will jeopardize programs that benefit endangered species, songbirds, state parks and Michigan's beaches that we so love.

This pandemic represents a potential crisis for fish and wildlife agencies, said Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Executive in Residence at Michigan State University Russ Mason.

"In a nutshell, the first concern is that many agencies are experiencing a drop in license revenue because 'point of sale' licenses in stores are mostly unavailable," Mason said. "The second threat is that the amount of Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson [both excise taxes, more to come later] funding each agency can get depends in part on each states' number of unique license buyers. Fewer buyers translate into fewer federal dollars."

The First Losses

On the state level, hunting and fishing license sales have been falling steadily for the last two decades and will likely see an even further decline with the impact of COVID-19. Demographic trends mainly drive this drop as members of the baby-boomer generation age-out of hunting and are replaced by fewer and fewer young people. Still, the magnitude of the repercussions due to COVID-19 are mostly unknown. As we lose traditional users like hunters and anglers, the funding system will continue to break down. Some states have been able to patch their hemorrhaging budgets by selling licenses online and working to market licenses differently; however, these are only temporary solutions to this long-standing problem. This issue also extends far beyond the state of Michigan, as many western states close down drawn hunts and withdraw governor's tags, budgets will continue to be slashed. Losing these big-ticket, out-of-state revenue streams will create gaping holes in the accounting of state wildlife agencies that will need to be filled or we risk conservation efforts for all species falling behind.

In addition to the decline in license revenue, the State of Michigan as a whole faces budget deficits to the magnitude of several billion dollars. So it is not unlikely that general funds from the state budget will be repurposed for COVID-19 response efforts. These are likely to include a wide variety of medical supplies and other healthcare needs, as well as unemployment insurance claims and workforce training programs. Expenditures like these will hopefully preserve the health and safety of the people of this state and the country, but this rescission will likely leave agencies like the MDNR underfunded.

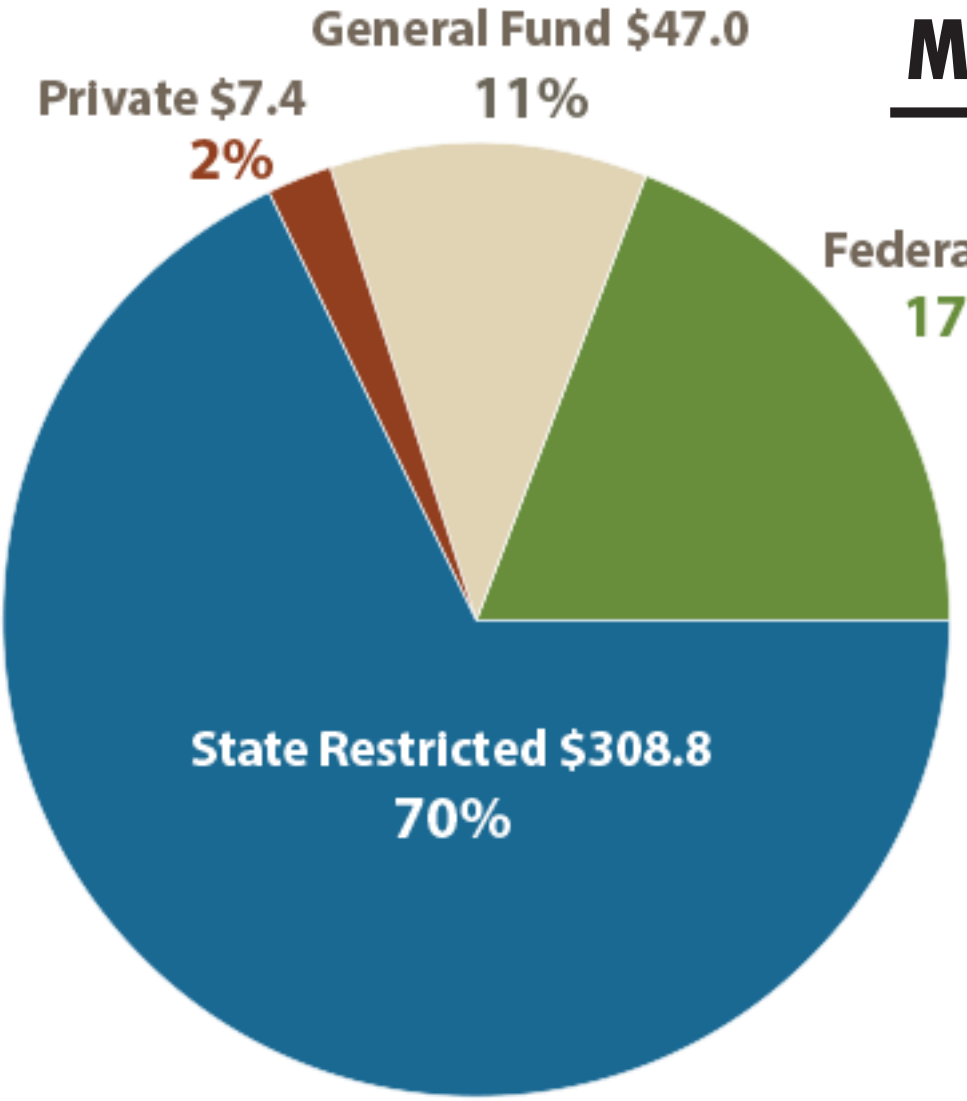
"During the COVID-19 crisis, there are huge expenses that are necessary to sustain human lives," said Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) Executive Director Amy Trotter. "We at MUCC sincerely appreciate our healthcare workers and strongly support them in this time of great need, but we can't let fisheries and wildlife management fall to the wayside. Unfortunately, the expenses required to deal with this crisis will leave much, much less in the state budget for fisheries and wildlife management and natural resource conservation."

One silver lining Trotter noted is that MUCC members and leadership had the foresight to protect game and fish through the creation of the game and fish protection account of the Michigan conservation and legacy fund in 2006.

"While budgets may be stretched thin as a loss of general fund monies, game and fish protection account funds cannot be used for purposes outside of fish, wildlife, research and law enforcement without changing the Michigan state constitution," Trotter said.

If there is a rescission of state general funds, it could be the case that the MDNR will be required to use these funds to operate programs that are unrelated to active fisheries and wildlife conservation. While the MDNR will likely still be working towards the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural resources, it is likely that they will have fewer financial resources from the state to use.

So, instead of going into food plots, wetland management structures and landscape-scale timber management, some license dollars could be put towards other costs like conservation officers and their vehicles, fuel and equipment. While these individuals are critical to the operation of the department, this move would take resources and effort away from scientific wildlife



MDNR Budget

This graphic outlines the MDNR budget. "General Fund" monies may be subject to a rescission, "Federal" funds may be impacted by a deferment of excise tax payments or an inability to match funds, and "State Restricted" money is collected through licenses and fees, which could suffer during the COVID-19 crisis.

management.

Given the great funding challenges that the conservation community will likely be facing, it is critical that the state strongly support our biologists, managers and conservation officer corps with general fund monies to ensure the MDNR can continue to manage the natural resources of the Great Lakes State. The ways in which the Michigan government reacts to this crisis will also have an impact on the state's ability to take advantage of federal funds.

A Conservation Nation — Unstable

While wildlife management remains largely a state issue, a great deal of funding for these efforts is collected and distributed at the federal level. In 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act (PR) was passed through Congress. This piece of legislation levied an 11 percent excise tax on firearms and ammunition, dedicating that funding to wildlife management, conservation and restoration. With the evolution of bows and arrows, Congress later moved to levy the same excise tax on archery equipment as well.

PR was mirrored by the Dingell-Johnson Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Act (DJ) in 1950, which placed a similar tax on boats, tackle and marine fuel for the purposes of funding fisheries management.

Collectively, these federal monies fund a huge portion of state fish and wildlife agency budgets, and hundreds of millions of dollars are collected under these levies annually. For reference, the MDNR received over $75 million from these funds in fiscal year 2019.

State fish and wildlife agencies, like the MDNR, use this money to hire staff, manage habitats and purchase land for conservation — especially State Game Areas (SGAs) in the southern portion of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The apportionment and dispersal of this funding is determined by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) by using the number of unique, individual hunting and fishing license buyers to determine funding eligibility. Once eligible, states must match 25 percent of PR and DJ funds. If the state loses

these individual license buyers or is unable to meet the match criteria, then the MDNR will forfeit this federal money.

Here's where the problems start to multiply even further: some members of the archery and firearm manufacturing industry are trying to squirm out of these age-old excise taxes during the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19. The federal government has already issued a deferral of the collection of PR funds from firearm manufacturers for one fiscal quarter, and it appears likely that members of the Archery Trade Association will receive the same benefits.

This will provide some temporary financial relief for some of the businesses associated with the outdoor recreation industry, but it could leave state fish and wildlife agencies high-and-dry. Of course, there are a number of industries seeking relief from government tax liabilities, but this deferment comes in the midst of one of the best periods of sales in the last 25 years. March 2020 and the onset of the COVID crisis accompanies the election of President Barack Obama and the month following the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT for the highest monthly firearm sales since 1998. Friday, March 20, 2020 shattered the record for the highest number of firearms background checks conducted nationwide in a single day: a total of 210,308 — a number higher than any during the Obama administration.

"It is bitterly ironic that even while gun sales are surging and excise taxes are pouring into the federal coffers, states may be denied access to the critical conservation funding upon which our nation's wildlife populations rely," said Safari Club International CEO W. Laird Hamberlin in a recent editorial.

It is important to keep in mind that as long as this deferment is not lengthened — or forgiven — state fish and wildlife agencies will be able to continue to take advantage of these record sales. However, it is still unclear what the future may hold for this money and how these funds may ultimately be delivered to fisheries and wildlife managers. It is essential that these taxes are paid in a timely fashion for the current system to hold up and so state fish and wildlife agencies are able to remain operational, but it seems to be only holding on by a thread.

We have now come to a point where the system — built on the backs of travel-restricted, license-buying baby-boomers and firearm enthusiasts — is failing.

For now, state, federal and industry leaders need to make moves to ensure that state fish and wildlife agencies are well-equipped in the short- and long-term. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), a group representing all 50 state natural resource agencies, and many other conservation organizations are working with Congress and the USFWS to provide temporary financial relief to state fish and wildlife agencies. As of right now, this reprieve could last for a period of up to six federal fiscal years, beginning with funding apportioned in fiscal year 2020. Using funding allocation formulas from previous, more stable fiscal years and reducing the non-federal match requirement for PR dollars will likely help state agencies stay afloat through this financial uncertainty. While measures are being considered at a high level to help these agencies in the short-term, there are a number of things that individuals can do to help as well.

Lifeblood

This system needs people like you to continue buying hunting and fishing licenses — and to support non-governmental, nonprofit conservation organizations who often carry the excess load of conservation habitat, R3 (recruitment, retention and reactivation of hunters and anglers), and natural resource policy work.

"The most important thing every hunter, angler and conservationist can do is to buy a license," Mason said. "As well, if you can, continue to financially support the community of non-governmental hunting, fishing and conservation organizations. It's up to us – literally – to make sure that the wildlife and fish resources we enjoy are healthy and available for future generations."

With so many fundraising events canceled around the country, these nonprofit organizations need you to continue your

"The most important thing every hunter, angler and conservationist can do is to buy a license." — Russ Mason

memberships. Ducks Unlimited, the National Wildlife Federation, the Ruffed Grouse Society, Quality Deer Management Association, the National Wild Turkey Federation, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, MUCC's affiliates and many other nonprofit organizations and their employees are all hurting in the midst of this public health catastrophe.

"As a result of COVID-19, fundraising events have been postponed around the country during the height of our fundraising season. These events bring in the majority of our revenue and memberships to the National Wild Turkey Federation. While we have encouraged our members to stay engaged and give online, we are not alone," said Becky Humphries, CEO of the National Wild Turkey Federation. "Other conservation groups are experiencing similar challenges. Unfortunately, without members or revenue, we will have less to invest in conservation delivery in the future."

Nonprofit organizations spend hundreds of millions of dollars annually on projects that benefit fish and wildlife on public lands and waters across the country. However, they cannot do it without the individual support of thousands of members. Now is the time to stand together and do the right thing for all of these groups.

Once there are stopgaps in place, leaders in the conservation community need to put their heads together and figure out a funding mechanism and a way of doing business that is suited to the needs of a post-COVID world. AFWA Executive Director Ron Regan predicts that the state fish and wildlife agencies across the country will need to be lean and adaptive to modern threats.

"State fish and wildlife agencies will face new challenges to remain relevant to 21st-century constituents, especially following this public health crisis," Regan said. "The next decade will see new opportunities for these state agencies to engage new partners, assume an enhanced role in wildlife and human health and redefine the importance of fish and wildlife to the citizens of this country."

Traditional conservation organizations, made up of hunters and anglers, will likely play a role in crafting this new policy framework.

"Hunters are North America's original conservationists, and they, and other consumptive-user groups like trappers and anglers, will continue to play a fundamental important role in wildlife management," said Cyrus Baird, regional manager of state government relations for Safari Club International. "Moving forward, the role and influence of hunters will be one of leadership — a position that will lead us into a system of conservation suited to meet the needs of the 21st century and beyond."

Expanding the Base

However, with hunters and anglers on the decline, these groups can likely no longer withstand being the only people propping up the system. State wildlife agencies will need to broaden their missions to reach the non-hunting and non-angling publics as these constituencies inevitably shrink. In this way, agencies will be able to expand their traditional bases of support and build crucial partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. Furthermore, agencies will also need to expand their areas of focus to encompass topics that are of concern to a wider public audience.

A key area of interest to leaders in the conservation community is the relevance of wildlife health, especially in assessing and mitigating threats of zoonotic diseases. With the massive spikes in COVID-19 cases in 2020, leaders are worried about the potential for wildlife to serve as pools or vectors of disease. State agencies, working with universities, hospitals and federal agencies, have a role to play in doing research on disease ecology and in human health. Wildlife disease laboratories will likely be further stressed to give

policymakers the crucial information needed to make informed decisions. Yet, this important research and innovative adaptation relies on the same, old funding model.

One mechanism for a new system could be through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA; H.R. 3742). This bill is the product of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Sustaining America's Diverse Fish & Wildlife Resources, which was chaired by Bass Pro Shops founder John L. Morris and former Wyoming governor Dave Freudenthal. This bill has been introduced in the last two sessions of Congress, would appropriate dedicated funding for states to fulfill federally-mandated State Wildlife Action Plans. These plans outline blueprints for the recovery of a wide range of species and identify projects that are ready to be put into action. Thus, this legislation has the potential to be good for our national economy, habitat and the species that depend on us.

"The COVID-19 crisis has underscored the importance of wildlife and the outdoors for millions of Americans," said Drew YoungeDyke, manager of sporting communications for the National Wildlife Federation. "The recovery of our country and the recovery of wildlife go hand-in-hand — a recovery that can put people to work immediately implementing shovel-ready plans that state wildlife agencies already have through the Recovering America's Wildlife Act."

This potential solution would also reduce state fish and wildlife agencies' reliance on monies from licenses and fees and may reduce the extent to which they are beholden to firearm and ammunition sales that are increasingly unrelated to hunting. It is one way out of this funding disaster and may play a role in a financial recovery package after the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. I certainly hope that it gains enough political capital to move its way through Congress, but the leaders of this field must also be open to other innovative solutions to these chronic problems.

An Uncertain Future

These are truly scary times for all of us. As a future natural resource professional, it is unclear the direction in which my field of study will take in the next six months; nevermind the next thirty or forty years.

I have been reminded many times during our social distancing orders that character is not created in a crisis — it is simply revealed. The same is true of our community, and this crisis is revealing fundamental flaws in our systems. However, I see this as an inflection point for conservation. We have reached a critical point at which hunters, hikers, anglers, boaters, trappers and paddlers will need to join with local, state and federal policymakers to build a system that our grandchildren can rely on.

I'm not sure how we are going to do it, but I do know that building this new reality will certainly take a great deal of thoughtful consideration, ambition, analytical research and could use a whole lot of time that we simply do not have. This new approach must encompass local, state and federal government entities, as well as industry and nonprofit leaders. It must be agile and adaptable to the problems that we face in this century and beyond. It will need to bring groups to the table that have never had a seat or an invitation before. It requires true, unhindered innovation and widespread support from everyday Americans to succeed.

In thinking about the development of this new system, I am reminded that the conservation of the fish and wildlife of this country require a system more efficient than government, more empathetic than industry, more interconnected than contemporary academia and more insightful than any one individual.

As I graduate from Michigan State University in May, that is the charge that I take into my career — and a question that faces all of us concerned about the conservation of wildlife and wild places. But not one of us can do it alone.

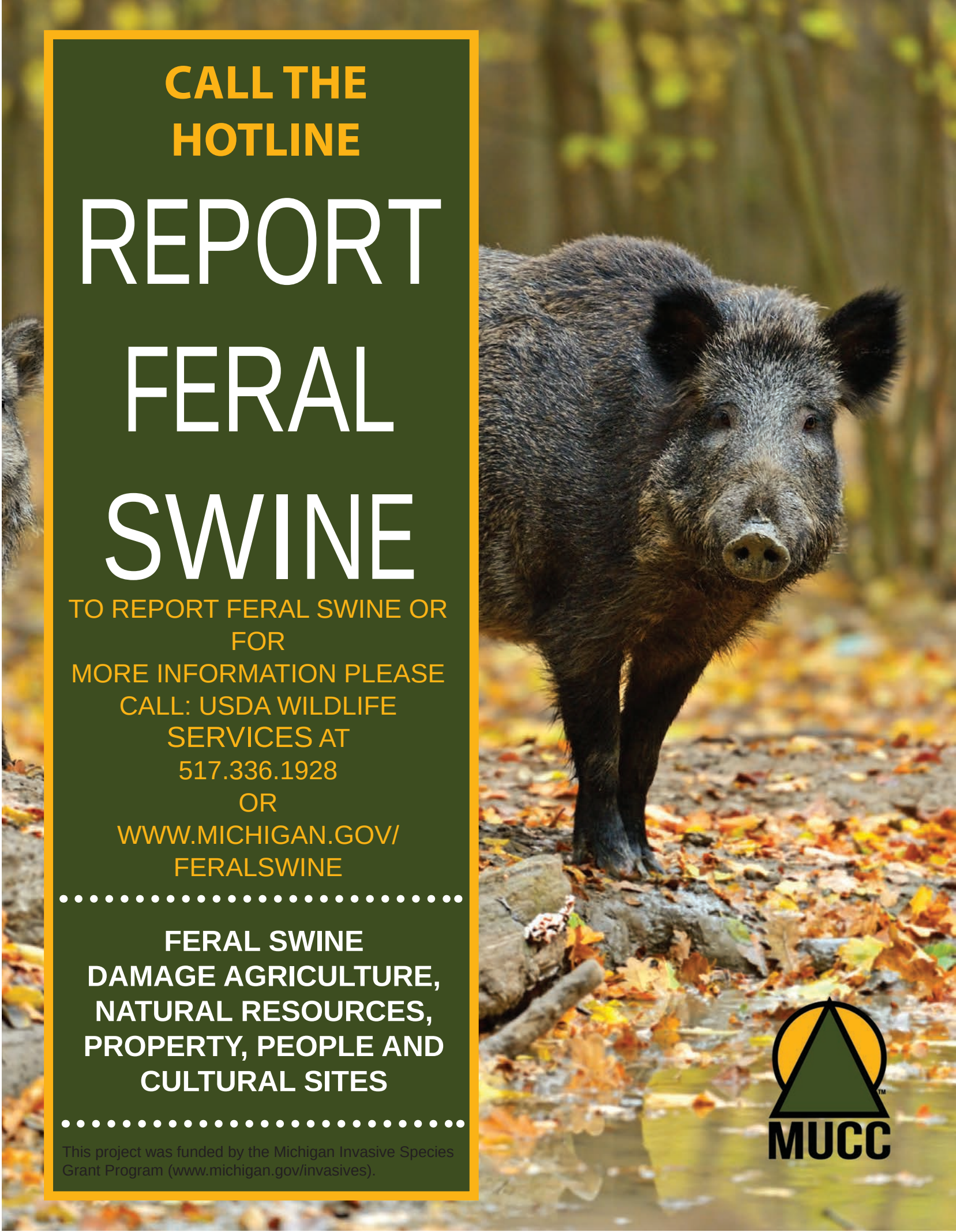
Due to COVID-19...

Michigan United Conservation Clubs Annual, in-person, Convention has been canceled.

A total of 23 resolutions were slated to head to convention in June. Each of these resolutions had passed through a rigorous process to arrive at this point — passing one of the three MUCC Conservation Policy Board meetings, which have occurred since the 2019 MUCC Annual Convention.

The MUCC Executive Board and staff are working to develop creative solutions to continue the grassroots policy process. We realize that the in-person debate and amendments that happen at convention are an important step in creating sound policy stances that MUCC works to implement.

A committee has been formed to discuss all possible options moving forward. MUCC is proud of the grassroots process that gives its members a platform and voice.



CALL THE HOTLINE

REPORT FERAL SWINE

TO REPORT FERAL SWINE OR FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL: USDA WILDLIFE SERVICES AT 517.336.1928 OR WWW.MICHIGAN.GOV/FERALSWINE

FERAL SWINE DAMAGE AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, PROPERTY, PEOPLE AND CULTURAL SITES

This project was funded by the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (www.michigan.gov/invasives).

MUCC

Surface Tension

By Steve Griffin

A surface bait caught this Wixom Lake largemouth.

I knew better.

The blanket of lily pads in this little upstream corner of Wixom Lake looked all but impenetrable: a creature might be able to scamper across the canopy, but no way, it seemed, could a predator from beneath get to it.

But, I knew better.

So, I skittered the white plastic mouse from pad to pad, pausing from time to time, making it hop a bit, dart a bit. And when at last the pads parted and the mouse disappeared into what looked like an empty coffee can, I instantly pulled back like my life depended on fast action – and brought the fish-less lure flying back at me.

I laughed.

After all, I'd known better.

Just about everybody who fishes the surface for bass will tell you – over and over, since you need reminders – that you must delay the hookset as long as you can, if you hope to boat the fish. The splash is just the leading edge of the bite. And then your advisor will usually laugh, knowing how quickly the heart overcomes the brain when a fish attacks something on the surface.

That's why we go back, time after time. It's the thrill I call "surface tension."

Remember that junior high or high school lesson in which a teacher tried to impress upon you the fantastic way water bonds across its surface: it gives it a glassy look, helps a boat plane, even floats a needle in that old science experiment? That's basic, and essential, science.

But surface tension to me is something else: that heart-in-mouth feeling as a lure gurgles along toward you — something wild's going to happen, and happen soon, and you'd best be ready, and you're probably not going to be…

And then it happens, a whoosh of a splash as your lure disappears, and maybe this time you wait long enough, or just get lucky, and the hooks find a hold, and the fight's on — if not entirely on the surface, then likely returning to it in a thrashing battle.

Most flyrod trout fishers will tell you that across time you'll catch far more trout by fishing deep or even middle-depths than you will on the top. And then they'll tie on a delicate little something that will float on the film — yes, thanks to scientific surface tension — and try for the little splash that makes their day.

When you move from that to bass fishing, it's like changing from classical music on earbuds to rap in a woofer-rigged lowrider. You feel it all over.

You remember moments in this game, like the lily pad episode at

the start of this tale.

Or the cast on a river near my home that sent a red-and-white Creek Chub Knuckle-Head Jr. toward the shoreline, and the way a hole opened in the water and the lure fell into it the way a fly ball drops into a fielder's open glove. I was so stunned it took a second to recover, and that's how I was able to set the hooks into the jaw of a smallmouth that then spent more time out of the water than in it until I was able to lift it into my boat, unhook and release it.

Two pounds of smallie, a few minutes of fight, and a memory I'll not forget was upon me.

Or, fishing a bass tournament with friend Don Fillmore of Coleman. The cast, toward a little pocket in shoreline brush, flew a few inches too far. My white rat wrapped twice around the limb and dangled, about 18 inches above the water, and I was sure I'd blown a cast to great cover.

I gave it a couple of tugs, and somehow it flipped back and over the branch, twice, and finally fell free — and into a new-made crater in the water like the one in the smallie story I just told. But this hole was even bigger — the maw of a 6-pound, 4-ounce largemouth bass that put us in the money overall and took big-bass honors for the tournament. Clutching the trophies and checks was a thrill — but nothing compared to seeing the lure fall into that hole in the water.

Sometimes not seeing provides the thrill. Jerry VanderMeer of Newaygo and I were on the Hodenpyl Dam backwaters of the Manistee River late one night, having tied on Jitterbugs like those my dad had talked about so often. Dad had warned us of the tension — how he'd nearly jumped out of the boat a few foggy nights when he'd become mesmerized by the soft gurgle of the timeless plug, and a bass erupted from the water as he raised the bait from it for another cast.

This night was different: We learned to listen for the rattle of hooks as an attacking smallmouth leaped from the water because if we somehow waited for the splash-down and then a second or two more, we had much better odds of hooking it.

A buddy still talks about the day on a big, deep, clear northern Michigan lake, when the smallmouth were eager to swim up from 15 feet down to smack a Pop-R. At the other extreme, I've caught largemouths that measured six inches back-to-belly, in what was no deeper than that six inches.

Surface lures won't work every time. Nothing does. But when they do, I argue they produce fishing at its best.

Some principles can boost your odds.

Remember that terrestrial things in nature seldom do the

A selection of proven topwater bass baits. Topwater baits are available from a variety of manufactures in a variety of different colors and patterns.

The author and a Sanford Lake smallmouth bass.

same thing for very long. They move, they watch, they run, they stop, they pause…. It's the same underwater and at the surface: vary your cadence, wobble the retrieve, act natural.

Throw to likely spots – but try the unlikely, too. Bass may not have read the book about where bass are supposed to be. They could be out shopping.

Be ready. Many of my catches — like the river smallmouth and the under-brush largemouth described earlier — have come as the lure lands or in the first few seconds (wait a bit to begin your retrieve) or first few feet after it.

Tie on your all-time best-producing lure — but if it doesn't do the trick, try something you'd consider tossing into your young niece or nephew's tackle box during a thinning of your collection. It might be the ticket that day.

White rat, black Jitterbug, red and white Knuckle-Head, blue and silver Pop-R — they're my go-tos — but I've had some great days on those lures in other colors, and on Zara Spooks, Rattlin' Chug Bugs, Tiny Torpedos, floating Rebels and Rapalas, plus some surface lures whose names have been worn off if they ever bore them.

I prefer baitcasting gear to spinning gear and braided line for largemouths, mono for smallmouths; the level-winds are more accurate and more fun. Braids are a sure way to set hooks and pull largemouths from brush and lily pads; mono is a bit less visible to smallmouths. And if ever there was a time to sharpen those hooks, this is it. (Some old-school plugs come with hooks so stout, and difficult to sharpen, that I swap them out for lighter, sharper ones.)

Fish the prime times of dawn and dusk, but don't neglect after-dark hours. And more than once, we've found bass hunkered down under thick cover on hot mid-days.

There may well be better, more productive ways to fish, and plenty of folks pursue them. (I do too, and often.) Some people may even claim their chosen method is more exciting than popping or gurgling a topwater plug.

But in the heart-racing flush of surface tension, I know better.

A Knuckle-Head Jr. was the (temporary) undoing of this smallmouth bass.

michigan
OUT-of-DOORS

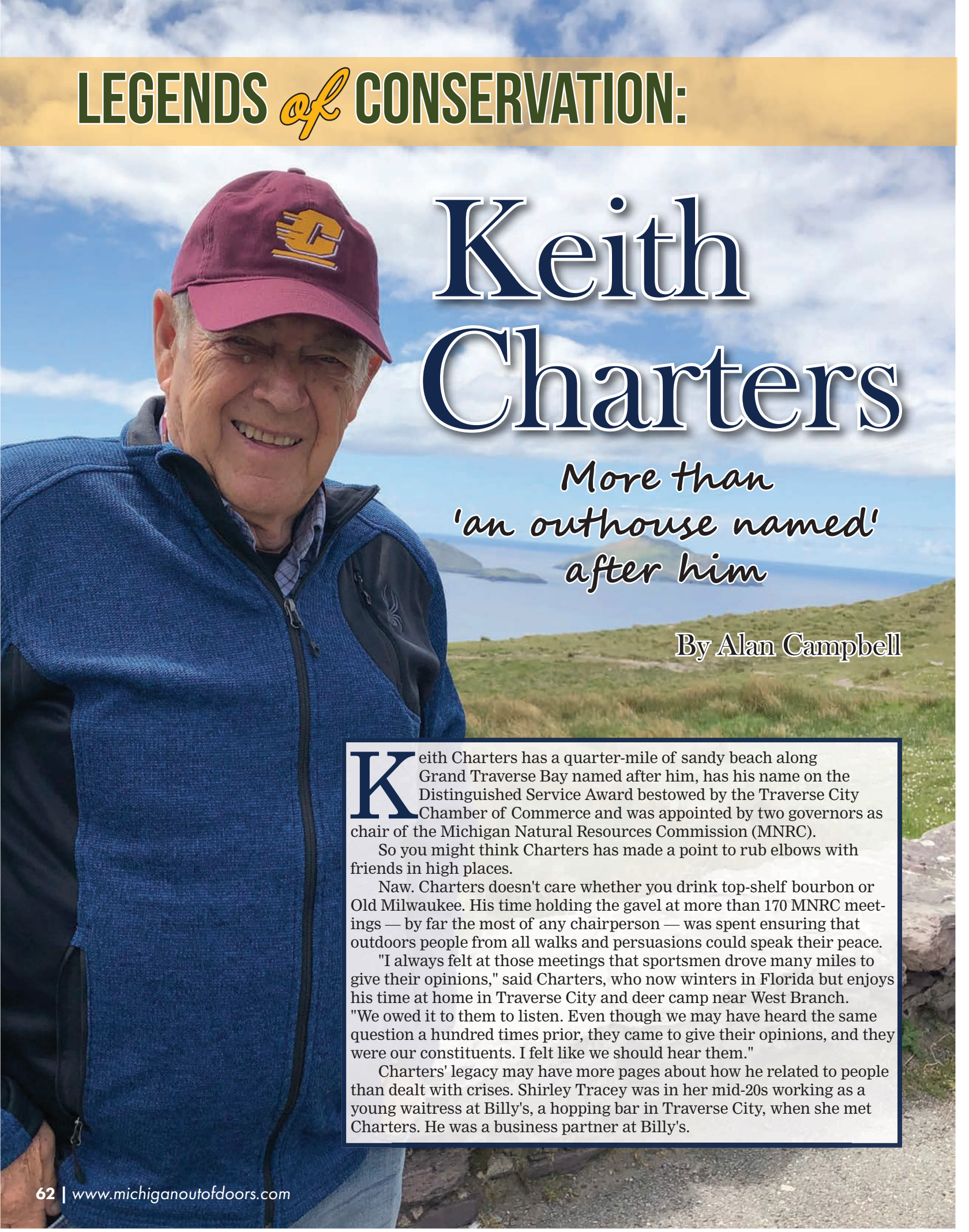
Subscribe, become a member and get MUCC and Michigan Out-of-Doors gear at www.mucc.org and www.michiganoutofdoors.com

GET MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS BY BECOMING A MEMBER OF MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

Visit www.mucc.org/join_mucc
or
Call Sue Pride at 517.371.1041

Affiliate Club members: Ask the person at your club who handles membership about subscribing to the print edition for a discounted rate.

LEGENDS of CONSERVATION:



Keith Charters

More than 'an outhouse named' after him

By Alan Campbell

Keith Charters has a quarter-mile of sandy beach along Grand Traverse Bay named after him, has his name on the Distinguished Service Award bestowed by the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce and was appointed by two governors as chair of the Michigan Natural Resources Commission (MNRC).

So you might think Charters has made a point to rub elbows with friends in high places.

Naw. Charters doesn't care whether you drink top-shelf bourbon or Old Milwaukee. His time holding the gavel at more than 170 MNRC meetings — by far the most of any chairperson — was spent ensuring that outdoors people from all walks and persuasions could speak their peace.

"I always felt at those meetings that sportsmen drove many miles to give their opinions," said Charters, who now winters in Florida but enjoys his time at home in Traverse City and deer camp near West Branch. "We owed it to them to listen. Even though we may have heard the same question a hundred times prior, they came to give their opinions, and they were our constituents. I felt like we should hear them."

Charters' legacy may have more pages about how he related to people than dealt with crises. Shirley Tracey was in her mid-20s working as a young waitress at Billy's, a hopping bar in Traverse City, when she met Charters. He was a business partner at Billy's.

"He is one of the kindest, most decent human beings I've ever met," recalled Tracey, who now owns restaurants near Kalkaska and in Mancelona. "I hadn't met him for years, and then he stopped in and asked my maiden name. The fact that he knew me blew me away. I was shocked. He must have had a thousand employees over the years."

Charters makes himself available whenever Tracey seeks advice or needs an ear to test business choices.

> *"I always felt at those meetings that sportsmen drove many miles... We owed it to them to listen."*

Restaurant: a 'means to an end'

Charters grew up in Whittemore, where he recalls that "if you didn't play sports or hunt and fish, you pretty much had a boring life." He developed a love for the outdoors watching his father train English setters and cast flies over the East Branch of the Au Gres, Rifle and Au Sable rivers. "He cast with a poetic motion," Charters reflected.

Charters needed money while studying to become a teacher at Central Michigan University, so he walked one block from his dorm to sign up as a busboy at The Embers Restaurant. He quickly moved up the ranks, splitting his time among schoolwork, waiting tables and outdoor pursuits. "I always managed to pheasant hunt over something boring like study," Charters conceded.

After teaching three years in Lincoln Park, an Embers partner asked if Charters would return to Mount Pleasant to take on a management role. Charters jumped at the chance, eventually opening a second restaurant named Embers on the Bay in Acme. Now married to Carolyn and helping to raise their children Elizabeth and Jeffrey, the Charterses decided to sell their Traverse City restaurant to Mountain Jacks and became landlords.

They also sold their business share in Billy's and The Embers.

Although highly successful with his restaurants, Charters now refers to them as a "means to an end." He took an active role in serving his communities, filling chairmanships on the Traverse City Convention and Visitors Bureau, Mount Pleasant Chamber of Commerce and Traverse City chamber. He was also elected to a seat on the Isabella County Board of Commissioners.

Doug Luciani was CEO of the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce when Charters was recognized for his work in a project to emphasize "smart growth" in local planning. The platform is now being taught at Michigan State University, Luciana said.

"None of that would have mattered if we didn't have a way to reach out to the 93 governments in the region," Luciani said. "He did it out of passion, and he has a passion for natural resources. I never detected an ounce of arrogance or partisanship or favoritism when I would appear before the NRC board for things. He always seemed very curious, which I think is a great attribute for a leader."

Charters supported 22-year-old John Engler, who grew up on a cattle farm near Beal City, during the budding politician's first run for state office to the House of Representatives. Engler sought out Charters after being elected governor in 1990.

"He said right after he got elected, 'I want you on the commission.' I said, 'There's no way I can go on the commission because we were still adapting to the seasonability of the Traverse City restaurant, to put it lightly.'"

Charters did accept a nomination to serve on the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Board, for which he held a seat for 20 years and served briefly as chair.

But four years after the initial invite, he took up Engler's offer to sit on the NRC. Starting in 1996 and extending until 2010, Charters chaired the commission that sets policy for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Balancing voices of users, staff

Fellow MNRC member John

Madigan said Charters wanted to hear from all sides in an issue.

"He made sure people who didn't have all the assets in the world were fairly heard and represented. He provided the balance between the 'haves' and the 'haves not'," said Madigan, who served nearly three terms. "Heads of public bodies often come to believe that it's their job to leverage decision making. Humility is required for a chair to allow the democratic process to work as it was designed."

"He didn't get carried away with the gavel. He wanted to make sure all opinions had a fair hearing," Madigan continued.

Madigan recalls traveling to a dedication ceremony with fellow Natural Resources commissioners Charters and Bob Garner. "They were talking back and forth, and I remember them saying that they would probably get an outhouse named after them," he recalled.

Fast forward a few years to 2011 for the renaming of Keith J. Charters Traverse City State Park. It was Garner who called Charters on a Florida golf course to tell his long-time friend of the decision made by the NRC after Charters had resigned. Charters had been kept out of the loop.

"All of a sudden, the phone goes dead, then there is sobbing. He can't believe anybody would do that because he's that humble. It was a significant amount of time before he could talk," Garner said.

It was Charters who helped out Garner, starting the groundwork for their professional and personal relationships.

"Gov. Engler would ask me who I thought should be on the commission. You had to have a split between Republicans and Democrats. When we had to replace a Democrat, I said I had the perfect guy. What about Bob Garner? He was one of the co-authors of the Kammer trust fund, and everybody knows him from television."

"I called (Garner) up and asked him if he'd meet me at a bar in Fife Lake."

The pair's strengths played off each other. Garner was and remains good friends with many MDNR staffers. He put weight behind their science-based decisions, while Charters brought out voices from hunters and fishers whose outdoor activities were directly affected by policy changes.

Charters' steady hand rose above partisan politics. In a move unlikely to occur today, Gov. Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat, in 2008 asked Charters to stay on as chair through the first two years of her administration.

Former lieutenant governor John Cherry of Montrose said it was the right decision.

"He came highly recommended from the conservation community," Cherry said. "He brought good common sense judgment to the job regardless of who was governor, and I mean that in a partisan way. For Keith, it was about what was right for the resource, not partisanship."

United front, divided minds

While chair, Charters led the NRC through a relatively quiet time in terms of outright disagreement within the conservation community. Cherry gave Charters some of the

"All of a sudden, the phone goes dead, then there is sobbing. He can't believe anybody would do that because he's that humble. It was a significant amount of time before he could talk."

credit.

"You look at the source for clashes. It could be a partisan one, it could be personality clashes between the chair and the director, or the chair and commissioners, or the chair and staff — it just seemed like he was a guy that worked hard to avoid clashes. Keith kept drama to a minimum. You would hope that is a common-place talent, but it's not," Cherry said. "And when it emerges, it's probably under-appreciated."

There were plenty of opportunities for battles, if not all-out wars, to dominate meetings while Charters led the NRC.

"Anything related to deer hunting was controversial, especially when we started getting into TB (bovine tuberculosis) and CWD (chronic wasting disease). The TB thing was going on during the Engler administration in northeast Michigan, where there were private (deer hunting) clubs. They had pretty much all been baiting, and baiting was ended," Charters said.

The NRC banned baiting in the Lower Peninsula for three years starting in 2008 after a captive deer in Kent County tested positive for CWD.

"We were talking about ways to prevent its spread, and there was a lot of dancing around the Michigan deer breeders association with some heavy lobbying. And the Ag Department thought they should be in control because captive cervids represented farming, the farming of deer," Charters recalled.

His views at times clashed with bureaucrats.

"Every now and then, and I don't say this egotistically, some of the rules they were putting forth were a little contradictory. For instance, there was no baiting but farmers were leaving round bales in the field … I never thought you should hear the controversies in public. I thought they should be heard behind closed doors, and there were many of them," Charters said.

He remembers being asked by a reporter shortly after being appointed commissioner about his priorities. They were recruitment, mentoring and retention of fishers and hunters, whose numbers were dropping 2 percent annually — a trend that has continued.

The MDNR embarked on a program to provide every fourth grader in the state a packet that talked about, among similar activities, why good conservation had to include culling forests and controlling the deer herd.

"Quite frankly, I failed, but so did everyone else across the country," he said. "We tried to avoid the word 'kill.' In my opinion, it was good, it was helpful, but you needed more."

Keeping true to his ways, Charters stayed out of the public discussion that followed Granholm's decision to switch authority for choosing the MDNR director from the MNRC, whose makeup is designed to be apolitical, to the governor.

"With the director being hired by the governor, it becomes political. We didn't ask (former directors) if they were a Republican or a Democrat. Well, now the director can be a political appointee," Charters said.

Charters resigned shortly after the MDNR director was picked by Granholm, about one decade ago. He said it was time.

"Toward the end, I would start thinking, 'I've heard this argument a thousand times.' It was time for fresh thinking. Besides, I was getting old. I think I was 69 when I got off," he said.

Although his time following a setter through cuttings is now rare, Charters has no misgivings about spending much of his adult life attending meetings and listening to the public.

Said Garner, "He's given up so much of his time and energy for the natural resources of this state, and he's done it all pretty cheerfully."

What's in a Name?

The difference between native, non-native and invasive species and why it matters

By Makhayla LaButte
MUCC Habitat Volunteer Coordinator

With all of the disagreements surrounding the management of our natural resources and the role of specific floral and faunal species in the ever-changing notion of "ideal" ecosystems, it is more important than ever before that we use precise and accurate language when engaging in such discussions.

Understanding the Difference

Native species are those found naturally in a specific region and are adapted to the environmental conditions and ecosystem there.

Non-native species, on the other hand, are those that are not naturally found in a region that they inhabit. Typically, these species are able to move to an area outside their natural range by human involvement. This includes being unintentionally transported as cargo, released accidentally from captivity, released intentionally to act as an ecological management tool (i.e., erosion prevention, predator to an invasive species) or given the ability to pass through a natural barrier (i.e., via shipping canals, ballast water).

The non-native species that are able to survive and establish are either managed intensively by humans or have very few physical, dietary or ecological limitations that prevent them from doing well in the new area. Non-native species are also sometimes referred to as "alien," "introduced" or "exotic" species.

One of the most common misconceptions is that non-native and invasive species are interchangeable terms. To label any floral or faunal species as invasive simply because it is not normally found in a specific ecosystem or region is not correct. To be considered an invasive species, an organism must be non-native to an area and cause economic or environmental harm, or cause harm to human, animal or plant health. A non-native organism's ability to cause harm is the key distinction when determining whether or not to identify it as invasive.

Michigan has invasive species of all kinds: mollusks, mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, crustaceans, plants, insects and diseases. The type of harm inflicted by an invasive varies depending on the species, but usually, more than one harm stems from an invasive species' infiltration of an ecosystem.

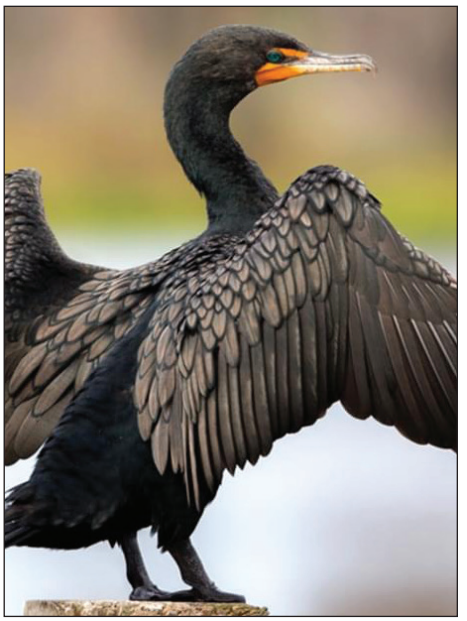
For example, one of the most harmful invaders of the Great Lakes region impacts far more than just the waters in which it resides. The introduction of invasive zebra mussels to the Great Lakes via ballast water discharge from international freighters led to a disruption in ecosystem function that spanned the entire food web. The mussels filter out

See if you can determine which species are native, non-native or invasive. Answers at the end of article.

Ring-necked pheasant

Mute swan

Chinook (King) Salmon



Double-crested cormorant

Sea lamprey

Earthworm

and feed on excessive amounts of phytoplankton, zooplankton and bacteria. These microscopic creatures are also critical food sources to small, growing game fish and other fish species, which are outcompeted by zebra mussels due to how efficiently they filter their food from the water. As the small fish starve and die off, so do larger predator fish that rely on the smaller fish as their food source. This cycle continues wherever the invasive zebra mussel establishes, stunting fish growth and limiting population sizes. Other negative ecological impacts abound, including increased toxic algal blooms. These algal blooms can lead to avian and fish die-offs.

Aside from their aggressive ecological impact, zebra mussels can also wreak economic and recreational havoc. They adhere to hard surfaces underwater like water intake valves and clog them. The annual cost associated with these removals in the United States alone has exceeded $1 billion. Additionally, the sharp edges of zebra mussels and their tendency to build up on hard surfaces make them a nuisance for swimmers and boaters alike.

Future Management Perspectives

Often, some of the most heated debates in conservation are about the management of invasive species that threaten the well-being of Michigan's iconic waters, lands and wildlife. While some non-native and invasive species have filled a niche in the ecosystem and native species have adapted to their presence in the food chain, others continue to threaten the integrity of our state's natural resources. What's worse is that some of our greatest ecological threats are still on the horizon.

This has led to intensive and expensive management efforts in Michigan and across the United States. As we move forward and face continuously new and changing threats across ecosystems, we must ask ourselves what an "ideal" ecosystem really is. Often, what makes one non-native species more preferable than another is human perception of its value. Where some individuals value the economics and novelty of certain non-native species in the Great Lakes region, others prefer native species be made the priority in our natural resources management efforts.

No matter what your preferred version of Michigan's natural resources looks like, it is more important than ever before that you understand the history, science and emotion behind the presence of some of Michigan's most infamous—and expensive—species. Only then can you begin to have truly effective conversations about the current and future management of our resources.

Whether you hunt, fish, hike or simply admire the natural world, there is one critical rule all conservationists should turn to when making decisions about natural resources: "Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and aesthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." — Aldo Leopold, The Land Ethic, A Sand County Almanac.

Ring-necked pheasant – non-native
Mute swan – invasive
Chinook (King) salmon – non-native
Double-crested cormorant – native
Sea lamprey - invasive
Earthworm – invasive

By Andy Duffy

Hex: Worth the Miles

It was the middle of June 1990. I stood at the registration counter at a campground where I was checking in and asked the clerk for directions to the South Branch of the Au Sable. I wanted to do some fishing.

The guy behind the counter told me he didn't know much about the river, but he could give me directions to some lakes where the bluegill fishing had been good.

I'm sure my jaw dropped. I was at a campground four miles from Grayling, the epicenter of eastern trout fishing, and some guy was talking to me about bluegill? As fun as they are, I hadn't traveled 2,000 miles to fish for panfish.

I made it clear that I wanted to fish for trout. The guy's eyes looked beyond me. I turned around to see an old gentleman standing there, listening to the conversation. That was my introduction to, if I have the name right, Harry Bishop. Even now, 30 years later, if a person were to ask around Grayling, people would probably have stories to tell about Bishop.

Bishop was a World War II veteran. While serving in Africa, he was wounded in action. He lay on the battlefield all day in the hot sun not knowing if he would live or die. He decided that if he ever made it home, he was done with seeing the world. He wanted to travel the United States. And that's what he did. He made it home and, after he retired, he chased insect hatches across the country. He made an annual pilgrimage to Grayling to fish the Hex hatch.

Ah, the Hex hatch. The Hex is a large mayfly. Entomologists call a Hex a Hexagenia limbata. I've heard them called the giant Michigan mayfly. A lot of people just call them mayflies as though they're the only kind of mayfly that exists. Whenever someone approaches me in June and tells me mayflies are hatching, I know the person is talking about Hexes. Although I think the designation has faded away, anglers used to call a Hex a caddis or a Michigan caddis.

When I started fly fishing, though, it was still common enough to hear an angler talk about the caddis hatch and to know he was talking about the big mayfly, not a kind of caddis.

Somewhere in Michigan, the mayflies will be emerging from the middle of June through early July. They'll begin emerging earlier in the lower portions of a stream (the hatch gradually moves upstream to cooler waters), the southern part of the state and the warmer rivers. They'll emerge later in cooler rivers such as the Jordan and in Upper Peninsula streams

When weather conditions are normal, they begin emerging when darkness falls. Still, although they hatch under cover of darkness, even non-anglers know when the hatch begins. Flies will congregate at street lights and porch lights. They'll litter streets in spots. A

buildup of dead mayflies has even made roads slick in places and has been blamed for some car crashes.

On that June day in 1990, I had never seen a Hex. I'd read about them, though. And I was lucky enough that my leave time fell during the hatch. I traveled from Fort Irwin, California, the Army's National Training Center, to fish the hatch.

Bishop offered to take me fishing with him that evening. We got on the river somewhere in the Mason Tract upstream from a couple of huge log jams. And that makes sense. When the flies emerge from the silt beds along the shore, they float down to the giant trout that have been hiding among the sticks all day long. The trout will come out and take up feeding positions.

Days are long in June, and a little light was still illuminating the northwestern sky when the hatch began. Still, I couldn't see any flies without the aid of a flashlight. The trout could see them, though. And I could hear the trout slurping down the flies.

Bishop told me I shouldn't try to make long casts in the dark. Instead, if I heard a good trout rising, I should wade close to it. The trout aren't so spooky in the dark. By wading close, a person can get a better fly drift, and he's less likely to get hung up in the streamside brush. We both caught fish that night. I don't know how big Bishop's best one was, but I caught a nice 18-incher. It was relatively puny by hex-hatch standards. Anglers often catch fish far larger than that during Hex time. That was my introduction to the hatch, though.

I can't remember if I made it back to Michigan for the hatch in '91. In November of '91, the Berlin Wall came down, and I got orders to go to Germany. Those coming back from Germany said it had become nearly impossible to find family housing there. That was a problem for me. I didn't want to go without my family. I had two choices, though. I could go to Germany unaccompanied for two years or extend my enlistment for another year and take my family with me. I didn't want to leave my wife and two young children for two years; neither did I want to wait for untold months for them to join me in Germany while we waited for a place to live. Then, a third option arose.

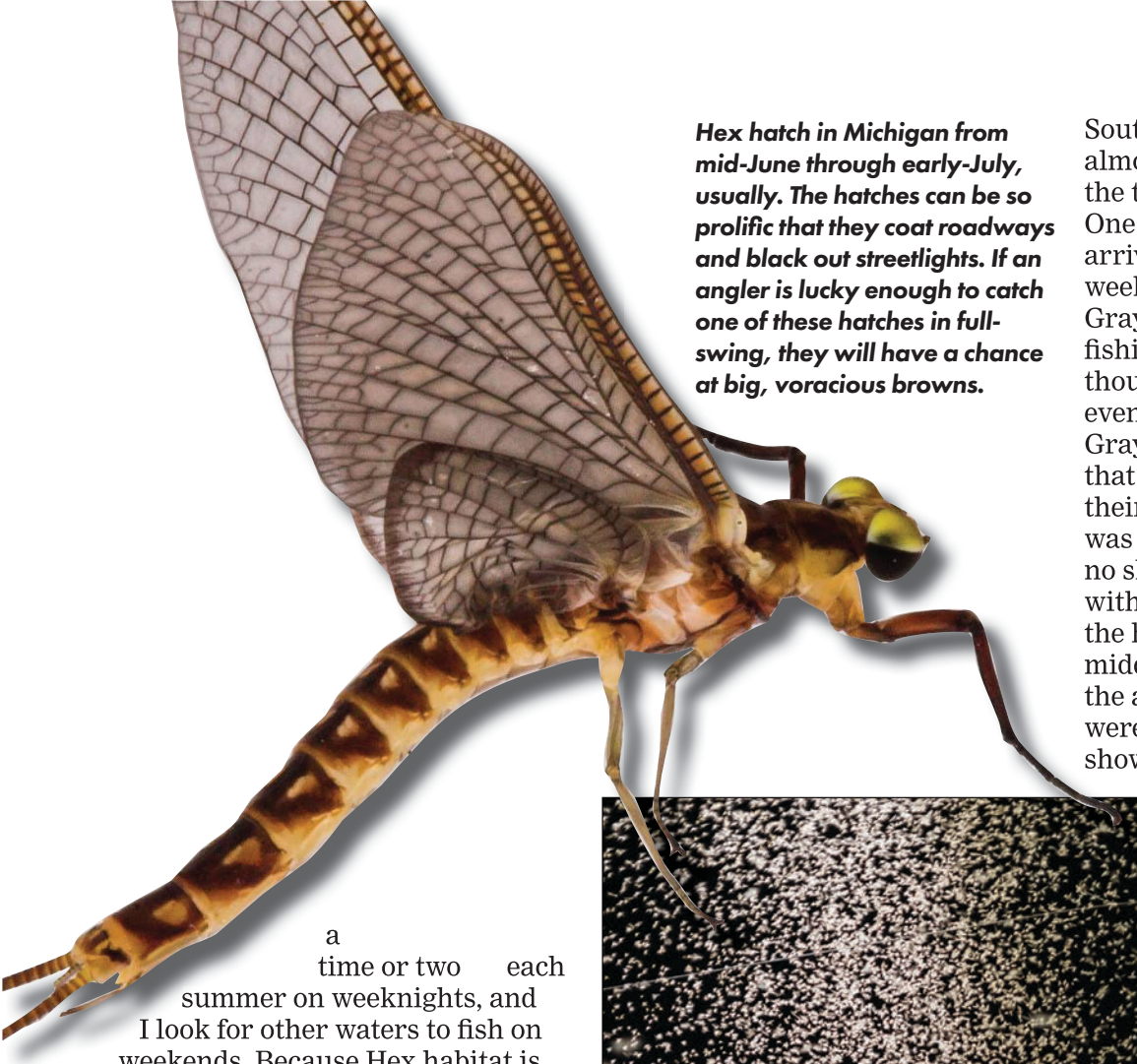
Because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States decided it could reduce the size of the military. Suddenly, the Army decided it had too many TAMMS clerks. Anyone who wanted to take a discharge could have one. I took one, moved to North Carolina and then to Michigan. The Hex hatch certainly played some role in my decision to settle here. I've been chasing the hatch ever since with moderate success. Some years, I can hardly get away to fish. I always try, though.

Back then, I thought the Hexagenia limbata was a mayfly of the Upper Midwest. Actually, it's found across most of North America. It goes by different names in other regions, though.

In Polly Rosborough's Oregon, for example, it is the big yellow may. Everywhere it lives, though, fish feed on it — bass, walleye, trout — it makes no difference. Because Michigan has very few green drakes and salmon flies, Hexes offer Michigan anglers their best chance to catch a trophy trout on a dry fly.

The South Branch of the Au Sable is justly famed for its great Hex hatches and large trout. The silt beds that line so much of the river are perfect Hex nymph habitat. Plus, with the river being such a high-quality stream and having no-kill regulations, it is home to some monster fish. Anyone interested in fishing the Hex hatch should someday fish the South Branch.

The thing is, everyone wants to fish the South Branch. It gets crowded, especially on weekends. Rivers all across Michigan, though, have stretches with excellent Hex habitat. And rivers all across Michigan have some big trout, too. Now I try to visit the South Branch



Hex hatch in Michigan from mid-June through early-July, usually. The hatches can be so prolific that they coat roadways and black out streetlights. If an angler is lucky enough to catch one of these hatches in full-swing, they will have a chance at big, voracious browns.

a time or two each summer on weeknights, and I look for other waters to fish on weekends. Because Hex habitat is scattered on many rivers, visiting anglers often need the inside scoop regarding where to go. Either that or they need to fish or float the rivers often enough to know where the good habitat is.

Anyway, the list of good Hex rivers reads like an honor roll: The mainstream of the Au Sable, the South Branch of the Au Sable, the Pere Marquette, the Big Sable, the Jordan, the Little Manistee, the Boardman, the Platte, the Escanaba and many others. Even lesser waters can get crowded during the hatch, though, especially on weekends. Still, the hatch is worth fishing if a person can find it. But sometimes finding it is difficult.

The flies don't emerge every night. A cold snap, for example, will bring the hatch to a screeching halt. The hatch tends to move upstream on many rivers, so a little guesswork is involved. Anglers need to try to guess how far up the river to move from evening to evening. It becomes a game.

Somewhere on the Au Sable's South Branch, though, the flies are almost always emerging around the time of the summer solstice. One year I remember, the solstice arrived on a Friday. I had the weekend off work, and I went to Grayling to do some camping and fishing. A cold front moved in, though. Nothing hatched Friday evening. At Gaylord, thirty miles to Grayling's north, there was a frost that night. People were covering their gardens. Tomatoes froze. I was camped at a campground with no showers. I filled my solar shower with water from the river, put it on the hood of my car and waited until midday to bathe. Even then, both the air temperature and the water were cold. It was one of the coldest showers I ever took in my life.

Many years, though, the days are hot and steamy when Hex season comes around. The weather seems to spark thunderstorms. One year, we were besieged with storms all through the time the Hexes should have been emerging.

I took an evening and went to the South Branch with my 10-year-old son anyway. We made our way through the swamp that adjoins the river only to find the water dangerously high. We found a little shoal where we figured we were relatively safe and waited for the flies to emerge. And, despite the conditions, there was a good hatch that night. Big fish were all around us.

We caught a few, and then my son hooked a leviathan. He was inexperienced at playing fish. His hand was wrapped around both his rod and his line so the fish couldn't run. His rod was bent over in a huge bow. His leader was stout, but I told him he would have to give the fish some line or it would break off. He let the fish take line and it raced to the nearest log jam and broke the leader. Perhaps it would have broken off anyway, or perhaps it would have broken his rod if he hadn't given it some line. I don't know. I felt terrible, though, about giving him bad advice.

While flies were still emerging that evening, a huge thunderstorm began approaching. We could see flashes of lightning everywhere. We decided we needed to get off the water immediately. Before we got to the car, the storm arrived. We got soaked. That's just the way things go during the Hex hatch.

Experienced fly anglers know the difference between duns and spinners, of course, and anglers will want to wait around for a spinner fall before leaving the river. A dun mayfly is one that has just emerged from its nymphal shuck and is riding the current drying it wings. The flies that escape the fish and the birds fly to streamside brush, shed their skin, and are then sexually mature. After that final molt, anglers call the flies spinners. The spinners return to the water and mate in the air. Once mating is complete, the males die. Females lay their eggs, and then they die. When the dying mayflies fall on the water, trout feed on the spinners. During the Hex hatch, a spinner fall often comes soon after a hatch. The spinners are generally the flies that emerged the previous night. A person new to fly fishing who wants to experience a Hex hatch should make certain he purchases both dun and spinner patterns. Associates at any fly shop can give a novice fly angler some good pattern advice.

Anyway, in Michigan, aquatic insects will be hatching from March clear into October. Trout will rise to emerging bugs. Trout will rise to terrestrials, too, when they blunder into the water, so fly anglers have lots of angling opportunities. If an angler misses the Hex hatch, it's not really the end of the world. That's what I always tell myself.

I can't really make myself believe that, though. June comes around, and my mind keeps taking me back to so many memories: that night 30 years ago when I met Harry Bishop, the tugs of large trout I've caught and the boils feeding fish leave on a river's surface. And I remember Bishop's words: "wade a little closer." The Hex hatch is something I'm always willing to wade just a little bit closer to.

Trout Dharma

By Calvin McShane

Downtown Grand Marais resembles a pop-up carnival between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Logging and commercial fishing died a long time ago, and now, without tourism, the quaint town nestled on a small Lake Superior bay might not exist. The village has traded chainsaws and gillnets for digital cameras and tourist traps. To some, it may be just the eastern end of the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, but for others, like it was to the long-ago fisherman and loggers, it is the gateway to all that is wild and pure.

I circled the one and only gas station twice looking for a parking spot. I had my eyes on a candy bar and a six-pack for some post-fishing respite. The chaos of the store's exterior transitioned seamlessly into the nearby shops and bars. The parades of people, goods and services contrasted starkly with the backdrop of sterile-blue Lake Superior. On the interior, an assortment of tourists claustrophobically roamed the aisles. In usual fashion, I got in and got out — undetected by any of the local mischief.

Dry pavement has a way of being enticing after it goes unseen during the doldrums of winter. I headed south and west roughly 30 miles. Hemingway had been where I was going; probably Traver, too. Perhaps their astute literary sense was born in the river, and I too was on the righteous path. The sun peaked an hour before and began its long-winded descent towards the western horizon, while clouds lingered as an anomaly. We hadn't had a drop of rain for at least six days, the aridity evident in the heavy dust clouding the shoulders of the only highway headed out of Grand Marais.

I usually like to brook trout fish alone. The summer before, I worried I insulted my best friend when I suggested we split up at the truck. When we met up after four hours of solitary fishing, he understood where I was coming from. The more people on the stream, the more the trees and water have to move aside from the ego. Get two egos close enough and sparks begin to fly. I feel bad for the wilderness; one fumbling idiot is enough for a stretch of water to tolerate.

The hike in was a race. The quicker you get to the stream, the quicker the world improves. I bushwhacked my way through the brush, much like Jon Kuhn, formerly of the U.P.'s true football team. I kept my head low, forearms in front and patience mute. Between my truck and the stream were a series of obstacles. There is a patch of easily-navigated high ground, to start. From there, the drop into the flood plain becomes increasingly difficult with each step. Six-foot high entanglements of Canada wildrye and switchgrass hop scotched thickets of alder and bog for nearly two miles. I was amazed to see bear scat littering

the minimal bits of open ground — how can anything live in such a place? The sweat beading down my forehead reminded me of the satisfaction that comes from working hard on something you love.

I first came to this stretch of water when I was ten. My father first fished it when he was just 16 — in 1972. He brought me here during a family vacation that primarily concerned beach bumming, sightseeing and a deep meditative-like relaxation on the part of my parents. I didn't appreciate the stream in its totality at the time. The deep, trench-like water intimidated me. Crossing seemed like an impossibility. Every noise was a bear, a mountain lion, an unknown creature like the one hiding in my closet. It was all so overwhelming until a nibble came, and a nibble was followed by a bite. Then, some head throbbing and stream-wide unpatterned darting came next. All it took was an 8-inch brook trout to finally peel my attention away from the delusions of youthful ignorance.

Even today, the water looks like a man-made tunnel built for kayak racing — oddly straight, deep, dark, fast and endless. The changes to the river are minor from 16 years ago. The big hole two bends above the doorstep used to have a skinny maple stuck perpendicular to the current a few feet underwater, but recently, it's sunken and accumulated sand and silt. Better now to fish it from above rather than the side. Just downstream from where I hopped in, a few feeder creeks must have dammed in the Spring, but the holes at their confluences still look daunting and, as expected, hold plenty of hungry trout.

A semi-regular summer breeze swept up the subtle valley from the south. The switchgrass swayed gently back and forth like the effortless movements of a woman's gorgeous blonde hair. I dunked my ball cap in the water, and the ice-cold shock made it feel good to be alive. This is what it means to be alive — not in an office or answering an email, not in anger or worry. Living is when you have three keepers in the creel and the slightest thought of heading back to the truck for a beer, but all the while knowing it's practically suicide to pry yourself off a trout stream on a day as exquisite as I was having.

I wanted to get to the last bit of deep water where you can't wade any further. The thought of swimming further downstream crossed my mind, but there are two perfectly good reasons to leave it be. First, there are some things best left alone, unknown and untouched. They exist in a world amongst themselves, only appearing to rattle in daydreamed imagination. And second, the turbulent unforgiving water humbles my bravery to that of 10-year-old me.

When I got to the final hole, I sat on the same sandbar I have been sitting on for 16 years. You can wiggle your legs out into the current, letting them get slightly pulled downstream, totally relieving any weight from your hips and back. All that is left is to put your elbows in the chilled sand and press your face against the sun. I took out my pocket knife and the keepers from the creel, slitting cuts from their vents up to the gills. I used my index finger to excavate the guts, gills and entrails. A few rinses in the water, while I held the trout's body in my hands, are all that is needed to clean the fish. I

blues, oranges and blacks that can persist on a body without life. It looked so inhuman and reaffirmed my thought that all great knowledge of the sublime comes from the things furthest from civilization.

The hike out was brutal. If there was a path, it was impossible to stay on. My father charged through these woods with reckless abandon, using decade-old broken limbs and mounds of dirt to show him where he came from. I would trail close enough behind him that his abrupt stops plunged the tip of his rod into my eyes.

On that day, though, I walked back with a brisk pace very much ready to settle on my tailgate with a beer. I found no signs of a path, and it pleased me. No path means no people.

The high ground is cloaked with stands of jack pine that are easy enough to spot from one another. The dips between them, however, can be confused with torture chambers equipped with alders so thick it feels like someone has hogtied you at the knees.

New drops of sweat crept from under the brim of my cap and dampened my flannel. I felt alive, but in a different way than before — I almost thought about heading back to the steam, building a small fire and never coming out.

Back at the truck, I turned up the radio and popped the aluminum lid on a less-than-desirable cold bottle of beer. I took the melted ice water from my mini cooler and tossed it into a small bucket with the catch. The slime was still thick on the trouts' bodies, and even though their color had faded, they still emanated a sense of severity. With my waders off and back to the ribbed tailgate, the fresh air swept across my legs, and I looked to the newly-forming clouds in the northern sky.

I told my girlfriend I'd be back around seven, but it was already eight, and the D.J. said they were going to play Springsteen after the commercial break — it didn't seem right to leave. I decided I would leave when the sun started to dim and the trees strobed shadows across my windshield on the way home. The radio fluttered in and out once, and I was 15 miles from home. I was alone with my thoughts, and unfortunately, my ego. Thankfully, my ego was a little weaker than when I left that afternoon. It was poisoned by trout and bludgeoned by the dharma of woods and water — it's death is slow, a battle counted with fish rather than years.

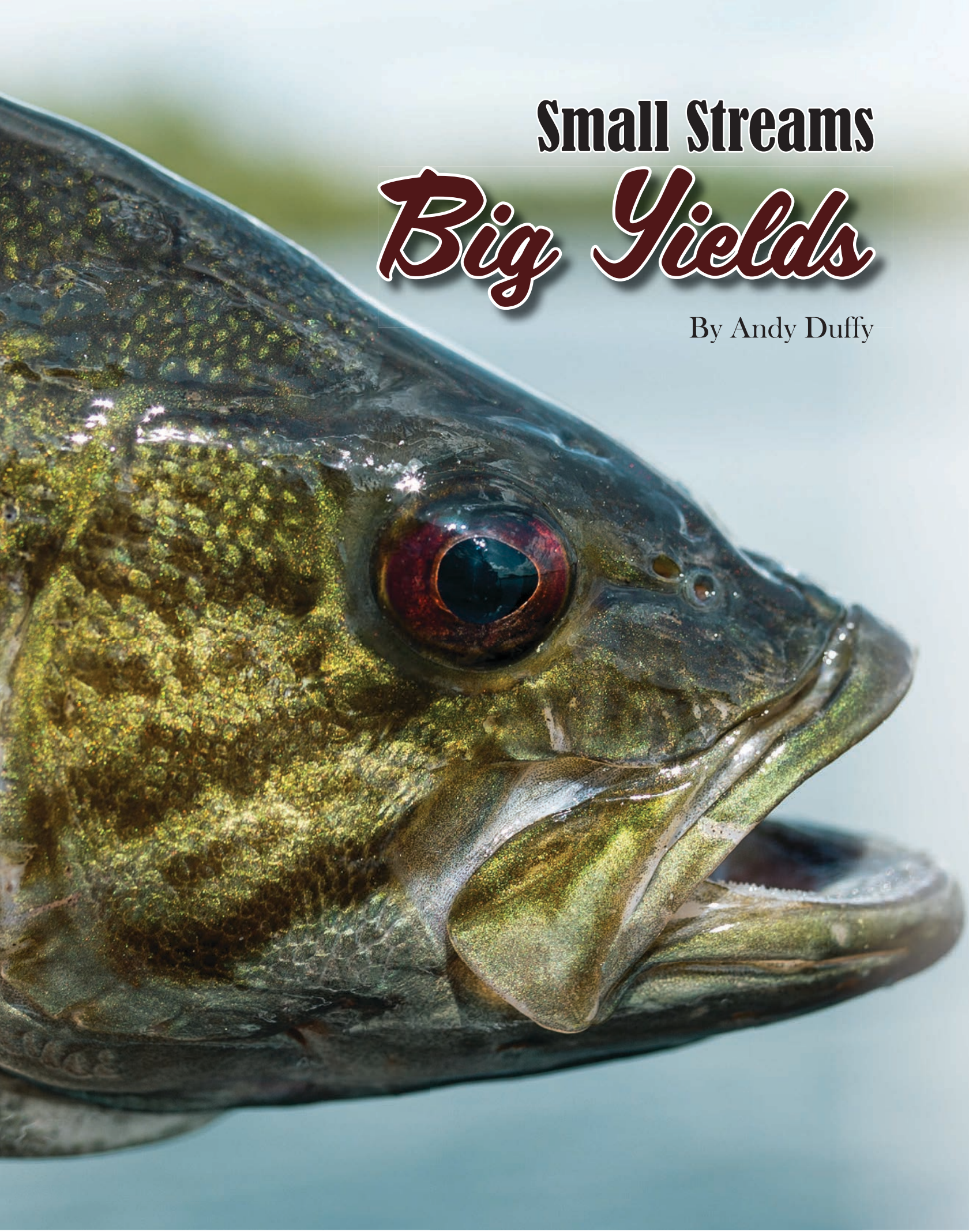
michigan
OUT-of-DOORS

Subscribe, become a member and get MUCC and Michigan Out-of-Doors gear at www.mucc.org and www.michiganoutofdoors.com

GET MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS BY BECOMING A MEMBER OF MICHIGAN UNITED CONSERVATION CLUBS

Visit www.mucc.org/join_mucc
or
Call Sue Pride at 517.371.1041

Affiliate Club members: Ask the person at your club who handles membership about subscribing to the print edition for a discounted rate.



Small Streams Big Yields

By Andy Duffy

The evening was hot, and the water was low when my son-in-law and I stepped in the little river.

The river, at least as far down as I've ever fished it, is small and intimate. A person armed with a fly rod will find wide-open casting in spots. Casting can be tough at times, though, even for an angler with spin gear.

People haven't been very kind to the river. It has been impounded several times just in the 30 miles or so that I've fished it. The impoundments warm the water and ruin it for trout if, indeed, it ever was cool enough for trout. The stream offers smallmouth bass habitat. The river is full of bass.

My son-in-law, Evart's Matt Hildebrand, is an avid angler and loves both small streams and smallmouth bass. He's a former Buckeye and fished a lot of Ohio's small bass waters in his youth. Since he moved to Michigan, I've taken him to numerous rivers. I'd never taken him to that one, though. I knew he would love it.

I hadn't fished it in several years. Then, a week or two before I took Hildebrand with me, I'd fished it and had success. That evening, though, we were going to fish a stretch of water I'd never fished before.

The way I'd figured it, we would wade upstream a little way and turn around and fish back down. Private land lay on either side of the river, so we had to stay in the water. And I figured I would rather start out wading upstream and getting the tough part out of the way. Fishing back down to the car would be easy.

That meant, though, we would be wading right through pools we hoped to fish later. And, as it was late in the summer, the water was thin except for the pools.

I was bent on ignoring the thin water and just getting upstream as far as I wanted to go as fast as I could. I planned to work back down and focus on the pools. Hildebrand, though, couldn't wait. He'd tied on a tube jig, and he began casting it upstream as we waded.

"That water is too thin to hold bass," I kept telling myself. But Hildebrand kept fooling me. He was catching fish. Naturally, they were small. They were little seven-, eight- and nine-inch things, but he was catching them.

Then we came to a spot where the water deepened. It was loaded with structure, too. It looked as if a group of giant loggers had played jackstraws with full-grown trees. Logs lay in jumbled masses. Were they remains from Michigan's lumbering days? Maybe. The river seems too small to have ever hosted log floats, but I couldn't think of any other explanation. The spot was loaded with bass, too.

That was where I wanted to begin my fishing. I maneuvered into position some fifty feet or so away from Hildebrand. We stood at that pool for the better part of the evening and reeled in fish after fish. Some of them were good fish, too, 14- and 16-inch fish with a couple of even larger ones thrown in. That's Michigan smallmouth bass fishing. At least it was on that evening at that river in that pool. When it's good, it's phenomenal

Often when we think of smallmouth bass fishing, we think of big waters. Those are the ones that seem to get the most publicity – Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay, the Detroit River and others. And anglers fish other major and well-known bass rivers — the Manistee and the Escanaba and the St. Joseph and the Muskegon, the lower Au Sable rivers and others. Because those rivers are deep and wading can be iffy, anglers hire guides or use their own boats and go on float trips that may take more time than an evening. And they miss fishing a lot of easily-waded water while they're at it — water they can fish after they get off work in the afternoon and still make it home in time for a late dinner — because the only way to get access to it is either by boat or by getting permission to access private land. But small rivers are found all across the state. I bet I've fished a dozen of them, and I've never looked very hard for them.

Some of my "small" streams have familiar names.

Former Buckeye Matt Hildebrand with a smallmouth bass he took from a typical, small, Michigan smallmouth bass stream. Smallmouth bass are found in small streams across the state.

Simple tube jigs such as these are excellent smallmouth bass baits. Simply cast them out and let them tumble along a stream's bottom. Anglers should be ready to set their hooks as soon as anything interrupts the jig's drift.

I put several major rivers in my small-stream category because they are small where I fish them. Go far enough upstream on a major river, and a person will find a small stream. Some of them will have mostly trout in their upper reaches. Others, though, have poor trout habitat but offer phenomenal bass fishing right up to their headwaters. And many major Michigan rivers have smaller tributaries with good bass fishing. The Little Muskegon River is just one example; I've spent several memorable afternoons fishing it.

Some of the Wolverine state's bass waters have been publicized by famous fishing writers. Ernest Schwiebert wrote a fascinating account of his early experience with the Huron River, for example. He was just a tot, then. He had a small carving of a steamship his parents had crossed the ocean aboard. He accidentally dropped it in the water and watched a fish, probably a smallmouth bass, engulf it. That's just one example of a famous fishing writer paying homage to Michigan's bass waters. A lot of Michigan's great bass water, though, goes unheralded. That's OK. When nobody talks about them, rivers go unfished. It's nice to have water to ourselves.

Even though this article is focused on small waters, some major rivers have all the attributes I'm discussing — easily-waded water chock-full of bass. Once a person learns a river, he can often find an easy-to-wade portion perfect for an evening's fishing.

I have found and fished such waters on both the Kalamazoo and the Grand rivers. On the Kalamazoo, I was fishing with a buddy who is much more comfortable than I am wading in deep water. On the backside of an island, though, I found perfect water for me. It was no deeper on me than the mid-point of my thighs, and it was calm. The bass must have liked it as much as I did. In a 100-yard stretch, using big, ugly streamers, I caught several nice bass.

Anglers have their preferred times to fish. When it comes to small bass rivers, I like to wait until the high waters of spring have dropped to normal levels. Many of the state's rivers fish better in late-summer and fall than they do early in the season. After the water falls a bit, fish often stack up in pools. The rivers are easier to fish, then, and not just because an angler can more easily pinpoint where the fish are. They can get baits closer to the bottom more easily, too, and near the bottom near the structure is where the bass hang out. Also, as everyone knows, bass like structure. Look for fish near log jams and hugging the bottom of deep pools. They seek out hydraulic cushions. They'll lurk around rocks. Where water flows along a bridge abutment is a great spot to find a bass. During the dog days of summer, bass also lie below the confluence of creeks and larger rivers.

Smallmouth bass angling remains good from summer right into the fall months. A friend of mine was once an avid bow hunter. After an arm injury made it difficult for him to draw a bow, he began bass fishing. That is how he now spends his fall months. And bass streams are nearly deserted once salmon begin entering our rivers and hunting seasons open.

What lures should a person use?

Mark Tonello, a Michigan DNR biologist, likes

Rapala husky jerks and crawfish-imitating lures such as tube jigs. I concur. Bronzebacks seem to have a particular affinity for crayfish.

How long into the fall will bass keep hitting? According to Tonello, the bass angling improves as the water cools, and they will keep hitting well until the water sinks down into the 50-degree temperature range somewhere. I believe that.

People love bass, of course, for their savagery. Trout will often sip tiny insects off the surface of a river. Bass, like pike, often attack things. But bass can also be gentle hitters. Anglers should remember that. When an angler is letting the current roll a tube jig along the bottom, for example, he should strike at the slightest hesitation in the drift. The lure was very likely picked up by a bass.

During the summer months, I like to wade wet. I just pull on an old pair of blue jeans and an old pair of tennis shoes and wade right in. That's the thing about small streams. Fishing them seems like a fun, relaxing thing to do. There's no need to make a big deal about fishing them. We don't need a boat or any fancy gear. A lightweight rod is nice because one makes detecting strikes easier. Given a rod, a handful of lures and an old pair of tennis shoes, though, everything else is superfluous. Michigan has lots of great activities to enjoy, but I can't think of anything more fun than going out to a small stream and cleaning up on small-mouth bass.

Right: This bronzeback hit a tube bait fished in an easily waded small, Michigan stream. Good streams are numerous in Michigan. When the water requires boats, anglers can still catch bass as Erin Hildebrand proved. Still, we can find lots of bass in small, easily waded waters.

A Cooperative Decade:

Southern Mecosta Whitetail Management Association

By Morgan Jennings
MUCC Wildlife Cooperative Coordinator

The Michigan Wildlife Cooperatives Program was started in 2015. Since its establishment in Michigan, over 130 co-ops have been created, totaling 352,000 acres of private land. This property includes all land being managed under a wildlife co-op's guidelines, which can vary between each group. These guidelines are set according to the best management practices for the wildlife and habitat in the area and usually with the help of conservation professionals and organization leaders — especially those that financially support the program. These supporters include Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Pheasants Forever (PF) and the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA).

Co-op guidelines are not meant to be regulatory in nature but instead help members reach their management goals most efficiently while simultaneously enhancing wildlife habitat. As a state that is 72 percent privately owned, the proper management of wildlife on that land is critically important to a species overall health at a statewide level. Co-op goals can include improving neighbor relations, identifying and implementing habitat improvement projects, improving buck-age structure, increasing the number of pheasants on the landscape, completing habitat and population surveys to get a better understanding of the landscape and harvesting an adequate number of does.

Oftentimes, co-ops will participate in activities that accomplish more than one of these goals at one time. This article features the Southern Mecosta Whitetail Management Association (SMWMA) for their long-term efforts to improve whitetail deer health and hunting in their area. SMWMA was chosen for this feature after participating in and winning a doe harvest contest that was held in the CWD core counties that were part of an antler point restriction (APR) field study. The contest was initiated by the program to encourage doe harvest. Adequate doe harvest is a critical component to having a balanced deer herd and can be important in disease management areas where deer density can affect transmission rates. Entry required proof that the doe was turned in for CWD testing. The core counties for the 2019-2020 deer season included in this study were Mecosta, Montcalm and Ionia.

Harold Wolf, leader of SMWMA, and his father planted the co-op seed in 1998. They held a meeting at their cabin, invited the four bordering neighbors and

shared a bowl of venison chili. Their intent was to open the discussion to starting a co-op, but it didn't take off.

"My father passed away in 2000. Starting a co-op was something important to both of us, so in the spring of 2009, I put together another meeting," Wolf said. "This time, I invited everyone within a 2-mile radius, and we had about 20 in attendance. SMWMA was born."

Over a decade later, Wolf says that it really is unbelievable how the co-op has changed every aspect of hunting. "Before our co-op, we didn't even communicate with our neighbors. Now, I couldn't even count the friends I've made."

"In the last 11 years, we have averaged eight doe a year and two bucks a year. We haven't harvested a 1.5-year-old buck in that 11 years. As far as management goes, being cognizant of our deer herd and our responsibility to manage and maintain it really makes hunting a year-round process," Wolf said

As of January 2020, SMWMA totals 15,000 acres between their 100 members and 75 landowners involved.

SMWMA excels at bringing people together — which is, by definition, what a co-op is all about, and it has certainly contributed to their success. Members engage at multiple annual events, including a coyote hunt, a turkey photo contest, a co-op banquet, a 3D target shoot, a September youth buck pole and a November buck pole. On a professional level, the group has completed browse surveys with the co-op coordinator, hosted a pollinator workshop, attends the annual Deer Rendezvous event and works closely with DNR biologist, Pete Kailing.

The co-op is also involved at a community level paying for the National Archery in School Program (NASP) in local schools and purchasing trail cameras for their county's DNR Conservation Officers.

Wolf was an active participant in the doe harvest contest, along with other co-op members, saying that he thought "it was a fun way to incentivize their group to meet the MDNR benchmark in order to keep APRs in the county."

"Co-ops are a microcosm in the state — we have hunters that will disagree on issues like baiting and CWD management. It all comes down to respect. We, as hunters, have to respect each other," Wolf said.

Wolf also explained that staying positive as a leader, especially in the face of disease, is important. "CWD is awful, but I believe we have the knowledge to deal with it as long as we work together. I believe in a scientific approach. I don't really care what is best for me or you as a deer hunter: I want what's best for the Michigan whitetail deer herd."

SMWMA is certainly making a positive impact on conservation after completing 2,000 acres worth of habitat improvement projects, including food plots, timber stand improvement, grassland plantings and providing edge cover. They have also collectively mentored more than 100 youth hunters, 50 adult hunters and donated 500 pounds of wild game throughout their 11 years of existence.

The power of cooperatives comes from a willingness to embrace your strengths, weaknesses and your neighbors and challenge each other to become better land stewards by utilizing the resources around you.

On a final note from the SMWMA founder, "I would like to start a 'congratulations movement.' I am a proud QDMA member, and as a co-op leader, I support quality deer management as a tool, but just like anything else, there are unintended consequences. I believe deer shaming is the number one threat to our hunting future and hunter numbers. In order to recruit and retain hunters, we have to stop this. If we take the fun and joy out of the hunt, we all lose. I believe when we encounter a hunter with a legally and ethically harvested deer, one word should come out of our mouths — congratulations. Respecting each other through all our differences is the only way we will grow this incredible past time we all love."

Co-ops have proven to be a lifeline in connecting hunters of different ages, backgrounds and even interests while providing a secure platform for individuals to express themselves and learn new methods of wildlife management. The SMWMA is a perfect example of the Wildlife Cooperatives Program at work and positively impacting wildlife and hunting in Michigan. Thank you for your efforts!

Harry Whiteley:
Adventurer and Advocate

By Rick Fowler

Michigan has cleaner water, more fish, better parks, more game for hunters and a more conducive environment due in large part to Harry Whiteley's unselfish devotion to these vital elements and our quality of life. Whiteley's drive to better Michigan's outdoors coincided with his 25 years of service on the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), including six terms as Chairman, which is more than any other person in the 97-year history of the commission. With those 25 years on Michigan's top conservation body, Whiteley carried on a family legacy. Indeed, his Uncle Harry had served 21 years on the same commission and is the "father" of Warren Dunes State Park. Also, his Grandfather Paul Hoeft donated 300 acres of land on Lake Huron, which is now a state park, too.

Whiteley once wrote, "The happiest people are those who are more concerned about other people than about themselves." With the DNA of public service instilled in his pedigree, it is no surprise he led the way for so many positive events in Michigan's recreational pursuits. The late Grand Rapids Press newsman Ray Voss stated, "Harry Whiteley is the real balance between the preservationists and the exploiters. He reduced complicated problems to basics." Harry will tell anyone that, "My stint on the conservation commission was indeed an adventurous and educational part of my life. I made wonderful friends and learned a great deal about our state." This says nothing of the regulations, improvements and legislation introduced to make

Michigan's outdoors desirable for all. We have these magical places to visit, to hike, to hunt and to fish due in large part to Whiteley's leadership during his commission tenure.

Harry was an accomplished journalist, of course, with hundreds of articles appearing in a variety of magazines and papers. In fact, his family owned the newspaper in Rogers City for decades. Yet, Harry was also a salesman, a politician, a devoted friend, a caring family man and son in addition to being an advocate of outdoor recreation and protecting Michigan's natural resources. These traits would eventually take him on a myriad of adventures in his lifetime. Today, he can reflect back on serving five Michigan Governors: John Swainson, George Romney, William Milliken, Jim Blanchard and John Engler. He was invited to hear the address that General Douglas MacArthur gave at the Press Association in East Lansing, attended Dwight Eisenhower's press conference in Detroit and showed his support for President Nixon at a convention in Chicago. In 1962 while a board member of the Michigan Press Association, he was invited to a White House luncheon hosted by President Kennedy. Harry did indeed embark on many memorable adventures.

Yes, he has met a lot of people, made a lot of friends, traveled extensively and has served his state and its populace admirably, but one of the highlights of his career was being appointed to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission by President H.W. Bush. "It was a surprise when the FBI checked me out. I guess that's routine." He also explained "how wonderful it was to be given a Lifetime Achievement awards from both the city and Chamber of Commerce. Plus to have the Natural Resources Commission name one of the state buildings after me (the Harry Whiteley Educational Building) at the RAM Center in Higgins Lake in 2013 was a pretty humbling experience for which I will always be grateful." That says a lot considering the plaques, photos, newspapers and various other memorabilia that adorn his walls and on the desktops of his current home office.

Another significant event in Whiteley's long life was being a member of the Michigan Outdoor Writer's Association (MOWA). "I was so proud to be president. I made so many wonderful friends with this organization. The people I hunted and fished with for so many years were these outdoor writers. This organization made possible many long-lasting friendships and perhaps some accomplishments, and of course, some fun times."
Harry has been a MOWAN since 1969 and is a deserving lifetime member of this outdoor association.

Whiteley retired from the newspaper business in 1984 and the Michigan Conservation Commission in 1985. Yet, he wasn't going to retire and do house chores. "Instead, I rented a small office, had a phone, my typewriter and the morning newspaper delivered and a plush chair. I was very content, kept involved in community affairs and never looked back."

In his book, "My Memories 1919-2014 A Lifetime of Adventure," Whiteley explains that he has observed so many things in his century of life. However, two are very important to him: "It saddens me to see the breakdown of our culture, which has been the root of many troubles for the younger generation. Secondly, I am irritated the way commentators and news reporters have become politicians swaying the populace to their way of thinking instead of reporting the news." Harry, in fact, did reach the century mark late last fall, yet his memories and reflection remain abundant to this vibrant writer, statesman, politician and caretaker of Michigan's outdoors and adventurer. "I feel all my experiences were made possible by being in the right place at the right time. I had more great experiences then anyone could imagine." Six years ago, when he completed his book, he offered this statement, "It's been a long journey and a great ride, but it's not over."

It is abundantly clear to me that I am far luckier than Harry Whiteley after our conversation. I had been able to accompany him on these adventures through our interview, our many visits and viewing his archives. Harry still writes a monthly column. Many months ago, he published one titled "A Fighter to the End." It was a tribute to a very good friend who had recently passed. Ever the constant, he is still concerned more about other people than himself.

As another generation, we need to realize that thousands of these libraries are closing daily. We need to tap into them. Harry Whiteley is a proud man who needs few accolades. Indeed, men like him are ordinary people, but yet the foundation of the American way of life. Our job is to listen to their stories, learn from their experiences and know what they are teaching us needs to be passed on to another generation of hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts before it's too late.

Q&A With MWC Chair Matt Pedigo

Members of the Michigan Wildlife Council attend the unveiling of an exhibit at the Michigan History Center in Lansing. The exhibit highlights a number of important wildlife conservation success stories, such as the Kirtland's warbler and elk. From left to right: Kristin Phillips, Matt Pedigo, Hank Stancato, Beth Gruden, Nick Buggia and Carol Rose. Not pictured: Jeff Poet and Ed Roy.

Ask your neighbor about the importance of hunting and fishing in Michigan and you'll likely get a more positive reaction than you would have received five years ago.

That's thanks, in large part, to the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC). Over the last five years, the council created a first-of-its-kind public education campaign in Michigan and is steadily building the case that scientifically based conservation and wildlife management practices – including regulated hunting and fishing – are essential to preserving Michigan's cherished outdoor resources.

The MWC shares its message across the state through unique billboards, TV and radio spots, social media posts and newspaper stories that explain the many ways Michigan's quality of life is inextricably tied to our world-class wildlife management and conservation efforts.

MWC Chair Matt Pedigo discusses the council's ongoing work and how it's helping change hearts and minds across the state:

Tell us about the Michigan Wildlife Council

The Michigan Legislature created the council in 2013 with overwhelming bipartisan support from lawmakers. We were entrusted with educating the public about the importance of wildlife management and conservation and — the key role that sportsmen and sportswomen play in preserving Michigan's great outdoor heritage for future generations.

Our board is made up of volunteers from all walks of life who love the state of Michigan and the outdoors. The public education campaign itself is funded through $1 from every hunting and fishing license. Our message has reached every corner of Michigan, but especially in Southeast and West Michigan.

What are you trying to accomplish?

Let's face it: Not everyone in Michigan gets hunting and fishing. Maybe they never had the chance to wade into a trout stream. Or walk through a field with a retriever at their side. And that's OK.

But it's also why the Michigan Wildlife Council's work is so important: Because the more the public understands the vital role hunting, fishing and wildlife management play in protecting Michigan's water and woods, the more likely they are to accept those activities. And acceptance is key to growing overall appreciation for our wildlife and natural resources – ensuring

Michigan's outdoor heritage will remain for generations to come.

Our mission is not to recruit new sportsmen and sportswomen. Our focus is helping non-hunters and -anglers understand the importance of what hunters and anglers love doing.

We've also worked really hard to explain to people that it's the sale of hunting and fishing licenses that pays for the vast majority of conservation work in our state. That money does not come from state taxes, which even many sportsmen don't realize.

And the council routinely points to Michigan United Conservation Clubs' research showing that hunting and fishing activity generates more than $11.2 billion annually for the state's economy.

Is it working?

We're moving the needle, for sure. Since the campaign launch in 2016, we're seeing a great recognition of the positive impact hunting and fishing have on Michigan.

New research we commissioned shows growing appreciation among the general public for the conservation and economic benefits sportsmen and women generate for the state. The survey also showed that 73% of state residents correctly identify hunting and fishing licenses as the largest sources of funding for wildlife management work in Michigan.

About three-quarters of people also said they believe that the hunting and fishing industry contributes significantly to Michigan's economic well-being.

Other key survey findings include the fact that approval of hunting and fishing remains high across all geographic and demographic groups, with 86% of Michiganders approving of recreational fishing and 83% approving of legal, regulated hunting.

That's pretty amazing.

What's next for the Michigan Wildlife Council?

We're excited by the numbers we see and how hunting and fishing are widely accepted as part of Michigan's heritage and culture. But there's still a lack of understanding about:

1) The connection between hunting and fishing and the management, conservation and protection of the state's natural resources

2) The economic impact of hunting and fishing

3) The role of hunters and anglers as conservationists

I believe the more our target audiences understand these important topics, the more likely they are to appreciate the benefits of hunting and fishing and the role hunters and anglers play in Michigan.

I'm proud to be part of the solution.

Let's Double-dip Summer-run Fish

By Jim Bedford

Michigan has never shown much interest in summer-run anadromous salmon and steelhead. We imported the toolie strain of chinook salmon because it was known as strictly an ocean-sport fish species. These salmon would turn dark in the Pacific and be ready to spawn when they arrived in the tributary rivers. There was even talk in Michigan of the state trying to harvest these fish when they started upstream in Michigan.

The DNR stated correctly that these fish don't feed in the tributary rivers. And this belief, sadly, led to the allowing of snagging of these fish. This was a big black mark on our sportfishing ethic.

These fish can't swallow or digest food on their run up the rivers, but they sure can protect their territory by annihilating lures. They also will take in and hold on to the fish eggs that were important to their diet as they grew to smolting size.

Mother Nature came to the rescue for us river rats as over many generations, a summer run of chinook developed. Through natural selection, more and more of these fish ran earlier and earlier. Apparently, the earlier running fish were more successful at reproducing themselves in our northern Lake Michigan tributaries. There will be fishable numbers in July in the Little Manistee and most other northern rivers by the second half of August.

Right now, summer steelhead are only planted in the Manistee River by Michigan DNR. Indiana plants the St. Joseph River and, of course, those steelhead have to travel through Michigan to get to the Hoosier state. The problem is that both rivers are too warm for the steelhead. Cool weather is needed to allow steelhead to run these large rivers. This is especially true for the St. Joe, where the water temperature often spends time in the 80s. The Manistee is cooler, but once the Tippy Dam impoundment warms up, the steelhead are faced with a 24/7 water temperature in the low 70s. There is no overnight cooling to give the fish a break. Michigan DNR has never shown much interest in expanding summer steelhead stocking. They cite inconsistent returns and the concern that they might interbreed with wild Michigan steelhead and dilute their special adaptive qualities. I think the continuing modest run of wild summer steelhead to the Pere Marquette River without affecting the wild winter-run steelhead is evidence that is probably not a big concern.

The author poses with a summer-run steelhead on an orange spinner before releasing it back into the river.

I believe summer water temperatures probably play the most important role relative to inconsistent runs of these fish.

As stated above, both the St. Joseph River and Manistee River, where the entire Michigan stocking goes, are often too warm. Despite several years of attempting to cool the water discharged from the turbines at Tippy Dam by upwelling colder water from the bottom of the impoundment with compressed air, the water temperature often remains in the low 70s around the clock for weeks at a time. Summer steelhead can survive water temperatures in the lower 70s for periods of time, but it is very stressful on them when this goes on for weeks. And, stressed fish don't bite very well.

My suggestion for an initial new river to stock Skamania strain steelhead would be Bear Creek, a tributary that flows into the Big Manistee below Tippy Dam. The advantage here as we look for new places for this fish is that the first step would not be in a new river system. Bear Creek is not an especially cold

stream, but it would be a rare event for it not to cool into the 60s overnight. It already supports strong runs of wild steelhead and chinook salmon. It is also undammed, and that seems to be especially advantageous for summer steelhead. These fish seem to do much better when a dam doesn't force them to stack up. While the spring run of steelhead into Bear Creek is usually consistently strong, the fall run is another story. Adding summer steelhead to its waters would help make the fall steelhead fishing here much more dependable.

Another prime candidate for summer steelhead would be the White River if, and it is a big if, we could finally remove the Hesperia and White Cloud dams. Like the low head Homestead Dam on the Betsie, we could do the same at Hesperia as a barrier to sea lamprey. Cooling the river will also be a real positive for resident trout, especially between the two towns.

The expansion of the stocking of Atlantic salmon in Lake Huron should also add another anadromous fish for the summer river angler. But so far, the new sites for these great river game fish have been harbors or the too warm lower Au Sable River. There is a fall fishery for Atlantics in the Au Sable, but it would great if stream anglers got a crack at these fish when they are silver, fresh-run fish in July and August.

The East Branch of the Au Gres and the Rifle River would seem to be possible stocking sites for Atlantics. While the lower parts of these rivers can be a bit warm during hot weather, the upper parts of both are cooler, and there are many cold tributaries in each. I also strongly believe that we should consider these streams for summer steelhead. They are both free-flowing and under fished in the summer.

Another point to make is that as Lake Michigan follows what happened in Lake Huron and transitions to a new food chain — from a plankton-alewife-salmonid one to a plankton-quagga mussel-goby-salmonid chain, steelhead may become the primary silver target in Lake Michigan since we already know that chinook salmon are very dependent on pelagic bait fish like the alewife and are rapidly trending downward. Summer steelhead have always seemed

Lynda Hayslette admires a summer-run steelhead in her net.

to make up a proportionally larger part of the Lake Michigan catch of steelhead. If this is true, and I think it is, more summer steelhead will help the Big Lake fishery too. Of course, they will also be important to the trollers as they zero in on the spawning tributaries during the summer, not well into the fall like our winter-run steelhead.

Let's take advantage of these anadromous salmonids and increase the chances of catching them in tributaries in the summer. We need to double-dip on these special fish.

Michigan Hydroelectric Relicensing Coalition

By Charlie Booher

Boardman River near Traverse City, MI

Michigan anglers are on the water again this summer, but our lakes and rivers are always in need of a watchdog. Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) is on the front lines, defending the robust fisheries resources of the state of Michigan for your enjoyment in a variety of ways—through the Natural Resources Commission, the Michigan legislature, in Congress, and through unique partnerships. For the last 29 years, some of our work behind the scenes has been through a coalition of MUCC and fishing groups known as the Michigan Hydroelectric Relicensing Coalition (MHRC).

The MHRC is a coalition of four statewide, nonprofit conservation groups who are dedicated to responsibly managing the waters of the state. The group was formed in 1991 when Consumers Energy sought to renew licenses for its hydroelectric dams on the Au Sable, Manistee and Muskegon Rivers. At the time, Michigan United Conservation Clubs joined forces with Trout Unlimited, the Anglers of the Au Sable and the Great Lakes Council of Fly Fishers International to give a voice to anglers and conservationists. The coalition allied itself with the resource scientists of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). All of these groups sought a more environmentally-friendly management structure for these hydro projects that would be favorable to these rivers' ecosystems — and the fish that rely on them.

Hydropower dams were once lauded as a source of renewable energy and are found on many of our nation's rivers; however, they are not without impact. While hydropower is considered a renewable form of energy, it also has the potential to alter river flow regimes, block the migration of fish, injure or kill fish entrapped in the turbines, impair downstream water quality through warming and fragment riverine ecosystems. Today, there are more than 50 hydropower projects on Michigan rivers.

With these trade-offs in mind, it is essential that these facilities are regulated in some way. In 1935, this responsibility was delegated to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) by the Federal Power Act. This New Deal-era legislation brought control of these waterways onto the federal stage, where it has stayed ever since. Before this, states determined which companies could build dams and where on an individual basis, creating inconsistencies across watersheds. FERC has since expanded as an independent agency to oversee all interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas and oil with a mission of creating and distributing a reliable supply of energy for consumers.

FERC oversees a process of maintaining balance among the needs of our homes and the economy, as well as the health and vitality of the rivers. While the Federal Power Act allows federal and state agencies to make recommendations to benefit fish and wildlife in the hydropower licensing process, many of the original licenses gave production the highest priority. These practices often harmed the fisheries of Michigan's rivers, especially by changing the fluctuations in streamflow. The practice of "peaking" was often employed, where utility companies would

hold back water during periods of low demand for electricity and release it later to generate electricity during high demand. While this met the needs of consumers, the daily cycle of flooding and de-watering was not good for the fish, as it caused erosion, destroyed stream habitat and created water conditions that were not livable for a lot of aquatic life.

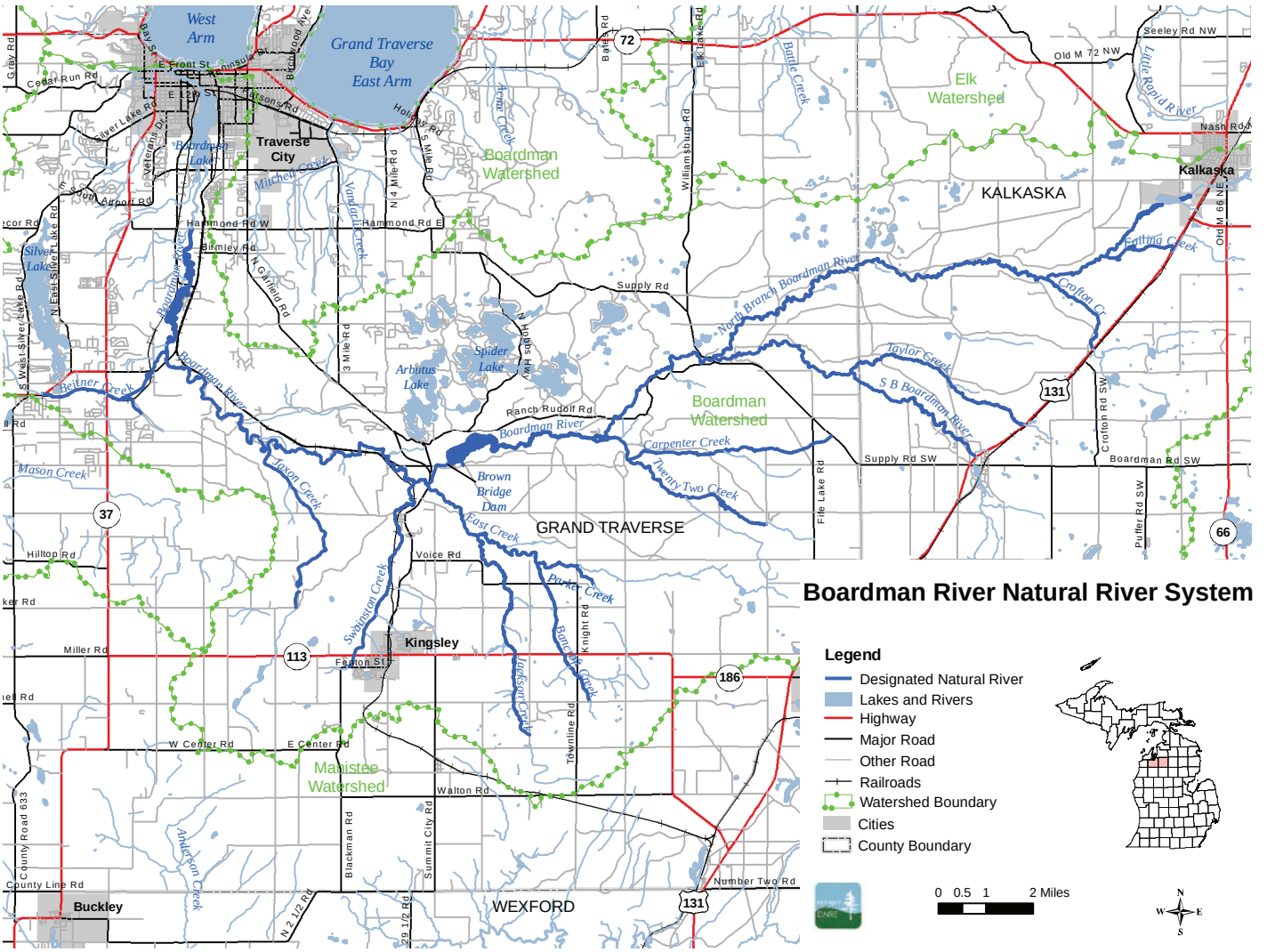
FERC typically grants 30-year licenses to utilities to use public waters for energy generation. Thus, when a utility seeks to renew a hydropower license, it presents an opportunity to balance power generation with restoring healthy rivers and providing quality recreation by including provisions in the license for the protection of water quality, fish passage and protection of federal lands. MUCC and our partners in the MHRC come to the table to advocate for this balance and for the maintenance of robust fisheries in Michigan rivers.

The MHRC participates as a formal "intervenor" in the process of licensing of hydroelectric dams in Michigan. Being an intervenor gives the MHRC legal standing in the FERC licensing process, as the outcome may affect the interests of the public who use and enjoy our rivers.

MHRC has been involved in the relicensing of 86 hydroelectric projects affecting 26 rivers, including Consumers Energy hydroelectric projects on the Au Sable, Manistee, and Muskegon Rivers, Eagle Creek Renewable Energy projects on the Thunder Bay River, Upper Peninsula Power Company's Bond Falls projects on the Ontonagon River and WE Energies' Menominee River basin projects. The MHRC has also been a critical player in the license surrender, decommissioning and subsequent removal of three dams on the Boardman River.

In 1991, in the first case with MHRC at the table, the coalition joined state and federal agencies to advocate for a number of fisheries and angler priorities at Consumers Energy's 11 hydropower projects on the Au Sable, Manistee and Muskegon Rivers. This partnership led to the negotiation of a landmark settlement agreement with Consumers. Through this settlement, FERC issued new license terms that adopted:
run-of-river operations,
water quality improvements to offset downstream warming,
erosion control to address former peaking impacts,
mitigation for turbine fish mortality,
recreation facility improvements,
protection of riparian lands for the benefit of sensitive species and heritage resources, and
the removal of Stronach Dam, a defunct hydro project on the Pine River tributary to the Manistee River.

This landmark settlement also laid the foundation for ensuing hydropower relicensing settlements on other Michigan river systems.



Since 1991, the coalition has participated in every settlement reached in Michigan over the last 29 years, and we will be involved in every one in the future. These settlements are advantageous to all parties as they provide a measure of certainty, especially for the utility that owns a hydro project. Like any business, utility companies want as much certainty as possible, and this process helps to provide an agreement between all of the parties involved.

In addition to these negotiations, the coalition is also a member of the implementation teams for the hydro relicensing settlement agreements, joining the state and federal agencies, Tribes and project owners. While settlement agreements secure the commitments to protect and restore rivers, implementation teams facilitate restoration and conservation work on the rivers. Implementation teams ensure that hydropower project compliance requirements are adhered to, oversee the distribution of mitigation funds for needed restoration work and resolve issues that invariably arise over time regarding the operating licenses.

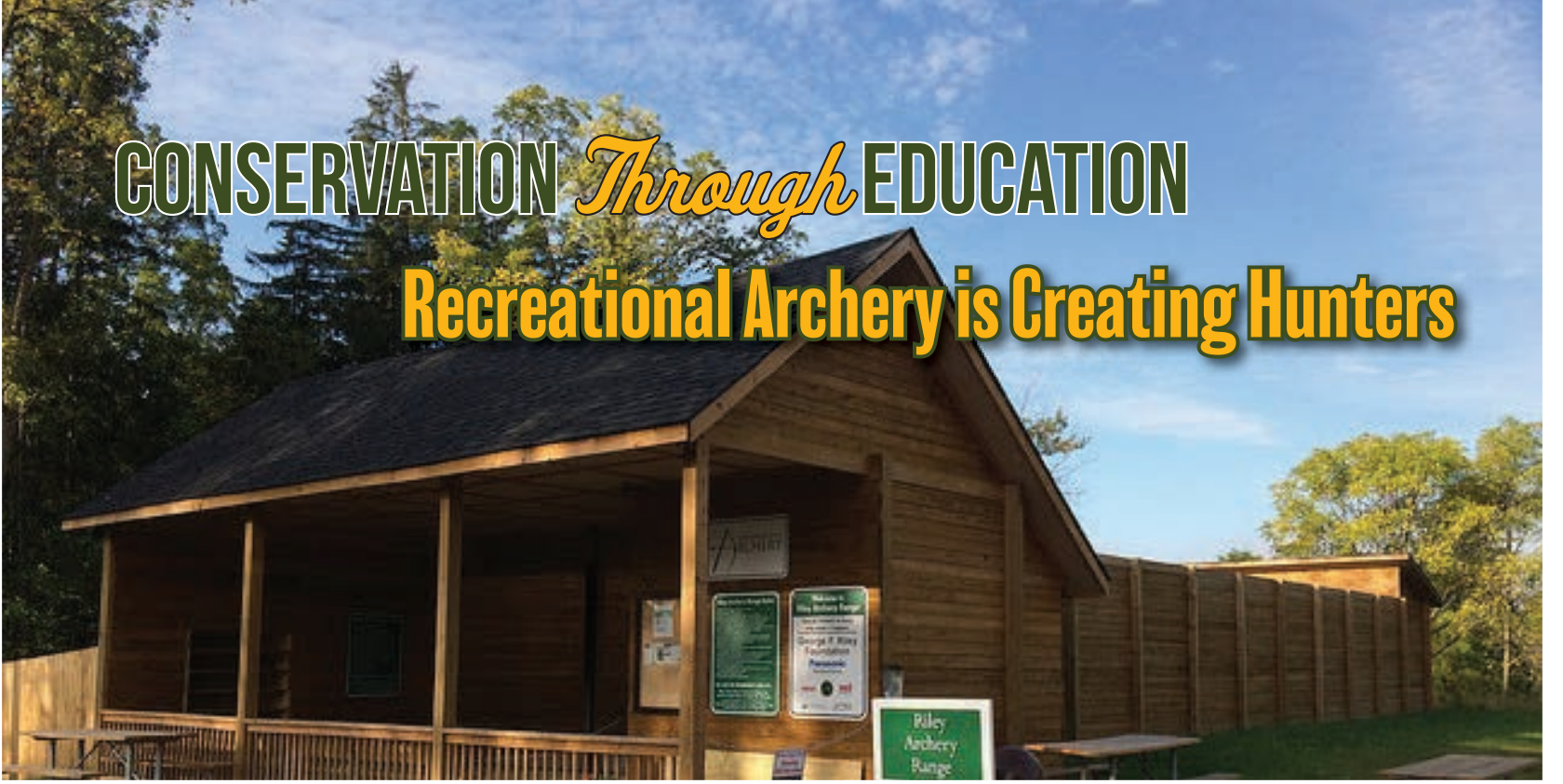
The MHRC also encourages the removal of dams that are not consistent with good stewardship of a river system. MHRC was a key player in the Boardman River restoration and worked with the project owners, state and federal agencies, and Tribes to remove three hydro dams that were no longer economically feasible to operate. Through this settlement, approximately five miles of the Boardman River were restored to a free-flowing state. This has opened up numerous opportunities for recreation along the river and better supports the ecosystems that rely on its flow — from the tributaries near Kalkaska to the mouth in Grand Traverse Bay. This 28-mile river is a living testament to the ability of the coalition to work for the betterment of fish and anglers in Michigan.

The MHRC remains a strong coalition of grassroots organizations giving voice to everyday citizens with interest in Michigan's rivers, and MUCC provides leadership and fiduciary support. Through the coalition's Executive Director Bob Stuber and members, MHRC has raised the public's awareness of river issues and supports the state and federal resource agencies and Tribes entrusted with the stewardship of our rivers. In addition to these regular members, the C.S. Mott

Hardy Dam Impounds the Muskegon River

Foundation generously supports the work of the coalition and is a proud partner of MUCC to ensure the long-term conservation of freshwater ecosystems by strengthening the conservation community and informing the development of water policy. The MHRC is a well-established, professional member in the hydropower relicensing process and has built strong relationships with members of the industry, state and federal agencies, and Native American Tribes over the past 29 years. Foremost, it remains a passionate advocate for addressing conservation, environmental, and recreation concerns at hydropower projects on Michigan rivers. This work continues to protect our passion for angling and for the fish that we so enjoy. So, as you float down a river in a canoe this summer or troll for trout or salmon on one of the Great Lakes, remember the important work that MUCC does to maintain and conserve those experiences.

Below: The South Union Street Bridge over the Boardman River.



CONSERVATION *Through* EDUCATION

Recreational Archery is Creating Hunters

By Shaun McKeon
MUCC Education Director

The previous two columns I have written have talked about the importance of recruiting, retaining and reactivating new people into the hunting community. They have highlighted programs with a more traditional approach through the model: recruiting youth and people who may have already found their way into hunting and fishing on their own. For this article, I am going to focus on the recruitment side from a less-traditional gateway — your local Parks and Recreation Department.

The city of Farmington Hills and its Parks and Recreation department has been welcoming and encouraging people to become part of the hunting community through their archery program for the better part of a decade. This archery program began when a few staff signed up to become USA Archery trained instructors in 2011 to run local programs. Throughout several years, the program morphed into a regional leader in spreading community archery throughout the state.

Brian Farmer is the Deputy Director for Parks and Recreation for the City of Farmington Hills, and he is one of the original archery instructors. The success of their program has grown over the years, and it is due primarily to the vision he and his coworkers have shared. From 2011 to 2013, the recreation department offered basic archery instruction and camps anywhere they could. Classes took place in schools, gyms and sports fields. The department knew to grow it the program would need a permanent home.

In 2015, through a community park millage and several sponsorships, including that of the George F. Riley Foundation and SCI-Novi (who also sponsors 80 youth to the Michigan Out-of-Doors Summer Camp), Farmington Hills built a state-of-the-art permanent archery range to give its archery program a home. With a range established and programs that continued to grow, Brian began to think about how he could branch out and help introduce more people to archery. In his mind, "Parks and Rec are one of the best recruitment opportunities to reach more people directly in communities, as that is where people look for the activities of interest in most communities."

Municipal recreation departments serve as a gateway for trying new activities. Residents are familiar with their programs and may even know many of the staff from participating in previous programs. The barrier to entry for a seven-week program is low, and it allows class participants to learn techniques, build skills and try equipment before deciding to continue by purchasing their equipment. Based on survey data collected, Brian began to see a trend in people trying recreational archery and wanting to continue to learn. They introduced archery camps, where participants learn about archery, hunting and conservation. They also created a bow-fishing program to continue to add ways to expand people's opportunities.

In 2017, with support for the Archery Trade Association, Easton Foundation and USA archery, an archery focus area began in Michigan through the Michigan Parks and Recreation Association. The trade group and manufacturers provided 10 recreation departments with all of the equipment necessary to run programs. The initial upfront investment was $120,000.

Two years later, those 10 programs have grown to expand into 15 programs. At the end of 2019, these departments provided their program members a survey with a focus on participation, and a snapshot of their results follow:

9,640 people participated in parks and recreation archery programs throughout fifteen communities in Michigan.

6,970 (72%) people had never shot a bow before or had not shot a bow in a long time. 2,670 (28%) people shoot a bow regularly.

4,754 (49%) participants purchased target archery or hunting equipment in the last 1-2 years, spending a total of $2,684,726.

7,653 (79%) people are interested in target archery or competitions. 4,298 (49%) participants are interested in hunting. Only 1,465 (15%) of those people currently hunt.

5,210 (54%) people are interested in bow-fishing 522 (5%) people have bow-fished.

4,894 (50%) of the people said that they want more information about hunting and bow-fishing opportunities.

Based on the success in Farmington Hills and the archery focus group, "The ultimate goal is to build archery ranges in local parks, which will lead to more people hunting. Marshall will be building a range like the one in Farmington Hills this year, and we expect that one other community will receive funding to construct a range in 2020. With the support of Lori Burford of Michigan DNR and the funds from PR dollars, the plan is to build two to four more ranges in local parks each year," Farmer said.

Increasing the opportunity for local communities to support their residents through archery bodes well for long-term recruitment goals. As the data from this program shows, community recreation is helping to connect people to hunting. A closing thought from Farmer: "Parks and rec must continue to connect with outdoor/hunting organizations to show that people will become hunters if we give them the opportunity.".

THROWBACK:

This article was originally published in July 2000

Go Deep for Bass

By Jim Barta

I'd wager that the largest portion of most bass angler's fishing efforts is spent target casting to shallow-water structure. There are times, however, when the vast majority of largemouth and smallmouth aren't in the shallows. In fact, much of the time, most large, mature bass can be located along deep points, submerged river channels or holding within deep-water structure.

This is supported by biologists, bass guides and many of Michigan's top bass anglers, including Wes Strickland, who has logged hundreds of hours documenting fish patterns and targeting bass at different stages of the season.

"Working shallow water for bass can be a lot of fun as long as you're able to find them there," said Strickland, an experienced Lake St. Clair guide and member of Wonderland Marine West's Team Stratos. "Shortly after a brief spawning period in the spring, most of the largest bass tend to move off their shallow-water beds and work their way into much deeper water. I believe that boating pressure quickly drives them into areas that give them a better sense of security."

Unfortunately, when bass are deep, most people have a tough time locating and catching them. That doesn't have to be. By pinpointing key structures that attract and hold deep bass, and then presenting lures and baits correctly, anglers can dupe these fish into striking as readily as in shallow water.

Deep weed edges are prime locations for bass waiting in ambush for the schools of bait-fish found skirting these edges throughout the summer. Points and areas where weeds form pockets are especially good bass-holding areas.

Although weedless spoons, spinnerbaits and Texas-rigged plastic worms often are preferred by anglers in these locations, such lures can't provide an angler with the important deep-water information that a jig can. Naturally, jigs with exposed hooks will foul up in weeds, but that is precisely why they are of great value to anglers seeking deep-weed bass. By using these jigs, astute anglers learn to map deep edge contours of vegetation and discover productive bass hangouts. Learning to pinpoint distinct breaks between thick weeds and open water can give anglers a definite advantage over those who simply cast blindly over a location.

With large schools of mature bass often found along these deep edges, anglers will want to present their jig in a manner that allows it to spend the greatest amount of time in the strike zone. Thus, casts made parallel to the edges are the most productive.

When a typical stand-up style jig hangs in the weeds, a sharp snap of the rod tip frequently jerks it free. A 6 ½-7-foot heavy, fast-action rod is best in these circumstances. The stiff action in the rod's tip quickly snaps the jig clear of any weeds that cling to it and hang up. Short, quick jerks should be attempted at first and gradually increased until the jig falls free. Often, this darting of the lure from the weeds will trigger bass into striking. An exposed hook also increases the number of hooked fish per hit when compared with baits such as a weedless, Texas-rigged plastic worm.

In recent years, anglers have had success with tube baits in bass fishing. Tubes are particularly effective on smallmouth. The baits can be jigged, popped, dropped or crawled through weeds, rocks, wood or open water. Few lures are more versatile than tube baits and few are easier to fish. When changing from shallow-water techniques to deep-water tactics, simply going to a heavier lead jig head can be all that's required. One of bass fishing's oldest techniques, the Carolina rig, is normally associated with 6-inch plastic worms or lizards ahead of the standard weight, bead and swivel. Adding a 3-inch tube bait in place of the longer plastic worm and shortening the standard Carolina-rigged leader from 36 inches to only 12 can be incredibly effective for deep-holding smallmouth bass. They are instinctively drawn to the clicking noise of the weight tapping small rocks along the bottom. Upon investigation, the first thing bass see is the trailing tube and what they perceive as an easy meal.

The most effective way to use a jig or tube along a deep weed line is from a boat with its bow positioned a few yards out from the weed edge. Ideally, as the boat drifts perpendicular to the vegetation, two anglers cast jigs parallel to the edge.

To locate the weed edge, cast and retrieve to find where the weeds are thickest, then cast deeper to find where the weeds are sparse. Continue until you locate a defined edge between weeds and open water. This is where most bass can be found and where anglers should concentrate their effort.

Crankbaits are among the most versatile deep-water bass lures. They can be worked slow or fast, deep, or even deeper. They come in an inconceivable variety of sizes, weights, colors and actions. Generally, the larger a crankbait and the bigger and wider its lip,

the deeper the lure will dive during the retrieve. Also, the crankbait's big lip enables the lure to dig, bump and bounce off deep cover such as brush, logs and rocks, which are all typical bass-holding structures.

To get maximum depth from deep divers, long casts are essential. Tests of crankbaits in tanks have shown that deep divers often require one-third the length of a cast to reach maximum depth when retrieved at medium speed.

In recent years, lure manufacturers have started producing crankbaits with lips that make them dive at steep angles. This allows them to reach their maximum depth quickly. These lures are especially important when it's necessary to maintain bottom contact while working certain deep structures such as submerged humps, long points, underwater roadbeds or rocks.

Such lures as the Luhr Jensen Brush Baby, Storm's Lightnin' Shad and Normark's Down Deep Rattlin' Fat Rap are superb tools for probing deep-water structure. The key to success with these lures is to crank them fast until you feel them bump cover. Stop the retrieve, and the lure will rise and back away from the structure. Wind the reel, and the lure again surges forward until it bums cover. Repeat this reel-and-pause technique until you have worked the lure away from the cover. Be particularly alert for strikes as the lure backs away from the structure it has just struck.

Walleye anglers have effectively used metal spoons and blade baits for years. Bass anglers, however, often have overlooked these baits. Spoon and blade baits can be especially deadly on bass suspended along deep river channels or manmade structures such as channel markers or breakwalls. Because they usually have treble hooks, these lures are poor choices as bottom-probing tools. They will easily hang up in deep cover and are difficult to retrieve.

Fish spoons and blades on a 6- to 7-foot medium- to heavy-action baitcasting rod with a reel spooled with 10- to 14-pound test line. Use a ½- to ¼ -ounce lure under most conditions and attach the lure to your line with a split ring or snap. To work these fast-sinking lures for suspended bass, position your boat directly over your target area, noting on your electronics the depth at which the bass are suspending. These lures are best when worked at or just above the fish zone. Holding the rod tip at 8 o'clock, sharply snap the tip up to 11 o'clock. This will pop the spoon or blade upward. As the lure falls, lower the rod tip back to 8 o'clock. The most critical moment is when the spoon is falling. Try to keep the line as taut as possible while still allowing the spoon to fall freely. Most strikes will come on the drop. It's important to maintain contact with the blade as it falls to detect a strike.

Proper spoon/blade jigging is a matter of timing. Lowering the tip too quickly causes you to lose contact with the spoon and miss trikes. Lowering it too slowly diminishes its desired fluttering action. Try to visualize the lure falling as you lower your rod. This often improves your ability to detect strikes.

Whether working the tournament circuit for that paycheck and trophy or simply looking for an exciting day of pleasure fishing, your time on the water will be better spent when it's used in areas holding the majority of fish. Deep-water fishing may seem difficult, especially when you can't see the structure you're casting to. But the fish are there – and in abundance. Next time you're on the water, head for the deep water and try one of these tried and proven tactics.

One Last Cast

By Nick Green, *Editor*

For me, hunting and fishing started at a young age. But, I didn't really have that "ah-ha" moment, the catalyst for my career, until my early 20s.

At the time, I was a 23-year-old Christmas tree trimmer with not much too worry about except where I would find my next libation or scrape up a few dollars for gas in my truck.

My employers, Wade (the dad) and Blake (the son) Sherburne, were avid fly anglers. I remember watching them come into work at 7 a.m. on late-June mornings looking like a truck had hit them. They weren't galavanting the countryside the night before like me, though — they were chasing brown trout eating hex flies through the dark of night.

Eventually, I somehow made my way into their boat one of those June nights. Blake had taken me on a few trips before looking for dry-fly eaters on a small, local stream where I cut my fly fishing teeth. But, that night — oh, that night — something inside me ignited.

I didn't sleep that night or the night after that; or, the six nights after that, in fact. I had found a purpose — chasing brown trout with a fly rod and reel. It was a purpose that eventually led me to bow hunting, bird dogs, a love for conservation and this job. I owe a significant portion of what I have become to the Sherburnes.

Wade and Blake have taught me more than they ever will realize. They taught me not only to cast a fly line, but how to have humility in the face of disaster. They taught me to appreciate the stepdad I had come to blows with and to understand that his hard work and tough love was the only way he knew how to be the best dad anyone could ask for.

The Sherburnes reaffirmed self-worth in me and helped me to realize that what I was offering the world was petty compared to what I was capable of.

Now, I hug these gents when I see them. Blake's big claw pats me on the back and knocks the air out of me. Wade's gentle smirk reminds me of stories and years past where he, too, ran a little faster than his boots could handle.

Blake was the best man in my wedding. Him and his dad stood next to me before I became a conservationist, editor of this magazine or fly angler. And they still aren't afraid to kick me in the butt when it's needed, and I appreciate that.

I saved the pickled heart recipe from earlier in the magazine for this page because it is special. Not only is it simply fantastic, it is Blake's recipe. It represents the few days a year I get to head north, leave the policking and grind of Lansing behind and remember how I ended up where I am.

The recipe represents nights around the fire in the Pinery and evenings huddled in Blake's garage watching fly fishing films while we dream of days we might get to travel to Argentina, Belize or New Zealand.

Soon enough, Blake and Wade, we will enjoy some pickled venison while a big brown slurps next to the boat and Wade looks over with that smirk saying, "just be patient, nicky."

Tight Lines,,

•1 venison heart
• 1 head of garlic
• 2 small onions
• 2 quarts of apple cider vinegar
• 2 tablespoons of salt
• 1 tablespoon of pickling spices
• 1 head of garlic,
• finely diced hot pepper flakes to taste
• 1/2 cup of water

Put the heart in a pot with seasoned salt and turn the heat on, bringing it up to a boil until the foamy-blood rises to the top of the pot. Then I turn it off and let it sit for a few minutes. The (original) recipe says to boil all ingredients together. I don't think this is right because you want the onions to be crispy when they come out of the pickling. Arguably, they're the best part. Once done boiling, take the heart and rinse it under cold water. When cool, slice the heart in quarter inch slices. Put the sliced heart in an jar and cover with the pickling fluid. Let it sit in the fridge for a week. I also add uncooked jalapenos and they are fantastic, too. Makes great game day finger food with crackers and cheese.

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.

OUR MISSION

Uniting citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage.

OUR FUTURE

MUCC protects our natural resources while educating the next generation of conservation stewards.

WHY SHOULD I JOIN MUCC?

- Receive one year of MUCC's official publication, Michigan Out-of-Doors.
- Support MUCC's education programs.
- Support efforts to conserve Michigan's natural resources.
- Support efforts to pass policy based on sound science.

☐ Yes! I'd like to become a member of MUCC!

Mail this to:
2101 Wood St., Lansing, MI 48912

Date _____

☐ New Member

☐ Renewal _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

Email _____

Membership Categories

All members will receive a subscription to Michigan Out-of-Doors magazine.

☐ 1 Year _____ $35

☐ 2 Years _____ $60

☐ Life Membership (per person) _____ $1,000

Method of Payment

☐ Check enclosed (payable to MUCC)

☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ Discover

_____

Card No.

_____

CVC Exp. Date

_____

Signature

Please call 1.800.777.6720
or visit www.mucc.org to sign up online

vudu™

3.5-18x50 SFP

PRECISION RIFLE SCOPE

EOTECH®

EOTECHINC.COM