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Fall 2020

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*The Last  
Day of Summer*

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**VOLUME 74, ISSUE 3**

*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.*



**"Oh, I just love Laker Day!"**

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# BASECAMP

Nick Green, Editor

## WELCOME TO MICHIGAN OUT-OF-DOORS

MICHIGAN'S PREMIUM OUTDOOR JOURNAL

Fall is my church — my reprieve from summer's heat and the fast-paced life long days afford.

There's something about the gold leaves of a popple as they drop on top of the rotting ferns and the way a marsh smells as you hear that first whistle of duck wings overhead in the morning.

The peep of a woodcock as it lifts upwards or the thunder of a grouse busting from beneath my dogs' noses — these are things only my church pew can provide me.

For you, maybe it's the crisp autumn leaves crunching under a deer's hooves as it makes its way under your stand?

With fall, though, comes change — and things that need changing.

The events of 2020 thus far have been less than desirable; I think we can all agree. For some, their whole lives have been uprooted and tossed out. For others, ignorant bliss has been the calling.

As responsible outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen, we have to be the change that perseveres. 2020 has once again shown us a disparity in the way certain demographics live and are treated.

We need to champion an outdoors that is as diverse as the population that makes up Michigan. We need women, minorities and children to be next to us as we look to the next 100 years of conservation.

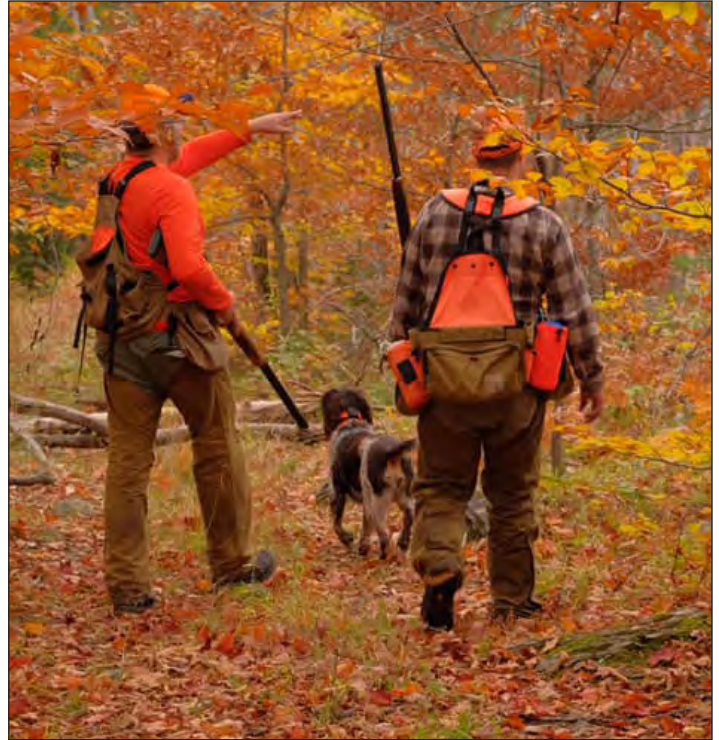
You and I can't carry the torch much longer. With waning numbers, our way of life is fading. Until we can comfortably and creatively extend a hand to those who haven't traditionally been hunters and anglers, we won't have a plan for 21st-century conservation.

We won't have a way to fund the habitat management we enjoy, and we won't win ballot measures that impact each and every one of us during our outdoor pursuits. We need diversity.

Throughout the past few months, I have been asked multiple times why MUCC did not weigh in on the racial injustice of today's world. We thought about it, and we talked about it.

But in the end, we listened. We absorbed what was happening around us and decided to try and think proactively about wildlife management and conservation stewardship among a diversified demographic.

Although we didn't solve the world's problems, one resounding fact came to light: We need more



**MUCC Executive Board member Ed Moore, left, and Editor Nick Green head out in search of grouse and woodcock in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.** Photo: Abraham Downer

people who don't look like us in the outdoors if our way of life is to survive.

With the new season, please take a look within yourself and decide if you can help us champion hunting and angling to new demographics. Decide what aspects of your outdoor life are important to you and how you can help us pass them on to the next iteration of conservation stewards.

This fall's issue covers the gamut: fall fishing, squirrel hunting, artifact hunting and the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund ballot proposal.

A beautifully-illustrated photo-essay about a father and his daughter stole this season's cover feature. I hope it evokes some memories in you as the long days become shorter and shorter and fade into reds and golds.

At the voting booth in November, you will be asked to help us modify how the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund money is allocated. Please VOTE YES on this measure — the next generation of conservationists depends on it. MUCC Executive Director Amy Trotter will discuss this issue in-depth in her column.

As this publishes, I am probably sitting in a duck blind chasing early-season teal. And the days of dogs on points aren't far off. Church is calling. See you there.

Yours in Conservation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Nick Green, the editor mentioned in the text.



# 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

*Stanley Anderson*  
from

Gayle Zimmerman, Dennis & Joyce Jones

In memory of

*John Boomer & Mahlon (Lonnie) Wallace*  
from

Harbor Springs Outdoors Club

*Fred Holden*  
from

Marion Cook, Suzanne Emch, Carol Bishop and Ronald & Joyce Pierre

*Pat Klott*  
from

Dan Eichinger

*Michael William Busen*  
from

Richard & JoAnn Payter

If you have recently lost someone you would like to honor here,  
please contact Sue Pride at [spride@mucc.org](mailto: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:**

*Mike Hogan* of Temperance, MI

*Douglas Krizanic* of Birmingham, MI

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

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

**Contact Sue Pride at [spride@mucc.org](mailto:spride@mucc.org) or visit [www.mucc.org/join\\_mucc](http://www.mucc.org/join_mucc) and select "Life Membership."**



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

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**Amy Trotter**, MUCC Executive Director

At the time of my writing, the summer is only half over, but our family has tried to make the most of it. The “silver lining” of the pandemic did allow my family to take advantage of the flexibility of working from home and no in-person school to enjoy the outdoors a little more while the sun was shining. Locally, we have explored Motz Park (Clinton Co.), Park Lake (Bath Township), and Lake Lansing (Ingham Co) swimming beaches and the trails of Harris Nature Center (Meridian Twp), taken a hike or an airboat ride in the Rose Lake and Maple River State Game Areas, and we had a chance to travel within 100 miles to P.J. Hoffmaster and Bay City State Parks, Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area and fish the Grand River and Lake Michigan out of Grand Haven. We haven’t even had time to head north yet (sorry, mom and dad)!

But the summer theme this year may not seem as obvious to most — I was amazed to learn that each and every one of these wonderful outdoor adventures was underwritten by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF)

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund was established under the Kammer Recreational Land Trust Fund Act of 1976 to provide a permanent funding source for the public acquisition of land for resource protection and public outdoor recreation. Funding is provided by revenue derived from royalties on the sale and lease of state-owned oil, gas and mineral rights. This landmark piece of legislation came to fruition thanks to the collaborative efforts of Michigan Oil and Gas Association (MOGA), Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) and state legislators on behalf of all Michigan citizens.

MNRTF has contributed immeasurably to protecting our state’s natural beauty and helped pave the way for wise and prudent development of our state’s energy resources. Since the creation of the MNRTF in 1976, the oil and gas industry has contributed over \$1.1 billion to Michigan’s state & local parks, waterways, trails and nature preserves throughout all 83 counties.

However, that doesn’t mean there isn’t room for improving this landmark piece of legislation enshrined in our Michigan Constitution.

In late 2018, the House and Senate unanimously passed Senate Joint Resolution O and accompanying implementation legislation. These bills change the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) and State Park Endowment Fund (SPEF) to allow for more flexibility in investments and to continue to funnel revenues from state-owned oil, gas and minerals leasing and royalties into the MNRTF into perpetuity. The most meaningful changes are:

**- Removes the MNRTF cap of \$500 million once the SPEF reaches an \$800 million cap**

**- Once the SPEF cap of \$800 million is reached, the funds will flow back to the MNRTF instead of to the state general fund**

**- Changes the allocation of the expenditures each year from 75 land acquisition/25 percent recreational development to a more flexible formula that allows for differences year to year based on high quality applications:**

- **Minimum of 25 percent for “development, renovation and redevelopment of public recreation facilities”;**
- **Minimum of 25 percent for acquisition of “land for recreational uses or protection of the land because of its environmental importance or scenic beauty”;**
- **50 percent flexible for either of the above purposes**

**- Stipulates that “not less than 20% of the money made available for expenditure from the endowment fund from any state fiscal year shall be expended . . . for capital improvements at Michigan state parks”**

The bills in the package were approved by former-Gov. Snyder, but since it involves a change to the Michigan Constitution, it also requires a vote of the people. That vote will be on the ballot in November 2020.

While 2020 may go down in infamy, I hope you will put another “silver lining” on this year and vote YES for the proposal to improve the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. This funding source has immeasurably provided for and increased opportunities for outdoor recreation, and we want to make sure it continues to provide opportunities for years to come.

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.*

**May 31 to June 13, 2020**

## **Shotguns and Birthday Suits**

CO David Miller was dispatched to a breaking and entering in progress complaint at a remote camp in Houghton County.

CO Miller and a Michigan State Police (MSP) trooper arrived and found an individual sitting on the couch completely naked near a loaded shotgun. The individual could only give his first name, and continuously repeated, "I messed up."

It was later discovered that the individual had put his vehicle in the ditch a few days earlier and walked to the camp and had been staying there ever since. He did not know the owners of the camp and had been helping himself to the alcohol stored in the camp.

There was nothing else reported missing.

The subject was lodged in the Houghton County Jail by the MSP on multiple charges, including breaking and entering.

## **Milk is Milk, is Milk, is Milk**

CO Steve Butzin received a complaint of an individual

possessing a spotted fawn in Escanaba.

CO Butzin went to the location and found a fawn wearing a dog collar and chained to a stake in the front yard.

Further investigation found that the individual had the fawn for over a week, and he claimed he was waiting for the mother to return.

CO Butzin asked the individual what he had been feeding it. The individual stated he fed it human breast milk.

The fawn was taken from the individual and turned over to Wildlife Division. The individual received a citation for possessing a live game animal.

## **Stinking up the Neighborhood**

CO Chris Lynch received a complaint of two rotten deer carcasses stinking up a neighborhood.

After CO Lynch gathered evidence and conducted numerous interviews, CO Lynch suspected one of the deer was poached during the 2019 firearm deer season.

CO Lynch developed three suspects and subsequently, COs Steve Butzin and Lynch

interviewed the first suspect.

The first suspect confessed to illegally taking the deer CO Lynch suspected was poached.

The first suspect was with two other people riding around in a truck and shining for deer. The suspect shot the deer after legal shooting hours by illuminating the deer with the headlights of the truck leaning over the hood of the truck and without a license.

The COs later tracked down the truck and rifle used in the poaching.

CO Lynch then interviewed a second suspect who confessed to driving the truck that night, illuminating the deer with the headlights and provided the rifle to the first suspect.

COs Butzin and Lynch interviewed a third suspect that was in the truck. The third suspect was deemed to have just been along for the ride.

A report will be submitted to the Delta County Prosecutor's Office for review for the charges of taking a deer outside of legal shooting hours, taking game with the aid of artificial light, taking a deer without a license, shining with a weapon in possession, taking game from upon a motor vehicle, possessing a loaded/



uncased firearm upon a motor vehicle, and shining during November.

### **Turtle, Turtle, Turtle**

CO Andrea Albert received a complaint from the Antrim County Sheriff's Department of a subject who had several turtles taken from the wild in her possession.

This person was also hoarding domestic animals. CO Albert contacted the suspect at her residence with Antrim County Animal Control officers to address the violations.

CO Albert found five snapping turtles possessed out of season and two painted turtles. The turtles were being kept in extremely unsanitary conditions and in very small containers.

The largest snapping turtle was about two feet in length and was being kept in a plastic tote that it just fit in and therefore was unable to stand, walk, or turn around. The subject claimed she had the turtles for years and never had purchased a fishing license to take or possess turtles.

CO Albert seized all the turtles and issued a ticket for the illegal possession. The turtles were released into appropriate turtle habitats. The Animal Control officers seized several cats, chickens, and one rabbit being kept in unlawful conditions..

### **Lucky**

CO Jon Sklba responded to a complaint of an unoccupied vessel in Bell Bay.

Upon investigating the scene, several personal items, including a fishing license, were located.

CO Sklba, Presque Isle Sheriff's deputies, and MSP troopers responded to the scene and began searching the area for the missing boater. One of the deputies was able to locate the subject at his residence.

The subject fell out of the vessel the night before and walked several miles back to his residence.

The subject was suffering from

hypothermia and had several lacerations from walking over rocks and through thick brush. The subject was turned over to medical staff and transported to the hospital.

### **Don't Drink and Kayak**

CO Brian Brosky, along with members of the MSP and Mason County Sheriff's Office, responded to a wellbeing check and an attempt to locate a kayaker on the Pere Marquette River.

Officers were advised that a kayaker needed to be checked on as he kept flipping over and appeared to be intoxicated to the point that he may be in danger. Officers checked several locations along the river and talked to several persons on the river to find the individual.

The kayaker was eventually located by a Mason County deputy and CO Brosky at an access site four hours downriver from where he was supposed to get out of the river. It turns out that the kayaker was behind the rest of his float party, and when he arrived at the takeout point, the other members had dispersed and the rest were out of sight at the access site, and he continued several more miles downriver before exiting close to sunset.

The kayaker admitted to drinking a few beers and not having a cell phone, which ultimately led to his lengthy trip. He thanked the officers involved for their response and help and for contacting his friends who were still out looking for him.

### **Gambled on the Gambler 500**

Fourteen conservation officers from District 5 conducted a group patrol in Ogemaw and Roscommon Counties for the Gambler 500.

The COs made hundreds of contacts, arrested two drunk drivers, issued 49 citations, responded to one complaint, and gave 93 warnings.

The event organizer was also located and cited for holding an event on state land without a permit.

The law enforcement presence made a tremendous impact on the

criminal behavior at the Gambler 500 and increased the safety of all who attended the event.

### **No Snails, Too Many Fish**

CO Christopher Knights got a call from a county park supervisor in Oakland County. The supervisor stated individuals were out at Addison Oaks County Park and looked to have an over-limit of pan fish as well as a bucket of snails. CO Knights made it to the park and located the family next to the water.

The family did not speak English very well, so CO Knights called over one of the younger children who looked to be a teenager. CO Knights asked if he spoke English, the teen stated yes, and he was able to assist CO Knights by interpreting.

CO Knights dumped two of the five-gallon buckets and counted 112 fish. CO Knights also noticed a five-gallon bucket almost full of Chinese mystery snails. These snails are an invasive species and are not allowed to be possessed. CO Knights worked with the young teen to translate and advise the men they were over-limit of fish by 12 fish. He also explained to them that it was illegal to keep the snails.

The men took a couple minutes and with the assistance from the teen, they understood the laws. CO Knights advised he would be issuing a citation for the over-limit of fish and snails. CO Knights issued one individual two citations who stated he was the one who took the snails and over-limit of fish. After explaining the ticket to all three men and the teen,

CO Knights went over the fishing guide with the teen and showed him the page with the size and limits for future fishing and gave him the guidebook.

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





# MIKE AVERY'S OUTDOOR MAGAZINE ((( RADIO )))

*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.*

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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 of hosting volunteer wildlife habitat improvement events across Michigan. Volunteers participate in a variety of wildlife habitat projects on public land and are provided an opportunity to engage in hands-on conservation while learning about wildlife habitat needs.

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

Due to restrictions in place as a result of COVID-19, the OTG program does not currently have any upcoming wildlife habitat improvement events scheduled. Please monitor MUCC and OTG social media for updates on the program.

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





**By Collin O'Mara**  
President and CEO  
National Wildlife Federation

Nearly 7.7 million American workers younger than 30 are now unemployed and three million dropped out of the labor force in the past month. Combined that's nearly one in three young workers, by far the highest rate since the country started tracking unemployment by age in 1948.

Nearly 40 percent worked in the devastated retail and food service sectors. And as the most recently hired, young workers are typically the first let go and often the last rehired, especially those of color.

As our country's leaders consider a range of solutions to address this crisis, there's one fix that will put millions of young Americans directly to work: a 21st-century version of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 1933, when President Franklin Roosevelt created the C.C.C., he was facing, as we are today, the possibility of a lost generation of young people. The conservation-minded president's idea was to hire young unemployed men for projects in forestry, soil conservation and recreation. By 1942, the 3.4 million participants in "Roosevelt's Tree Army" had planted more than three billion trees, built hundreds of parks and wildlife refuges and completed thousands of miles of trails and roads.

# 7.7 Million Young People Are Unemployed. We Need a New 'Tree Army.'

*This op-ed was originally published in the New York Times.*

While the corps was not perfect — only men were hired, work camps were segregated, and some projects caused ecological damage — the C.C.C. was the most expansive and successful youth employment program in American history. It also played a crucial role in forging the Greatest Generation, which defeated fascism and built the strongest economy in the world. Today, there's plenty to do for a revitalized conservation corps that would put young Americans back to work.

We've amassed a staggering backlog of restoration needs for our nation's lands and waters, and face escalating vulnerabilities to fires, floods, hurricanes and droughts. Our national parks, wildlife refuges and other public lands have \$20 billion in deferred maintenance — and states have tens of billions of dollars more.

Eighty million acres of national forests need rehabilitation. Half a million abandoned coal and hard-rock mines and thousands of orphaned oil and gas wells need reclamation. More than 12,000 species of at-risk wildlife, fish and plants need conservation.

Smart investments in natural solutions could create millions of immediate jobs for the demographic groups and regions acutely affected by the downturn. One study found that restoration jobs support up to 33 jobs per \$1 million of investment, which can stimulate economic growth and employment in other industries. Those that would stand to benefit include outdoor recreation, agriculture, forestry and ranching, which have been hit hard by the pandemic.

These projects would expand recreational opportunities, increase our resilience to extreme





Photos are from historic archives of the Civilian Conservation Corps



weather and use nature by planting trees to sequester the carbon dioxide emissions that are warming the planet.

We already have federal, state, local and tribal plans and projects that have been vetted and are ready to go, and pending bipartisan legislation, like the Great America Outdoors Act and the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, which would provide financing for some of this work. We also have the infrastructure of AmeriCorps' National Civilian Community Corps and other programs that are part of the Corporation for National and Community Service. They can be scaled up and modernized, as proposed by Senators Chris Coons of Delaware and Martin Heinrich of New Mexico, both Democrats, and others.

To maximize these benefits, three lessons from the C.C.C. should guide our recovery today.

First, all communities must benefit, including youth of color and Indigenous young people.

Second, states, local governments and tribes must be full partners. Third, high-quality educational opportunities and apprenticeships must be included to ensure that the program's participants are fully prepared for private-sector employment opportunities.

How much would all this cost? That depends on the scope of our ambitions. But clearly, there is

plenty of work to be done and too many young people without jobs or prospects who are available to do it.

We can prevent a youth unemployment crisis from hobbling the next generation, strengthen local economies and bolster community resilience, but we must act now to put millions of young people to work restoring America's natural treasures.







A Photo-essay:

# *The Last Day of Summer*

By Greg Frey

*"...and all at once, summer  
collapsed into fall."*

Oscar Wilde












Northern Michigan's summer was almost over. I'd spent most of it on the river with clients, but not with my daughter — the one who loves nature and fly fishing. We knew we would both be back in the classroom soon enough. It was time for a road trip.

We could have made the 45-minute drive to the Jordan River in two vehicles. But that would have taken away an hour and a half of quiet talk time. And that is a precious commodity with a 17-year-old daughter — something not to be squandered. We took one truck and two bikes and spotted ourselves.





A woman with long brown hair, wearing a pink jacket, blue jeans, and red sneakers, is sitting on a large, mossy tree branch. She is looking down at something in her hands. The branch is thick and curved, extending from a large tree trunk on the left towards the right. Below the branch is a calm river with a greenish-brown hue. The background is a dense forest of tall trees. The foreground is filled with tall, green grass. A thin rope or cable runs diagonally across the scene from the branch towards the river.

There was no hurry that day, and no guiding pressure to compete with. We had time to smell the flowers, count the waxwings, climb a tree and study a bee hive. What could be more perfect?

It was a happy day. A day for light-hearted flies like Chubbies, Humpies, Patriots and Woolly Buggers with silly rubber legs. The water was low — gin clear, Iron-Fish-Distillery-Vodka clear. We fished undercut banks, gravel bars and 100-year-old petrified white pine logs with squared off ends. They were cut during Michigan's logging era — the Green Gold Rush. Those logs rebuilt Chicago after the fire of 1871, but some never made it to the sawmill.













**H**ow about an 18-inch brown? It was caught at midday, in the bright sun and on a river full of behemoths that rarely gives them up before midnight. It was all smiles.

The day was a road trip to remember — a float to never forget.





A close-up photograph of a young doe fawn with brown fur and white spots, resting on a bed of dry leaves and twigs in a forest. The fawn's head is in the foreground, looking down, with its body extending into the background.

# Why Some Doe Fawns Breed and Some Don't

By John Ozoga

**C**ompared to other deer species, white-tailed deer are among the most prolific. One reason for the whitetail's high productivity is females can breed at a young age and produce offspring shortly after their first birthday. By comparison, mule deer exhibit inherently lower productivity, in part, because mule deer fawns seldom breed.

Breeding among female whitetails six to eight months of age is fairly common in the right environments. It's this special trait that permits whitetail populations to literally explode when conditions are favorable.

But whether a female whitetail reaches puberty and breeds in her first year may depend upon many poorly understood factors. Birthdate, genetics, day length, nutrition, climate and social pressure are just some of the factors thought to be involved. Despite considerable research on the subject, however, investigators still debate the phenomenon.

## The George Reserve Example

The George Reserve deer herd stands as a classic example of just

how fast whitetails can multiply when favorable conditions permit doe fawns to achieve puberty and breed.

The nearly two-square-mile fenced-in George Reserve is located in southern Michigan and operated by the University of Michigan as an outdoor laboratory. Six deer, including two bucks and four presumably pregnant does, were introduced into the reserve in 1928. Within five years a drive count census revealed a herd of 160 deer.

At the time, biologists marveled at this rate of growth in a deer population, and this example became a landmark in the young



profession of wildlife management. However, a re-examination of data by Dale McCullough, who was in charge of George Reserve deer investigations for many years, revealed that the introductory herd probably grew at an even more rapid pace.

According to McCullough, drive counts on the Reserve in the early years were made by crews far smaller than those necessary to do effective censuses. Based on new evidence, he calculated the 1934 deer herd numbered about 180, not 160, and estimated that the population reached a peak of about 222 head in 1935.

McCullough tested his new population growth estimates by reducing the reserve herd to 10 deer in 1975. Then he protected the population from hunting. By 1981, the herd grew to 212 head. Furthermore, the population followed a growth curve virtually identical to that of the original herd from 1928 to 1935.

Ironically, the George Reserve deer herd does not represent a case of a whitetail population achieving its maximum breeding potential. That's right; it does not! On the contrary, McCullough observed that reproductive success declined as herd density increased. Had the initial rate of increase been maintained, the reserve deer herd could have grown to 300, as compared to the estimates of 222 in 1935 and 212 in 1981.

Since few individuals were dying within the reserve, McCullough concluded that reproductive success must have declined and slowed the population growth. Much of the decline in productivity occurred because doe fawns failed to breed at higher deer densities. In fact, McCullough determined that doe fawns only breed under optimal conditions, when deer populations are well below carrying capacity and nearly all newborn fawns survive.

McCullough also observed that the production of triplets by adult females and breeding by fawn females occurred at approximately



the same deer densities. Therefore, he proposed, the occurrence of triplets among adult does may be a useful clue to the breeding of fawn females in adult populations.

## Good Nutrition is Important

Biologists generally agree fawns must be extremely well-nourished in order to achieve puberty and breed. Therefore, a high incidence of pregnant fawns is considered indicative of good range conditions, where healthy deer populations are maintained below carrying capacity.

To achieve puberty and breed, at six to eight months of age, fawns must be born on schedule, generally during late-May or early-June and reach a certain critical body size. In the North, that size is about 80 to 90 pounds. For smaller southern populations it's about 70 pounds. This doesn't mean all animals reaching or exceeding these weights breed and produce fawns.

Both protein and energy are important to the reproductive process in young deer. Protein is required for body growth. However, energy-rich foods appear particularly important in the production of female hormones.

In Virginia, researchers learned that female fawns fed high-energy diets had higher levels of the hormone progesterone than fawns fed low-energy diets. These differences in hormonal levels relate directly to the female's sexual maturity, the release of eggs from the ovaries and thus the ability to breed. Dietary protein levels had no apparent effect on the attainment of puberty.

## Regional Differences

Not all well-nourished, large doe fawns breed, even when they live in areas of low deer density. The highest fawn pregnancy rate is found in the Midwest farm belt. More than one-half of the doe fawns typically breed in agricultural areas of Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota, as well as in the southern parts of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan. In Iowa, for example, researchers found that more than 70 percent of the doe fawns bred, and carried an average of 1.25 fetuses. While most conceived only one fawn, a good number carried twins and some even conceived triplets.

Fewer doe fawns breed in their first year in the southern states.





Only 10 to 40 percent reportedly breed in the Southeast, even on the best range. Likewise, fewer than 16 percent of the doe fawns are expected to breed in the Llano Basin area of Texas.

Doe fawns are also less likely to breed near the northern limits of their geographic range, where climatic factors and range quality may vary greatly within relatively short distances and even in the same area from one year to the next.

In the Adirondacks of New York, only about four percent of the doe fawns breed. But in southern New York, where the quantity and quality of range forage is better, more than 36 percent become pregnant. Likewise, in Southern Michigan, more than one-half of the doe fawns typically breed every year. Yet, less than five percent become pregnant in Upper Michigan. Similar (south versus north) trends are reported for Wisconsin and Minnesota.

While some of these differences are obviously due to differences in available nutrients, some investigators believe that other environmental factors such as temperature

and day lengths, could also be operative.

Genetics might also come into play in some areas. However, genetics do not explain the different breeding potential noted among northern versus southern Michigan fawns, since the ancestral stock for southern Michigan's George Reserve came from near the southern shore of Lake Superior in Upper Michigan.

## Photoperiod Effects

Most (if not all) of the white-tail's seasonal physiological events such as antler growth, body growth, coat molt, fattening and reproduction are controlled by or cued to seasonal changes in the amount of daylight (photoperiod). This has led to speculation that regional differences in the amount of daylight might also influence puberty attainment in young deer.

Researchers in southern Michigan studied doe fawns raised in light-controlled chambers to evaluate the effects of changing photoperiod on the onset of puberty. Fawns, raised on 16 hours

light and 8 hours dark, were placed in two test groups at four months of age. One group was switched to 8 hours of light (short days) in mid-October, the other group remained on 16 hours of light (long days) until December, then switched to 8 hours of light.

Timing of pelage change, changes in growth rate, and onset of puberty were affected by the initiation of the eight-hour day. Those fawns that experienced an earlier switch to short days were physiologically more advanced than those on prolonged daylight. Seven of the eight early short-day fawns achieved sexual maturity in January or February, whereas none of the eight in the extended daylight group had sexually matured.

## Contrasting Results

We also studied the relationship of photoperiod to puberty in doe fawns at the Cusino Wildlife Research Station in Upper Michigan – with very different results.

At Cusino, we subjected one group of four-month-old female fawns to an extended photoperiod (long-day fawns) by means of overhead lights to illuminate outdoor pens. Control animals, also confined outdoors, were exposed to natural day length (short-day fawns). The photoperiod phase of the study lasted nine weeks; then a mature buck was placed in each pen until March.

In all, 19 of 29 test fawns were bred during the study. Sixty-one percent of the long-day specimens bred, compared to nearly 73 percent of the short-day counterparts. One long-day fawn conceived twins; all others bore singletons. Hence, the similar reproductive performance between experimental groups refutes the idea that extended photoperiod enhances reproductive performance in doe fawns. Some factors other than photoperiod must account for the poor breeding success of northern doe fawns.

The only striking difference in



reproductive performance between doe fawn groups in our study was the wide variation in the date of estrus according to experimental treatment. That is, long-day fawns exhibited a prolonged breeding season, extending from November 24 until February 20; eight of them bred during January and February. By comparison, all those exposed to natural daylight bred on or before January 20.

Interestingly, despite comparable birth dates and newborn weights, doe fawns that became pregnant (irrespective of treatment) in the Cusino studies averaged more than seven pounds heavier by September 21 compared to non-breeders. Fawns that bred also demonstrated greater skeletal growth during the study period.

## The Critical Fat to Lean Biomass Ratio

It's obvious that doe fawns must be skeletally large and fat in order to achieve sexual maturity. Under varying levels of nutrition, it's equally possible to find large lean fawns as well as small fat ones, none of which would be expected to breed. We suspect, therefore, that doe fawns must achieve a certain critical fat to lean body composition necessary to achieve puberty.

The timing and extent of fat depots seem to play an important role in the attainment of puberty. Reduced photoperiod tends to trigger such important seasonal events as pelage change and fattening. For this reason, long-day fawns in our Cusino studies probably did not achieve the critical fat/lean body composition necessary to induce puberty until after they were switched to natural daylight. This in turn likely accounted for their delayed onset of puberty and breeding.

We concluded that the body-weight of wild Upper Michigan doe fawns essentially stabilizes in mid-autumn due to marginal nutrition and advent of harsh weather.

In other studies, for example, as little as a 10 percent reduction in the caloric intake of fawns in autumn seriously inhibited their skeletal growth and fattening. As a result, on the northern range, a natural decrease in the availability of high-energy foods, rather than decreasing daylight, probably serves to halt sexual development among whitetail fawns.

## Enclosure Studies

Despite these findings, we were unable to stimulate frequent breeding among supplementally-fed doe fawns in our nearby square-mile Cusino enclosure. Although the well-fed enclosure doe fawns averaged more than 80 pounds by late November (some were over 100 pounds) – and undoubtedly achieved favorable fat/lean biomass ratios – only one of 208 became pregnant during a 12-year period. This occurred in spite of high productivity among mature does and a high frequency of triplets.

Therefore, lack of breeding among enclosure fawns suggests that selective pressures other than

genetics, photoperiod, nutrition and climate were involved.

## Social Effects

It's important to note that our enclosure deer lived more natural social lives, as compared to pen-raised deer. Mature bucks in constant close contact with young females, as occurred in the small pen studies, is not natural. And it's my guess that differences in social behavior largely accounted for the gross difference that occurred in the breeding performance of penned versus enclosure doe fawns.

There are several possible explanations involving social contact, or lack thereof, that might explain why pen-raised fawns bred while enclosure fawns did not, despite comparable weather conditions and equally nutritious diets.

One possibility is the unnatural confinement of bucks with doe fawns in small pens had some type of bio-stimulating effect, which induced breeding. As I've mentioned in other articles, confining bucks and mature does together in autumn tends to





advance mean breeding dates by eight to nine days. It's possible the close (unnatural) contact with sexually active bucks also had a stimulating effect and advanced onset of puberty in pen-raised doe fawns.

## Orphaning

Another possibility involves orphaning – the severance of mother-young bonds. Pen-raised fawns were separated from their mothers when four months old. In contrast, enclosure fawns remained socially tied to their mothers and other female relatives throughout the breeding season.

Domination by older females tends to suppress the reproductive performance of younger females. We learned, for example, that release from maternal domination improves the reproductive performance of two year old does.

In the case of doe fawns, the critical ratio of fat to lean biomass controlling sexual maturity probably occurs earlier among orphaned fawns as compared to those subjected to constant psychological stress as the result of maternal domination.

A study in Texas confirmed that orphaning plays a key role

in doe fawn breeding – even in a southern environment. Two of four doe fawns deliberately orphaned in mid-autumn subsequently bred, whereas none of five control animals achieved puberty.

McCullough surmised that herd reduction in the George Reserve contributed to improved nutrition, better physical condition and, hence, increased pregnancy rates among doe fawns. On the other hand, one might argue that fawns were freed from maternal suppression as the herd was purposely decimated by hunting (in December), and that social factors were more important than nutrition in triggering puberty in doe fawns.

## The Southern Michigan Experience

While southern Michigan whitetail numbers have increased dramatically during the past several decades, the incidence of doe fawn breeding has declined. And the reasons why are not particularly clear.

The Southern Michigan deer harvest increased from about 7,000 in 1963 to 78,000 in 1982, which reflects about a tenfold increase in

deer population size. Meanwhile, the pregnancy rate among doe fawns declined from 60 percent to about 47 percent.

Lou Verme argues that harvest rates have not kept pace with the steadily expanding southern deer herd. As a result, he claims, "... as the [southern Michigan] deer population increased, proportionately fewer doe fawns were orphaned because the annual harvest, although considerable, did not increase as a percentage of the available productive does taken through hunting." He contends, therefore, that decreased pregnancy rates among southern Michigan doe fawns stems from social factors – namely increased maternal domination – and not nutritional constraints.

Lowered fertility likewise has occurred among southern Wisconsin doe fawns in recent years, despite liberal antlerless seasons designed to check population growth. Conversely, breeding rates among doe fawns in a southern Carolina herd reportedly increased as deer densities were reduced through heavier antlerless harvests.

These trends support the hypothesis that biosocial factors, coincident with herd eruption or decline, can influence pregnancy rates among doe fawns as readily as nutrition.

## Conclusions

Clearly, doe fawn breeding is a complicated phenomenon. Whether or not a doe fawn breeds seems to depend upon a host of factors, the effects of which are still poorly understood. Certainly, early-born doe fawns that grow to be skeletally large, as well as fat by autumn, are most likely to achieve puberty and breed, especially if they live in low-density herds. But even then, harsh weather, social pressure and probably other unknown forces may come into play and interrupt breeding.







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# Intricacies and Responsibilities

By Robert Kennedy

**M**y waders began leaking ice-cold water near the seam of my right thigh. I promptly propelled myself out of the water on top of the thin river ice as my father and cousin snickered at my loud exclamation from the temperature shock I had just experienced. Even with the freezing weather, we composed ourselves and continued to set traps for beavers that were wreaking havoc on the property. Using wire and sticks to position the baited 330 sized conibear underneath the water, it brought forth a sense of nostalgia. Reaching down into the murky waters with my shoulder-high gauntlets, thoughts trickled through my mind of trappers and Native Americans participating in similar game-taking methods well before my time.

Beaver trapping was a new experience for all of us that day,

and doing it in the wintertime with frozen fingers just added to the learning curve. I had grown up hunting and fishing, understanding game sign, practicing conservation and continually practiced animal habitat projects. My admiration for trappers and trapping began during my grade school years while learning about the demand for beaver felt in the 1600s, though setting my first trap was later in life.

Being a practitioner of the skill didn't occur until my early twenties, and understanding the intricacies and responsibilities of trapping furbearers didn't truly grasp my moral standing until after my first catch. The first animal that I ever caught was a grey fox. Its beauty was majestic, and as I approached the animal held in the trap, it was clear that it was in minor dismay. I quickly dispatched it using my sidearm, and upon

further examination of the animal, I found that the trap had broken its leg bone. I was immediately heartbroken at discovering the broken leg since respecting the animal and the ethical take of life had been ingrained into my being as an outdoorsman.

Though morality is immeasurable, I knew I had to critique my skills and perfect them to eliminate as many flaws as possible. The idea behind today's trapping technology is to hold an animal in place without injury. However, because of my lack of knowledge, it was evident that the animal's injury was still possible through ignorance of the equipment I was using. After my misjudgment, I began taking the time to understand the differences in trap size selection, proper placement of traps and the vast differences in trap styles.

The intricacies of choice and usage are a captivating



## *"The recognition of an ecological balance started to manifest in my trapping narrative."*

responsibility that drives perfection, but finding the correct trap can be daunting to a newcomer. The different brands of traps, styles and price points are luxuries that our ancestors didn't have to decipher. There are traps that are designed for catching specific animals while making it nearly impossible to catch others like domestic dogs. There are traps with rubber jaws, offset jaws and double jaws designed for removing the possibility of broken bones or skin. There are simple traps like cage traps and difficult ones to master like setting snares. All have their purpose, but to decipher what the proper trap is for the situation at hand, diligence is needed to ask questions and do research in the right places. Making a phone call to a trapping supplier or taking advantage of internet searches and forums are a reliable way to build confidence in trap selection, usage and ethical placement of traps. Growth of our character is built by recognizing our mistakes and, similarly to the fur demand of the 1600s, I had made a mistake by letting money cloud my decision making.

Due to my haste in trying to make a dollar, I had set a trap improperly and trapped a fox without fully understanding the impact on that ecosystem. It was only the second fox that I had seen in the wild and the first grey fox I had ever personally witnessed. I was fully unaware of the population in that area, and I didn't know if I had pushed the population to the brink by removing one from the landscape. With the ups and downs of the fur markets, it can bring many people in and out of the world of trapping. Historically, the spike in fur prices had also brought me into trapping with only

the thought of money on my mind, but after my first catch, I knew I wanted to be more than a guy taking advantage of fur markets. Trapping one fox started a ceaseless learning experience in wildlife management. Already having one major learning curve in my short trapping career, I didn't want to let myself down again by blindly removing populations of animals from the properties I frequented. The recognition of an ecological balance started to manifest in my trapping narrative. In the trapping seasons following my first catch, earning money for fur became the lesser concern as my focus switched to being the fulcrum in the balance of nature.

Without a doubt, trapping

can be the most beneficial tool at an outdoorsman's disposal for balancing population levels and, if need be, eradicating a species from an area. To read the animal sign, set the trap and leave it to be checked within legal means is the most time-efficient method compared to hunting. Additionally, when an animal is caught in a live hold trap, the choice is given to release the animal depending on the trapper's moral druthers and management plan.

Understanding the management function of trapping is an intimate relationship with the wild when we recognize the actions we impose on it. Even though we are as





*"When using the benefits of ethical trapping and taking the entire ecology into consideration, we are able to manage populations without the decimation of species — both predator and prey."*

much a part of nature as the bee pollinating a clover flower, our capacity of knowledge and influence in the wilderness is substantially larger. Where there is an action, there is always a reaction, especially when there is a loss of life. Being the only species able to comprehend this, humans have been endowed with the responsibility of wildlife management and balance. We are the apex predator that manages the relationship between prey and other predators.

Predator and prey populations ebb and flow consistently, but on occasion, without human intervention, overpopulations of predator species can altogether remove prey populations from the landscape for decades. Equally, prey populations without a presence of predators can become too much for the habitat they occupy with starvation and diseases surely to follow. A utopia is nearly possible when

we place ourselves at the forefront of managing animal populations using trapping.

A easy comparison of the

damage predator populations can inflict is to look at the relationship of smaller predators like raccoons and their relationship







with ground-nesting birds like turkeys. Studies have found that a third or more adult hens die by fanged predators, and nearly half of all nests are destroyed by small predators. These numbers can include predators that we are unable to trap, such as raccoons, opossums and skunks — all egg eaters. Similarly, animals like the beaver can pose a threat to habitat destruction if left unchecked. One beaver dam placed strategically on a river can undoubtedly flood out hundreds of acres displacing other animals from the natural habitat.

I have seen similar narratives come to fruition on our family property. A beaver dam caused the destruction of habitat and trapping has rebounded nesting bird numbers. Turkey populations have steadily been making a comeback throughout the state, but 10 to 15 years ago, their numbers on the property I frequented were minor.

The property had all the habitat a turkey could ask for with roosting trees galore, ground cover for nesting and plenty of natural food, but their numbers were nothing to boast about. Their population had an immediate spike the first year I began trapping the property for raccoons. Furthermore, after a few years of controlling raccoon populations, the property is now seeing a substantial population increase of pheasants. Just like the turkey, pheasants and other upland birds are susceptible to nest-robbers.

In both situations, natural, destructive habits of predators and prey animals can remove other animals from the ecosystem. Ironically, as an apex predator, that's where our duty comes into play to make sure the long-term relationship between animals can coexist and viable habitat can be sustained. When using the benefits of ethical trapping and taking the

entire ecology into consideration, we are able to manage populations without the decimation of species — both predator and prey.

There is always a learning curve when we try to take on something new in life, especially when there is so much weight behind our actions. Thankfully, modern traps have come a long way in their designs to allow us to make minor mistakes when learning the skills of trapping. As we grow our skills, we also polish our personal reasonings behind why we practice our heritage of trapping. The skills and acts of trapping are undeniably beneficial to a passionate conservationist like me. When we ensure conservation practices stay on the forefront of our minds, trapping will continue to leave a positive and cohesive impression on the wildlife and the lands we tread.



# An Upland *Legacy*

By Abraham Downer





I stood on the porch of my Mom's guest house with my English Setter, Remi. That night was a momentous occasion, but I gathered that the significance was lost on him from his sleepy eyes. Four months earlier, he had sired a litter of 10 pups with a female owned by my mom, Sally. Both of their pedigrees can be traced back to the gun dogs that my grandpa Bill Wicksall and his brother Jack began breeding on the very same property almost 75 years ago. That night, I would pick out an English Setter puppy to help me write the next chapter of the Wicksall English Setter story.

My Grandpa Bill and his brother Jack began breeding and training English Setters sometime around 1948 when they got their first English Setter from Edwin Olsen who lived near Milford. They quickly became obsessed with upland hunting for Grouse and Woodcock. Those were the

golden days, and back then, they had the woods almost entirely to themselves. They would pack up their Suburban with as many as six dogs and head out for the entire day to chase the birds that lured them through aspen stands and cedar swamps near their homes in Traverse City.

Some years later, DNR biologist Andy Amman would begin acquiring dogs from Jack and Bill for the purpose of locating and banding American Woodcock chicks in the springtime. Andy found that this was a far more effective way to band chicks than previous methods and that Jack and Bill's dogs worked close and were extremely honest on point. So began the volunteer woodcock banding program, which my Mom and I continue to take part in. I think it's interesting to note that Michigan has banded more American Woodcock, since the inception of the program, than all other states combined.

Years later, my mom met my dad, Dave, and they went on their first date — which entailed grouse hunting an abandoned blueberry patch with his golden retriever, Odie. They even went grouse hunting on their wedding day. I guess the desire to chase the King is in my blood as much as it is these dogs.

Although my mom banded woodcock with her dad, Jack and Andy, she was never invited to go hunting with them. It was a different time back then, but she always cleaned the birds when my grandpa returned home. She, more than anyone, wanted to be a part of the occasion. She fell in love and became hooked on bird dogs chasing ruffed grouse with my dad. The two of them would go on to raise dozens of litters of English Setters, and my mom became well-known in Michigan for woodcock banding with those very dogs.

That night, though, I sat next to







**Above: Sally Downer has banded woodcock, like her father and uncle before her, with the Wicksall line of English Setters for decades. Below: Abraham Downer's puppy, Cedar, lies on top of her dad, Remi. Both carry on the line of historic Wicksall dogs.**

the Boardman River, and I listened to the water rush by like the family members I had heard stories about. I felt small, but I also felt like I was a part of something so much more significant. As I thought about all of this, I looked up to the night sky. Venus was dancing with the waxing moon to the west. Two woodcock were sky dancing overhead, and a hen was peenting in the field adjacent to my Mom's property. A Canada goose got up off the river and honked as it traveled up the banks. I stood there admiring all the wonders and couldn't help but feel like someone had reimagined the intro to the Lion King for a dusky Northern Michigan evening. I found that idea amusing, and it seemed fitting for the next generation in our family's line of English Setters.

I decided to put Remi up and turned to make my way to the garage, where my mom has a small kennel for raising litters of pups. They were seven weeks old and could stay outside by themselves overnight. I cracked the door, and the soft red light from the heat lamp spilled out. All 10 perked up from their bed of straw to see what was there. Usually, a visit from someone meant supper was ready, but they were pleased with the late-night

romp.

I went in, sat down and lifted the latch to the kennel door. The pups ran up to me and immediately climbed onto my lap to greet me with their tiny paws and breath landing on my face. I picked up each one and turned them in my hands to inspect their small bodies with patches and ticking of white, black and tan. I ask each of them if they would like to go home with their papa. Remi's not exactly thrilled about the whole affair. Though, I'm sure in time, it will become second

nature showing his daughter how to navigate the woods like so many of my predecessor's veteran dogs had. They'll learn to use their noses to find those russet fellows, and the king of the Northwoods — ruffed grouse. I sat and wondered about the times that my Mom, and her father before her, had to wrestle with themselves over which pup to bring home.

Up until that point, I had my decision narrowed down to two pups. I had entertained the idea of bringing them both home, but in the end, I made my decision. I settled on an orange and white female that has only a couple small patches on her ears and a smattering of ticking on her face. Her markings are quite different than Remi's solid black cape that he wears on his back and face, which should help with telling the difference between the two in the thick covers we navigate during the fall. I named her Cedar.

Since that night, Cedar has pointed pigeons, been gun broke, learned her commands and done everything that I could expect of a young pup at this point. I'll be tailing behind her and Remi, eagerly awaiting a staunch point with the old side-by-side shotgun that my dad used. Together, they are daughter and father of the flush — setters of the Boardman River Valley.







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# JAY'S SPORTING GOODS

## Conservation Partners Spotlight

**J**ay's Sporting Goods is one of the largest providers of outdoor recreation gear in the state of Michigan. With locations in Clare and Gaylord, both stores make for easy stops for those heading "up north" at any

time of the year.

As hunters, anglers and trappers themselves, the owners and operators of Jay's have a vested interest in conservation. They care about Michigan's woods and water because their family greatly enjoys

the outdoors — and their business depends on natural resources and public lands for people to utilize. Earlier this year, they decided to renew their commitment to Michigan conservation by becoming a Platinum Member of Michigan United Conservation Clubs' Conservation Partners Program.

Jay's started out in 1968 when Jay Poet, a shooter and lifelong hunter and angler, decided to fulfill his dream of developing a first-rate sporting goods store in his Northern Michigan hometown. After selling guns, ammunition and reloading supplies for a number of years out of a small garage in Clare, Jay and his wife Arlene slowly grew their family business to what it is today. Now, with Jay's son Jeff Poet at the helm of the family business, they are still going strong.

Their customers, both long-term and more recent additions, will nearly always find a member of the Poet family working in the store, no matter when they might choose to

**Jay's President and CEO Jeff Poet gives an acceptance speech at MUCC's 2019 Annual Convention. Jay's was chosen as the Corporate Conservationist of the Year.**







**Jay's Sporting Goods has the largest selection of new and used firearms in Northern Michigan. Jay's also has donated firearms to MUCC for use at events.**

visit.

"Everyone should be able to follow their dream", says Arlene Poet on the history of the business. "We've never led our family to believe that this is what they had to do. They should do whatever they want. That's what life is all about — to enjoy what you're doing. Life's too short not to do that".

They may have grown since the beginning, but their dedication to the folks who come through the door hasn't changed one bit. All customers who walk into Jay's are treated like part of the family — one that has grown together for more than 30 years.

"We're grateful for each and every one of our customers," Jeff Poet said in regards to their company's history. "We want them to think of Jay's Sporting Goods for all their outdoor needs. And we want their shopping experience to be a good one".

The Poet family have always been great supporters of conservation here in the state of Michigan, and they support a number of conservation organizations that do a wide variety of work. Jeff Poet also serves on the Michigan Wildlife Council, representing businesses that are substantially impacted by hunting and fishing.

MUCC thanks Jay's Sporting Goods for their Platinum Membership in our Conservation Partners Program. We look forward to continuing our partnership with Jay's long into the future as we work together to unite citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage.

For more information on MUCC's Conservation Partnership Program, please email MUCC Public Information Officer Nick Green at [ngreen@mucc.org](mailto:ngreen@mucc.org).

**Thank you to Jay's  
Sporting Goods  
for being an MUCC  
Conservation  
Partners Platinum  
Sponsor!**







# Lifelong Conservationist

**By Charlie Booher**  
MUCC State Policy Fellow

In summer 1944, John Murphy was 13 years old, and a fledgling organization known as Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) was only eight years into its existence. In its infancy, MUCC was about to gain a longtime supporter — a young Murphy headed off to the first Michigan Out-of-Doors Youth Camp at Higgins Lake. Here in 2020, he is still a proud member.

In May, during a virtual staff meeting, we received a weekly update on memberships: ups and downs in donations of various kinds, as well as membership renewals and magazine subscriptions. But, there was one who stood out above the rest — a gentleman who has spent more than 76 years as a member of MUCC.

MUCC receives nearly 40,000 membership registrations and

renewals annually — each one helping us to pursue our mission of uniting citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage. However, some of these interactions can't help but catch our attention.

In a different time, I'd offer to buy a cup of coffee and meet in person, but Mr. Murphy and I had to settle for a phone call on a rainy spring morning. We talked for a while about what had kept him connected to the nation's oldest statewide conservation organization through so many decades and changes in the world around him. For Murphy, that attachment came down to summer camp and a magazine.

At the all-boys camp in the summer of 1944, Mr. Murphy recalled canoeing, fishing and learning from early conservation officers about tactics used to detect

poachers. Educators at the camp taught him about the ecosystems of Northern Michigan and the importance of carefully managing them. As the oldest boy in a family of 14 kids, it was probably a great chance for him to get outside and away from the hustle and bustle of metro-Detroit.

"Back in those days, we got up to camp however we could," Murphy said. He and a group of his friends from Roseville made the nearly 200-mile drive to Higgins Lake in the back of a diesel Army surplus truck. He attributes that experience, all those years ago, to spurring his love of the outdoors and his commitment to conservation.

It's helpful to keep in mind that, at the time, the Department of Natural Resources was the Department of Conservation — there weren't salmon in the Great Lakes and Michigan State





University was still Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science.

Mr. Murphy recalls receiving some of the first editions of Michigan Out-of-Doors magazine and looks forward to it in his mailbox every quarter. As a retired police officer, his favorite section is, of course, On Patrol, which recounts stories of conservation officers solving crimes associated with the fish and wildlife of Michigan. Murphy also appreciates the coverage of new laws in the magazine and the work that MUCC has always done to help develop those rules and regulations.

Now almost 90, Mr. Murphy spends his time playing euchre, jigging for walleye, cutting firewood

and hunting for morels at his cabin in Lewiston. The last time we talked, he was running a chainsaw clearing brush from a powerline corridor on the property.

In 1954, Mr. Murphy was renting a small place in Roseville with his young family, but he invested in an army-surplus Quonset hut and a plot of land for a hunting camp up north. This area was familiar to his family, as his mother and grandmother had both worked for a minister in the Grayling area. Remembering his time in the area when he was young, Mr. Murphy wanted something of his own in that part of the state.

He got the whole thing for less than \$500 at the time.

"It's been a great place for us all to get together as a family," Murphy said. "I've got great memories of taking all of my kids and grandkids there and quite a few great-grandchildren, too. That's where they all started exploring in the woods, and we'd get into a fair bit of trouble along the way, with plenty of skunks to get sprayed by or porcupines to run into."

Today, things are no less adventurous. For his milestone birthdays, he celebrates by skydiving and intends to do the same for his 90th later this year. This time, he will do it with his daughter and likely some of his grandchildren.

As for the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Murphy is hanging in there. Murphy told me that he still finds great joy in being lulled to sleep every night by the foghorns and diesel engines of the freighters lugging by his home and enjoying his property up north. He is responsible in his recreational pursuits, he notes, and keeps himself safe. One thing stands out more than others: For a gentleman in a high-risk age class, with plenty more things to worry about, Mr. Murphy called in, wrote a check and renewed his membership to the organization that began his love for the outdoors.

As we at MUCC navigate this crisis, this brings a glimmer of hope and a piece of inspiration for the future of this community in even the darkest times. A man who took the time, for more than 76 years, to support us continues to do so — even in the midst of this public health crisis.

While some things have changed since Mr. Murphy first joined MUCC, many have not. Michigan Out-of-Doors is still in print, and almost 60,000 kids have attended a camp run by MUCC. Mr. Murphy is still a member of the nation's largest, most successful statewide conservation organization. However, today more than ever, things look different for MUCC.

For the first time since its inception, the in-person summer





**Above: John Murphy in the mid-1980s sitting outside of the Quonset hut he purchased decades earlier and placed on property he bought near Higgins Lake. Below: Murphy on his 85 birthday before skydiving. Murphy will again sky dive for his 90th birthday later this year.**

camp season was called off. While there is a virtual, camp-to-go option, the future of this great summer tradition is uncertain. If you, like Murphy, have benefited from an MUCC summer camp or a similar outdoor experience, please consider making a donation to our education department using our secure, online platform.

We hope that you will follow in his example and join MUCC, renew your membership or consider upgrading to a lifetime membership today. Like Mr. Murphy, we hope that you see a lifetime of value in uniting citizens to conserve, protect and enhance Michigan's natural resources and outdoor heritage.







# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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

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Please call 1.800.777.6720  
or visit [www.mucc.org](http://www.mucc.org) to sign up online





MECHANISMS FOR CHANGE:

# Fire as a Conservation Tool

By Makhayla LaButte

## DESIGNED TO BURN

**A**lthough best known for towering forests and shimmering Great Lakes, much of Michigan's natural history is intrinsically tied to wildfire and the habitats that depend on it. Once abundant, these ecosystems are now scattered and hidden in plain sight among the converted landscapes of agriculture and select forests.

Much of Michigan's native flora and fauna are adapted to fire. Pine and oak forests and various types of grasslands are ecosystems that require fire in order to provide quality habitat for native wildlife. Although wildfires are readily prevented and suppressed today, they were once a normal part of the landscape due to natural occurrence and intentional use by Native Americans. Traditionally, people who occupied the landscapes of Michigan would use fire as a tool to manage the land for needs like agriculture. Perhaps one of the best examples of Michigan wildlife being adapted to fire-prone landscapes is the Kirtland's warbler and its unique adaptation to jack pine habitat. Endemic to Michigan and limited locations in Wisconsin and Quebec, this ground-nesting migratory songbird only nests in young jack pine that still have their lowest branches near the ground.



Being serotinous, or covered with resin and unable to open without an environmental trigger, the cones of jack pine require the extreme heat from a fire to open. In the nutrient-rich soil created by fires, these cones produce the next generation of jack pine stands. As Michigan land management agencies became increasingly aggressive in their efforts to prevent destructive wildfires, they inadvertently starved the jack pine ecosystems of the fire necessary to regenerate.

The abrupt and maintained loss of wildfire also led to a sharp decline in the Kirtland's warbler population. As young jack pine forests grew scarce, the Kirtland's warblers struggled to find suitable nesting habitat. This severe habitat loss, paired with cowbird nest parasitism, led to the Kirtland's warbler being listed as an endangered species in 1967.

Following extensive conservation efforts by state and federal land management agencies utilizing both prescribed fire and other jack pine regeneration techniques, the Kirtland's warbler population successfully rebounded, and they were removed from the endangered species list in 2019.



The Kirtland's warbler and its jack pine ecosystem are but one example of fire-adapted flora and fauna in Michigan. The wildlife found in grasslands like savannas and prairies are also dependent on wildfire.

According to Michigan Natural Features Inventory, grassland habitats like prairies and savannas once made up a significant portion of Michigan's landscape. However, the designated acreage of these grasslands shrunk from two

million acres to eight thousand acres since European settlement of the area.

Dominated by grasses and containing sparse or no tree cover (primarily fire-adapted oaks), the prairies and savannas of Michigan were shaped by recurring fires. As Europeans settled the land, much of the prairies and savannas were converted to agricultural land or became the building sites of urban development. The locations of these habitats that do remain are carefully managed by natural resource professionals to protect the unique flora and fauna that occupy these areas.

These grassland habitats are not only home to endangered species like the Karner blue butterfly, but popular game species like wild turkeys, white-tailed deer and ring-necked pheasants. Songbirds and pollinator species like bees and butterflies also rely on grasslands. Not only do they provide quality habitat for game and nongame species alike, but they also provide services like air and water purification.

Many of Michigan's forest and grassland habitats rely on fire to keep them healthy, and native wildlife often thrive in the aftermath of a burn. Aside from regenerating native trees, shrubs and grasses, fire also increases

*"Following extensive conservation efforts by state and federal land management agencies utilizing both prescribed fire and other jack pine regeneration techniques, the Kirtland's warbler population successfully rebounded, and they were removed from the endangered species list in 2019."*



the mineral content of soil and creates dead, standing trees that provide food and shelter for insects and birds. The impacts of wildfire on the landscape are complicated and vary based on factors unique to each habitat, but many natural resource professionals agree that fire is a critical component of a high-quality ecosystem.

## BRINGING FIRE BACK TO THE LANDSCAPE

Although wildfires in Michigan are still sparked naturally by lightning or accidentally by humans, many fires are purposefully suppressed by both state and federal natural resource management agencies. This is done to protect human lives, homes and businesses after many severe wildfires roared in various locations across the state, whether sparked by lightning, railroads or other human activity.

However, it became clear that fire suppression had its own drawbacks and often led to even more extreme wildfires due to the build-up of highly flammable debris. Thus, management agencies began to conduct prescribed burns to rid the land of built-up debris and reintroduce fire back to the ecosystems that rely on it.

Just as a doctor might prescribe a medication, natural resource professionals often prescribe fire as a landscape-level treatment. Prescribed fires are started intentionally by trained and certified professionals in areas selected for fire treatment. These areas have clear boundaries, and the type of fire prescribed is dependent on ecosystem and environmental factors like the species impacted, soil type, weather and the season. According to data provided by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), each year the fire management crew of the DNR Forest Resources Division conducts nearly 100 prescribed burns that cover approximately 9,000 acres of state-owned public land.



## Sorry we missed you!

A Michigan Department of Natural Resources employee stopped by to let you know DNR staff will be conducting a prescribed burn in your area. Prescribed burns simulate the benefits of natural fires – which are vital to our natural resources – and are used to:

- Improve wildlife habitat.
- Restore and maintain native plant life.
- Control invasive plant species.
- Reduce the risk of wildfires.

The burns are conducted by highly trained DNR personnel and public safety is a top priority during the process. If conditions aren't right, the burn can be canceled at any time.

Questions? Contact us at the number below:

Additionally, approximately 18,000 acres were treated with prescribed burns on federal land throughout Michigan in 2019 alone. Prescribed burns by tribal governments, local governments and on private property also take place each year

across the state.

Prescribed burns require extensive planning. Burn days must meet specific weather requirements to ensure that the burn is successful and that control is maintained over the flames. Natural resource



professionals never burn without a clear goal in mind for the ecosystem. Common examples of such goals are the regeneration of native flora like jack pine, clearing grasslands of excess shrubs and trees, the removal of invasive species or the reduction of fuels (woody debris, leaves, shrubs) that could cause severe wildfires.

Following the end of a controlled burn, the fire crew in charge of the area will monitor the burn site extensively for days or even weeks to ensure no hot-spots remain that could ignite a new fire. By conducting controlled and purposeful burns within set boundaries, natural resource managers are not only able to rejuvenate fire-dependent lands and maintain habitat for Michigan wildlife, but also provide critical training to wildland firefighters.

## A CONTROVERSIAL TOOL

The use of fire as an ecosystem management tool has long been a contentious debate, even as the study of fire science has advanced and the number of successful burns has increased.

Complaints and concerns have increased as human civilization has grown, and homes, cities and farms are built in areas that have been exposed and adapted to frequent wildfire long before their settlement. Even in Michigan, where homes and private property abut jack pine ecosystems and grasslands, individuals express displeasure at forest treatments involving prescribed fires.

The biggest complaints from the public that stem from prescribed burns are the resulting smoke and the desolate appearance of a landscape immediately following a burn. Additionally, many fear the possibility that a prescribed burn could grow out of control and threaten areas outside of the designated burn boundary. Although alternatives like mowing, herbicide and mechanical clearing can also be used, fire has consistently offered extraordinarily



cost-effective and ecologically-beneficial habitat results.

It is important to understand that a lack of prescribed fire in fire-adapted landscapes often results in fuel build-up that ignites even more dangerous and destructive wildfires. Such fires know no boundaries and are incredibly challenging (and expensive) to fight and control.

Fire crews work to limit the negative impacts of smoke from prescribed fires by waiting for ideal weather conditions and informing homeowners near a burn site of the possibility of smoke. The inclusion of surrounding landowners in the prescribed burn process has had a positive impact on individuals' perception of its use as a treatment tool. What's more, many members of the public are impressed by the speed at which high-quality habitat regenerates following a prescribed fire.

By educating ourselves about the extensive science supporting prescribed burns within many Michigan ecosystems and the plans in place by state and federal agencies regarding their wildfire programs, we are not only better able to understand the reasons behind the decisions of natural resource professionals but play an active role in understanding the resources themselves.

## LEARN MORE

Although much of the discussion about prescribed burns is held on the topic of public lands, there are resources available for private landowners interested in performing prescribed burns on their own property. One such resource is the Michigan Prescribed Fire Council, whose mission is to protect, conserve and expand the safe use of prescribed fire on the Michigan landscape. Their webpage offers an abundance of information regarding prescribed burning in Michigan for practitioners, students and interested members of the public.

Numerous other conservation organizations, land management agencies and universities across Michigan offer resources for individuals interested in learning more about prescribed fire and the value of fire as a conservation tool. Before starting a fire, always obtain a burn permit from the Michigan DNR and review the local ordinances in your area to ensure burning is permitted. Burn permits are issued based on the fire danger ratings in your area. Monitor the weather diligently to ensure good burn conditions, wear appropriate safety gear and always have materials like a shovel and water nearby to control the flames.





# Leaving a Legacy

By Chris Lamphere

*"We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." - Aldo Leopold*



# VOTE YES FOR MI WATER, WILDLIFE & PARKS

**O**f all the public policy ideas that have ever been proposed in the state of Michigan, it's safe to say that few rival the scope and significance of the Natural Resources Trust Fund.

"It will go down in Michigan history," said Department of Natural Resources Director Daniel Eichinger. "It's one of the best ideas our state's ever generated. It's a totally novel concept that is elegant and brilliant."

Since its legislative inception in 1976, the trust fund has contributed nearly \$2 billion toward land purchases and recreational development projects throughout Michigan.

Perusing the laundry list of investments made by the trust fund, it's easy to forget where the money comes from and how it came to be used for acquiring, improving and protecting lands for public use.

The idea of setting up a trust fund to capture revenue generated through oil, gas and mineral activities on state lands was envisioned as an answer to a contentious question that raged in the 1970s and still rages today: how do we mitigate the damage that exploitation of natural resources inevitably causes to the environment?

Consolidating ownership of large swaths of land has a tremendous impact in terms of expanding public accessibility, improving recreational opportunities and

managing the ecological continuity of the land, Eichinger said.

"Opportunities to secure these types of acquisitions don't come up very often," Eichinger said. "If we didn't have the trust fund — and having it available at a moment's notice to jump on opportunities — what would be required to pull something like that off? Hundreds of large and small areas wouldn't necessarily be available to the public like they are today."

In November, voters will be asked to approve some changes to the trust fund that will ensure its viability into the foreseeable future.

## History of the trust fund

As former DNR Deputy Director Don Inman tells it, in 1970, they were between a rock and a hard place.

Shell Oil Company announced they had discovered a promising oil deposit beneath environmentally-sensitive (and beautiful) land within the Pigeon River Country State Forest in northern lower Michigan.

Since the state had already leased the mineral rights to the company before the deposit was found, if they denied drilling out of concern about the impact it would have on the environment, they would have been taken to court and probably would have lost, Inman said.

On the other hand, if they

agreed to allow oil extraction without conditions, they likely would have faced severe backlash from environmental groups.

"We started scratching our heads," said Inman, who at the time worked in the Office of Environmental Review as a wildlife biologist but was tasked with brainstorming solutions to the impasse with Jack Bails, assistant to then-Gov. William Milliken.

As author Dave Dempsey describes in his seminal book *Ruin and Recovery*: "Since the task force concluded that even the limited drilling the DNR was willing to accept would have unavoidable, harmful effects on the forest, Inman turned his thoughts to the idea of what might mitigate the damage ... He suggested to Bails that the estimated \$200 million in state revenue that would be derived from drilling in the forest should be deposited in a separate fund earmarked for the purchase of other recreational lands in the area for public benefit. As Bails put it, the idea was to 'take the assets of oil, and turn them into assets of land.'"

Inman said his goal was to imagine a process by which any damage done by oil, gas or mineral exploration would be overshadowed by the benefits created through consolidating wild lands and preserving them for future generations.

"These lands are like a



treasure, like money in the bank,” Inman said. “Large chunks of (forested) property are extremely important for producing fish and game. They also pick up a lot of carbon, kind of like the rain forest.”

The idea of diverting oil, gas and mineral revenues back to state lands quickly picked up steam and was supported by then-Michigan United Conservation Clubs Executive Director Tom Washington, along with others who worked tirelessly to get the measure approved by the legislature.

Bob Garner, who at the time was assistant to state Sen. Kerry Kammer, collaborated extensively with William (Bill) Rustem from the governor’s office to navigate the political obstacles that stood in the way of the trust fund being adopted.

“I heard about the idea in 1975 from Tom Washington,” Garner said. “Those were some good years. It seemed like there was a keen interest in protecting our natural resources. I just feel lucky to have been a part of something like this. It’s just about as important a piece of legislation that’s ever worked its way through the system. I’m still amazed by it, even having been involved myself.”

Although the Michigan legislature in 1976 approved the bill that established the trust fund, its future at that point was far from secure.

Inman recalls that there were several attempts by legislators to access the money that was captured by the trust fund to be used for other purposes.

To protect the funds from the ever-shifting winds of politics, a proposal was placed on the 1984 ballot to make the trust fund part of the state constitution. A majority of Michigan voters passed the proposal, along with subsequent proposals asking for the cap on the trust fund to be raised from \$5 million to \$500 million.

Rustem said he isn’t at all surprised that the majority of



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

voters supported the trust fund in multiple elections.

“People in Michigan care about their natural resources,” Rustem said. “They have a unique affinity for public lands.”

Dempsey put it this way in *Ruin and Recovery*: “The decade-long fight had consumed millions of dollars, made enemies out of former friends, and failed to stop the drilling ... But the struggle had resulted in a permanent trust fund to protect important lands for public use and sharply restricted drilling of the forest under terms Bails and Inman later regarded proudly as a model ... nobody had won a clear victory — but neither had the forest suffered a clear loss.”

## **Impact of the trust fund**

Documenting the full impact that the trust fund has had on Michigan communities, residents and visitors since 1976 is a monumental task that no single magazine article (or book, for that matter) could hope to accomplish.

Over the years, the trust fund has allocated between hundreds of thousands and tens of millions of dollars toward projects in every single Michigan county; total

investments as of September 2019 were \$1,193,527,823.

“Literally hundreds of projects across the state,” Rustem said.

“The trust fund has bought many of the gems that we enjoy today.”

Garner said he’s particularly impressed by the projects along the shorelines of the Great Lakes, such as the Arcadia/Green Point Dunes in Manistee and Benzie counties.

“Those were acres that were way too sensitive to be developed,” Garner said. “The face of Michigan would look very different today if not for the trust fund.”

Rich Bowman, Director of Working Lands at The Nature Conservancy, said the trust fund is an ingenious idea due in part to where the money comes from.

Bowman said if the state were to simply allocate the revenue they receive from leasing oil, gas and mineral rights to companies, they quickly would run out of money because there are sometimes long stretches of time when these types of activities don’t happen.

“We really don’t know what’s in the ground or what it’s worth,” Bowman said. “There are years when it isn’t being extracted.”

Putting the money in a trust fund and only using the interest



**VOTE YES THIS NOVEMBER TO PROTECT  
DRINKING WATER, LAND & PARKS  
WITHOUT RAISING TAXES.**

**The Michigan Natural  
Resources Trust Fund**  
(NRTF) has been protecting  
our drinking water and natural  
areas for decades, providing  
opportunities for hunting,  
fishing and other outdoor  
recreation for Michiganders  
to enjoy.

### **The best part?**

It is not funded by our tax  
dollars, but by the oil, gas,  
and mining industries.

### **Now, the NRTF needs your support**

on a ballot proposal that would  
further expand investment in the  
critical protection of our open  
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**VOTE YES**  
FOR **MI WATER,**  
**WILDLIFE & PARKS**

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***Although no MNRTF dollars have gone directly to Porcupine Mountains State Park development, an abundance of the trails that run through and connect this 65,000-acre piece of wilderness in Ontonagon and Gogebic counties have benefited from grants from the MNRTF.***

it generates, however, ensures an indefinite source of revenue.

Bowman acts as a liaison between the trust fund board of advisors and municipalities interested in purchasing or developing land for public benefit.

In many cases, Bowman said the trust fund monies are leveraged by small cities and townships that want to expand their public park areas.

For instance, in 2018, Bowman was involved in the acquisition of the Sargent Sands property within Ludington State Park — a project that involved fundraising by the local municipality to match the amount that was contributed by the trust fund.

In other cases, Bowman said the trust fund money has been used to develop easements on privately owned land.

One of the largest projects of this kind occurred in 2005, when an easement was placed on 248,000 acres spanning several Upper Peninsula counties.

Bowman said the state was initially outbid by a forest products company to purchase the land but they were able to come to an

agreement that allowed the land to remain open to the public for hunting, trail usage and other recreational activities.

“I love projects like that,” Bowman said. “There are so many things we have today that we wouldn’t have if the trust fund didn’t exist.”

Inman said if one wanted to get an idea how the state would look if the trust fund didn’t exist,

all they would have to do is look at a plat map from the 1950s and 1960s showing all the disjointed and broken up properties throughout the state.

Trotter said that the impact the MNRTF has had on freshwater quality shouldn’t be lost either.

“Large tracts of undeveloped lands are necessary for wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation, but they are also critical for fresh, clean, healthy drinking water for Michiganders,” Trotter said. “Many of these sites act as the kidneys for our freshwater lakes and streams, protecting our source waters and aquatic habitats and filtering out unwanted contaminants naturally.”

## Changing the trust fund

Come November, the people of Michigan will be asked to decide on a couple of proposed changes to the Natural Resources Trust Fund.

While not nearly as sensational as the national political drama that will undoubtedly be on the minds of many Americans as they file into their respective polling places, the trust fund proposal could have fateful implications for the state — pass or fail.

MUCC Executive Director Amy Trotter said the proposed constitutional amendment, which was unanimously approved by state

***The Natural Resources Trust Fund Board allocated more than \$600,000 to aid in the development of the Rose Lake Shooting Range in Bath.***







***In 1996, \$600,000 was granted by the MNRTF Board to acquire frontage property near the Tahquamenon Falls River.***

lawmakers in 2018 to be placed on the 2020 ballot, proposes two primary changes to the trust fund.

First, it would completely eliminate the cap on the amount of money that can be collected by the trust fund, and second, it would provide more flexibility for how the money in the trust fund can be spent.

Let's consider the flexibility portion of the proposal first.

As it currently stands, 75% of annual trust fund spending must be done on land acquisitions, with only 25% permitted for recreational development projects.

Trotter said the amendment proposes to change those percentages to 25% for land acquisition, 25% for development and 50% for "flex" spending on either one.

Trotter said the proposed change also makes it clear that redevelopment and renovation projects fall under recreational development; as it currently stands, those types of investments are "gray areas at best," Trotter said.

"I think that flexibility is important," said Rustem, who serves on the Natural Resources Trust Fund board of advisors. "If you don't provide access opportunities (in the form of recreational development), there is less use for the land."

"The need for acquisition is not that great," said Garner. "But people do need funding for the facilities. It's probably time to change (the spending percentages)."

Bowman said the demand among Michigan municipalities for recreational funding far exceeds the amount the trust fund is able to invest each year.

"Even though we're in the land protection business, public access is crucial to building public support," Bowman said.

While changing the spending percentages is a move that

supporters believe is a big step in the right direction, removing the trust fund cap could have even greater consequences.

When the trust fund reached its \$500 million corpus cap in 2011, money from oil, gas and mineral leases started flowing into the State Park Endowment Fund.

Once the State Park Endowment Fund reaches its cap of \$800 million — something that Trotter said should happen within the next 30 years (assuming no long-term funding effects from the COVID-19 pandemic) — the money will then be diverted to the state's general fund.

Removing the cap will ensure that this money remains devoted to conservation efforts for years to come, Trotter said.

"By removing the cap, the people of Michigan would be saying we want this money to go toward the protection of natural resources," Bowman said. "This would make the trust fund last forever ... a pretty amazing legacy to leave our descendants."

A third, relatively minor change included in the proposal is to require the State Park Endowment Fund to spend at least 20% per year on capital projects, Trotter said.

At this time, Trotter said the majority of expenditures made by the endowment fund relate to day-to-day maintenance at state parks and very little goes to park infrastructure.

***The MNRTF Board allocated almost \$2.7 million to help with the acquisition of the Arcadia/Green Point Dunes Conservation Easement in Benzie and Manistee counties.***





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you go, there are plenty of fish to catch, rays of sunlight to soak up and outdoor family memories just waiting for you.

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Mackinac Island is just a short boat ride from the St. Ignace downtown marina, with 136 slips that accept boats up to 150 feet in length. Mackinac Island offers plenty of opportunities to enjoy the motorless tourist attractions. Take your bikes or your hiking boots along to get the most out of this outdoor adventure, as you explore the quaint shops, outdoor restaurants and famous landmarks. St. Ignace offers daily ferry service to Mackinac Island from their downtown docks; just a short walk away from hotels and motels.

Nestled between two of the Great Lakes in the U.P., and housing many inland lakes and rivers, St. Ignace is the perfect place to plan that fishing trip you've been waiting on! Although summer is the prime season for big game fishing, there are abundant fish to catch all year round in St. Ignace – on the Great Lakes and inland water bodies. Salmon, trout, walleye, northern pike and muskies are all waiting for you this fall.

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# FALL NORTHERNS

## *On the Fly*

By Drew YoungDyke

**F**all fly fishing for northern pike is about chasing a moment. All of it — the equipment, the strategy, the effort — comes down to a glimpse of a pike underwater stalking the streamer, a brief pause and a sudden, violent strike. Within that brief moment is all the adrenaline of the strip-set and the anticipation of wondering if the fish is on the line, followed by the elation of a heavy tug or the disappointment in a slack retrieve.

Last fall, I invited some friends from different conservation organizations in Michigan and Wisconsin up to my family's Upper Peninsula lake cottage for a long weekend to chase that moment, along with Jordan Browne of Michigan Out-of-Doors TV to film it for a National Wildlife Federation film, *Northwoods Unleaded*. We spent three fun-filled days reeling in northern pike with nontoxic gear

for both spinning and fly rods while the September leaves changed color overhead.

Michigan anglers have long traveled to Canada for trophy northern pike, but there are ample opportunities to catch northern pike throughout Michigan. My grandpa and I used to catch them trolling with spoons on Lake Skegamog in the Northern Lower Peninsula when I was younger, and my family has been catching northern pike at our cottage on Chaney Lake since my great-grandpa bought it in the late 1950s. In fact, a postscript to the first entry in the cottage log notes that "Grandpa Bill caught a beautiful 24.5-inch northern."

Chaney Lake is a small, 530-acre lake near the Ottawa National Forest in Gogebic County. Our dock points to the deepest depression in the lake, reaching about 20 feet deep, while the edges

boast shallow weeds perfect for pike to ambush prey. A large, shallow weed complex at one end for spawning is present. Chaney Lake is under special pike regulations allowing the take of up to five pike under 24 inches and one over, designed to increase the size of the fish in the lake and reduce the abundance of "hammer handles." Similar regulations are being considered for additional lakes throughout Michigan by the DNR Fisheries Division.

George Lindquist, past Michigan United Conservation Clubs president, caught a hammer handle off the dock as the first evening approached, as did Craig Challenor, president of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. With the bite on, we split up into two groups with the gear anglers on George's 17-foot boat and the fly anglers with me in our little aluminum rowboat.





**MUCC Immediate Past President George Lindquist hoists up a pike he caught on Chaney Lake in the Western Upper Peninsula. The lake's slot-size limit encourages the keeping of smaller pike.**

George's crew cast into the drop-off. We heard the shouts from George's boat as Sarah Topp and Ryan Cavanaugh caught beautiful pike. Sarah is the former On The Ground coordinator for Michigan United Conservation Clubs and Ryan is the co-chair of the Michigan Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. Sarah caught one over 24 inches and kept it to pair with the next day's lunch of pasties from Randall's Bakery in Wakefield.

Marcia Brownlee, director of Artemis Sportswomen, and Aaron Kindle, director of sporting campaigns for the National Wildlife Federation, joined me in the rowboat with fly rods. We worked the weed edges extending out from shore. As Aaron rowed, I cast an articulated streamer with nonlead dumbbell eyes to the weed edge and stripped it back on my eight-weight rod. I watched a northern pike follow it a few feet below the surface and strike suddenly when I paused the retrieve. With a strip-set, I had my first northern pike on the fly. It fought violently into Aaron's net just as the sun was setting across the lake. It was only about 20 inches, but I released it.

Later in the weekend, I caught

another small northern just off the shallow weeds on a Lefty's Deceiver fly weighted with tungsten putty. Everyone on the trip ended up catching pike, but I was the only one to do so on a fly rod. As a novice pike fly angler, though, I wanted to know if this was just luck or if I was actually fishing the right spots with the right equipment and the right tactics for fall northern pike.

"For lakes, I like to search on the edges of shallow flats where pike will ambush baitfish," advised Kole Luetke, a fly fishing guide for Superior Outfitters out of Marquette. "I also continue to fish the typical key structure that I fish thought the year, such as weed beds and deadfalls on the shoreline. The key is to locate the baitfish and, in the later season, warmer water temps. On rivers, I fish typical structures like deadfalls and slow backwater and sloughs." Luetke guides clients for multiple species across the Upper Peninsula, including northern pike and muskies. He uses somewhat similar tactics for both, though he uses relatively smaller flies for northern pike.

"Oftentimes during the fall when I'm hunting bigger fish, I will

utilize the 'L-turn' or 'figure 8' like in musky fishing," he said. "My retrieve speeds slow down when the water temps drop, and I like to utilize long pauses throughout the retrieve."

As with the ones I caught, northern pike will follow the fly — often back to the boat — and strike during the pause. Rather than lifting the line for another cast, drawing a figure-eight with the fly with the rod tip down gives the pike more opportunity to strike. Kole uses larger flies than the smaller streamers I fished, though.

"In the fall, I like to increase the size of fly I use. Typically, I fish articulated flies anywhere from 8 to 12 inches. I don't often exceed the 12-inch mark for pike, but I will occasionally throw triple-articulated flies over 12 inches," Kole said. "My preferred fly colors are fire tiger, brown and yellow, and white is killer in the tannic waters of the UP. In order to turn over large flies, I use a shortened leader, 18 inches of 40- to 50-pound Fluorocarbon connected to 18 inches of 40-pound bite wire. This is similar to the leader I use for fall musky fishing."

With Kole's advice, I'm looking forward to another trip up to the cottage this fall for pike fly fishing; albeit, I will be solo. I've tied larger articulated flies in the colors he suggested, bought a nine-weight Orvis Clearwater rod and a sinking line to better cast them and rigged up some wire tippet leaders along with premade ones from Scientific Angler. I'll target the same weed edges, structure and drop-offs, but I know it won't be quite as fun without the whole crew there this time.

That moment of anticipation between seeing the pike follow the streamer, pausing the retrieve and the sudden burst of underwater violence will make it all worth it, though. Traveling to the far end of the Upper Peninsula isn't necessary to find it, either. Wherever you are in Michigan, there's a lake or a river nearby holding northern pike and endless opportunities to chase that moment.



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# Stewardship for **CONSERVATION'S** Cash Cow

By Charlie Booher

**D**eer hunting in Michigan is a pretty big deal. If you didn't already know it, I'm sure you'll come to that realization after reading through this magazine or any other outdoor publication this time of year. However, many only think about deer and deer hunting between August and December — preparing for, during and directly after the fall seasons. For others, this is a year-round pursuit that takes up a whole lot of time in the field, mental space for planning and dollars from wallets. Needless to say, the level of planning, commitment and education varies among hunters, not to mention in the broader wildlife conservation community.

Every fall, around 600,000 people buy a deer tag out of a total ~660,000 unique hunting license buyers in the state of Michigan (in 2018). These numbers certainly fluctuate from year to year, generally on

the decline, but the proportion has stayed relatively stable over time. While Michigan hunters all purchase a base license making them eligible for small game hunting, research suggests that a great deal of these individuals buy a license for the sole purpose of hunting deer (and small game is often just an added bonus). Nationwide, seven out of 10 people who hunt, hunt deer. Given that state fish and wildlife agencies (like the Michigan Department of Natural Resources) are primarily funded by hunting and fishing license dollars, this puts a whole lot of eggs in one basket. The number of people who exclusively hunt deer creates a reliance on their license dollars.

This is even more impactful when considering the fact that federal funds (through the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act) are distributed, in part, based on the number of

unique individual license buyers in each state. So, if most of the unique individual license buyers exclusively hunt deer, state fish and wildlife agencies are extraordinarily reliant on them for both their license fees and in the federal funding calculations.

However, state fish and wildlife agencies need large numbers of deer hunters and require well-educated, conservation-minded sportsmen and sportswomen. This doesn't account for the fact that those who know more about deer biology and behavior tend to meet their hunting goals more consistently — whether they are motivated by antlers, meat or the experience.

Because of the amount of conservation dollars tied to deer, whitetails are one of the most studied animals on the planet. The scientific community likely knows more about deer than most species in the state of Michigan. Yet, as we walk



into the woods and fields this fall, it is often easy to forget the processes, trials and tribulations that the entire ecosystem has been through in different seasons. Thankfully, there is a fairly easy way to digest a great deal of this information without ever cracking open a textbook.

While we were socially distancing and working remotely this spring, I took advantage of the opportunity to take the Quality Deer Management Association's (QDMA) Deer Steward I course online. With nearly 16 hours of curriculum, the class provides an in-depth overview of all things dealing with deer and deer hunting through Clemson University's virtual coursework platform.

The creation and presentation of this information is a key element of the organization's mission, QDMA Director of Conservation Kip Adams said.

"QDMA has always had a focus on education and providing the best available information for hunters,

*"Nationwide, seven out of 10 people who hunt, hunt deer. Given that state fish and wildlife agencies (like the Michigan Department of Natural Resources) are primarily funded by hunting and fishing license dollars, this puts a whole lot of eggs in one basket."*

landowners, agency employees and anyone else interested in deer," Adams said. "We at QDMA believe that breaking down the science of deer management will create better, more informed stewards of our natural resources."

Different versions of this course have been created to be presented to members of state fish and wildlife agencies to teach professionals about these

important topics. The funding model necessitates them knowing a thing or two about deer — and a number of fish and wildlife agency professionals around the country believe that this is the best way to educate staff about the "cash cow" of conservation.

Whether or not participants in these classes work for state fish and wildlife agencies, are private landowners or are public land hunters,







**Controlled burns are a vital piece of habitat management for numerous species. See page 42 to learn more about how you can conduct a controlled burn on your property and why they are one of the most effective tools in managing land for wildlife.**

there is valuable information to be learned. These informed stewards continue to fund conservation efforts and conduct active habitat management on private land. For states like Michigan, where 72 percent of the land base is privately-owned, the amount of private land being managed for wildlife is greater than the amount of public land with similar objectives. From the Deer Steward courses, hunters and land managers have the chance to educate themselves about ecosystem succession, habitat types and physiology.

While this course provides great insight for those with land to manage for deer or other wildlife, it also offers an opportunity to learn about how decisions regarding deer management are made and the factors that are taken into account. After studying this for four years, one of the most impactful elements of this course was having a crash course in state-level deer management. This is especially true of the need to acknowledge uncertainty in management decisions and learning about the models used to make decisions. As deer hunters, it

is easy to get frustrated with rules and regulations — especially when the hunting digest grows to almost 100 pages long. However, each of these rules are enumerated for a reason, and many of those reasons can be explained through this form of education.

In changing deer regulations, we often see conflicts in the Natural Resource Commission over a few topics without fail: antler point restrictions (APRs) and doe harvest. These two regulations divide hunters every time there is a decision to be made. This course seeks to offer some background information on both of these topics.

"Folks always want to focus on bucks," Adams said. "But sometimes, to grow mature bucks, you have to put your focus on the does. That's why I think the lesson on antlerless deer management is one of the most important modules in the course."

In the unit on population dynamics, QDMA staff and academic deer researchers outline both sex and age as important demographics. These factors are then combined with hunter goals to determine the rules and regulations

that you find in the hunting digest or on the wall of your hunt club.

Many elements of this course expand the pursuit of deer hunting beyond just the fall season. The lessons of this class and its many hours of instruction offer activities during all times of the year and help focus your management efforts on what will make the biggest difference. This course is built to have something for everyone who enjoys deer or deer management. Much of the habitat content is geared towards landowners who might be able to manipulate habitat on their personal ground. However, it is just as appropriate for public land hunters who volunteer to improve State Game Areas (often facilitated by programs like MUCC's On-the-Ground).

Of course, deer are very different depending on where you are in the country.

The deer steward course has been ongoing for more than a decade and has been online for the last seven years. It has been filmed twice in that time to ensure that the curriculum is up to date with current research and suitable for



deer enthusiasts all over the country. Typical, in-person sessions of the Deer Steward II host individuals from 15 to 17 states and can be customized to suit the needs of people from those places. The online Deer Steward I course takes a systems-based approach to make the modules suitable for any habitat type and include examples from around the country. While the focus is often on habitat, the instructors also take the time to break down elements of deer hunting culture that are unique to different regions of the country. The Deer Steward I course is only offered online and can be taken anytime, whereas QDMA exclusively offers Deer Steward II in person.

While many folks were stuck at home this spring, they decided to invest some time into this course.

"Early on in the COVID-19

pandemic, people were really taking advantage of the discounted course," Adams told me. "Participation in the deer steward course is normally pretty high, but it really spiked during March and April. As we got into June and July, our numbers started to return to normal, but the increased participation helped us to make up for the losses of so many cancellations. We're looking forward to being back in the classroom in the summer of 2021."

Beyond Deer Steward I, QDMA offers a number of other courses, including Deer Steward II and various other habitat workshops. If you've already taken Deer Steward I, you might consider joining their Deer Steward II course in Alabama in May 2021 or a habitat module in Pennsylvania in August 2021.

In taking these courses, I would

hope that you might gain a better understanding of deer, deer hunting and deer management. The scientific community knows a great deal about these large mammals, and QDMA has put it in a form that is easy for hunters to digest.

As of this writing, the future of QDMA is in flux as the organization merges with the National Deer Alliance. The leadership of the organization maintains a strong commitment to education, deer and deer hunters, and they plan to have the merger finalized by the start of the 2020 deer season. Through this combination, and their partnerships with other conservation organizations around the country, I am certain that deer hunting will remain at the forefront of the conservation conversation in the future.



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# LEGENDS *of* CONSERVATION:

## Ken Buchholtz

By Alan Campbell

I first met Ken Buchholtz at The Stonehouse restaurant in Escanaba. I had a feel for his priorities before we sat down.

"Didn't I read someplace that you received another award?" asked a woman while we were waiting for a table.

"Well, that wasn't me," Buchholtz deflected.

"That was a whole team of us helping people."

On our way out, I bellied up to the lunch bar to ask if anyone would provide some words about Ken for this story. All three guys said they would.

After offering obligatory doses of Upper Peninsula humor, they got down to business.

"What a great guy he is," said Bob Romps, who happens to be transportation coordinator for Pathways Community Mental Health.

"Giving up so much for the community and the handicapped. I've sat on some committees with him. It's unbelievable. He's always giving."

I believe Buchholtz is responsible for getting more physically and mentally challenged people in the woods than anyone who lives above the Straits, and possibly in the entire state. And that's saying something considering the network of organizations — often working in obscurity — dedicated toward that same purpose.

Buchholtz's best-known title is president of the Wheelin' Sportsmen program in Escanaba, which is affiliated with the National Wild Turkey Federation. But his connections run deep throughout the U.P., allowing him to call on a journal full of groups and people willing to help those who need a boost to once again enjoy the outdoors.





## Survivor makes vow

Buchholtz's life and career path seemed on cruise control until a rare disease caused the walls of his blood vessels to inflame, limiting blood flows. He sold his half of an equipment repair shop in Escanaba and figured his life would end soon after his kidneys failed.

"My health was crappy. I made a promise that if I got better, I'm going to see what I can do to help other people get outdoors," he said.

A kidney transplant in 2007 from his sister gave Buchholtz the strength to fight back Wegeners Disease, which has been in remission ever since.

"For eight years, I had that virus, and I didn't know what was eating me up," Buchholtz recalled. "Then I got my kidney and strength back. Just from helping people, the joy that came out of it, made me feel

*"My health was crappy. I made a promise that if I got better, I'm going to see what I can do to help other people get outdoors."*

good. I've been helping people ever since. "All it takes is time and effort."

He calls Bob Miller, a quadriplegic since the age of 18 due to a four-wheeler accident, his "first guinea pig." They met while going through dialysis.

Working with Mickey Salmon, a now-deceased paraplegic from Escanaba, and local body shop welder Joe Wellman, the trio embarked along a trial-and-error road toward finding a way for Miller to once again shoot a rifle.

Buchholtz and Miller had talked about how much they missed outdoor pursuits while undergoing treatments.

The stumbling block in the process was how to move the scope on Bob's .243 Savage, which was held in place by a homemade brace attached to his wheelchair, closer to his eye.

"Finally, I took a screwdriver and made a scratch on the stock. I put a blanket on my Weber grill and laid it on there. Then I took a hacksaw out and cut it off. Bob wasn't happy. It was a nice stock. But the first time he looked down it, he said 'Holy crap, I can see the target and all the trees.' We shot six, seven deer and a couple bear. And we blew the window out of the blind a couple times, too. There was a lot of excitement and the windows were shut because it was cold," Buchholtz said.

Miller has since passed, but his name is immortalized on the wall of a handicap trailer built by the Wheelin' Sportsmen.

Unable to work because of chronic physical limitations, Buchholtz emerged from his death bed to turn his full attention toward helping others — especially in their pursuits of hunting and fishing. He accepts only pure joy in return.

Buchholtz's eyes water when recalling Ray Bauchamp from Flat Rock kill his last deer. Bauchamp was 85 and on dialysis.

"His brother called me up and said Ray wants to go hunting, and he's never going to make it to deer season. It was Labor Day. Three days later, we were in a blind and hunting with a crop damage permit. A doe came out, and he said, 'Look at the big buck!'... his son wrote a story he called 'The

**Ken Buchholtz explains how a "sip and puff" device allows someone unable to move their hands to accurately fire a rifle.**







**Jeff and Deanna Kwaitkowski harvested a trophy tom in a hunt orchestrated by Ken Buchholtz, who has won numerous awards for his work with physically challenged hunters.**

Last Hunt' and sent us a donation. He said he would never forget this," Buchholtz said.

Last fall Darrell Tattrow, a resident of St. Jude's Assisted Living, shot a black bear from a handicapped blind Buchholtz built behind his house on 47 acres.

"My friend, Derek Lark, who has spina bifida, shot a 10-point," Buchholtz continued.

Too often in this age of food plots and trail cams, we forget that no one person owns the animals we pursue. Technically, they are owned by all Michigan residents. To Buchholtz, they are gifts, and

he would much rather give than receive.

One gift can brighten many lives. The director of an assisted living facility sent a \$450 donation to Wheelin' Sportsmen along with a note to Buchholtz saying how much the lives of patients are enlightened when someone returns from an outdoor adventure. Game harvested is butchered and its meat smoked. If appropriate, deer heads are mounted.

"Their friends all gather around and share the food, and they relive the hunt together," Buchholtz said.

Spending an afternoon with

Buchholtz leads to more stories than can be recounted. He estimates that he takes 50 people out hunting each year, and he's been at it for a dozen years.

## A human link

Every community in Michigan has the resources to help its less fortunate, but few have a Ken Buchholtz with the dedication and trustfulness to connect givers with recipients. Brenda Crow, a licensed technician with Pathways Community Mental Health, has called on Buchholtz for more than a decade.

"Ken is a wonderful man," she said. "He has to have helped hundreds of people just in our group alone. He's touched so many lives and impacted them and their families."

It's Crow's job — and life's purpose — to mainstream people with disabilities, to help them gain independence, to help them find enjoyment in life. She recalls when a petite, 68-year-old woman decided she wanted to shoot a gun for the first time.

"All the guys were talking about turkey hunting. So she shoots the biggest turkey. I was helping arrange her apartment the other day and asked where to put her camouflage clothing. She said, 'We have to keep it by the door. I'm going to go hunting with Ken,'" Crow said.

Buchholtz has assembled an amazing circle of friends that keeps growing. A farmer needs does removed? The call comes to Ken. The MDNR has funds to start a pilot archery program in schools? Start with Ken. Have a relative who can't get to his blind? Ken will get him there.

"We get people all the time who call and offer a property to hunt, and we're talking people who don't even let their relatives hunt. They especially like helping veterans. We get our choice of some nice properties, and then I usually make the choice by whoever is in the toughest shape," Buchholtz said.



*"A lot of people like to help, but he goes to a different level. I get a little teared up talking about it... he is without a doubt, one in a million."*

"Everybody knows who he is, and he's trustworthy," Crow continued. "If he says he's going to do something, he's going to do it. He's good at connecting people. Ken has told me to call someone, and I'll make the call. When they hear the name 'Ken,' they know it's all on the up and up."

Twenty years ago, Jeff Kwiatkowski, a police officer from Roseville, went in for spinal surgery and woke up a paraplegic. His dad was a Detroit cop and avid outdoorsman, which is all Kwiatkowski wanted in life. As fast as a knife can cut, his passions were taken.

"I always loved to blaze my own trail, to not stay behind the desk, to always get out there. It devastated me. I couldn't open (an outdoor) magazine or watch a hunting show. I just got so choked up. I didn't know how to get out there," said Kwiatkowski, who is now 58.

He credits his wife, who he proposed to at Cabela's in Dundee, his hunting camp near Cornell that has been rehabbed into their full-time home and friends like Ken "Buck" Buchholtz for getting him through those tough times. Taking a handicapped person hunting isn't for everyone, Kwiatkowski readily admits. Buchholtz regales in the opportunity.

"In dealing with people with disabilities, and I can say this because I'm one of them, we come with a lot of baggage. A lot of us may be on medication. There may be self-cathing, so we have to have some privacy. Or we might need a caregiver. Not once have I seen him roll his eyes... there is never a complaint from Ken," Kwiatkowski said.

Buchholtz is a tireless advocate for hunters with disabilities

— pushing for law changes that allow the disabled to hunt from a vehicle with a permit or to bait deer during the Liberty Hunt.

"He drives from one end of the U.P. to the other. Then, he goes downstate for meetings. I don't know where he gets the energy. A lot of people like to help, but he goes to a different level. I get a little teared up talking about it... he is without a doubt, one in a million," Kwiatkowski said.

Buchholtz isn't shy about pulling favors to help others, but he does shy away from the spotlight.

"Please don't feel sorry for us," Kwiatkowski said. "But he gives hope each year. When you're in that blind with him, you feel like he's your old hunting buddy... You never hear him boasting about himself. I'll come upon an article about Ken and call him up. He would never say anything. I know he's won some big awards."

## Recognition piling up

Buchholtz served those in need in relative obscurity until a few years ago when recipient organizations began nominating him for awards. Despite his best efforts, the accolades keep coming.

He picked up his latest award a few months ago at the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) convention in Nashville, where he was named Wheelin' Sportsmen Volunteer of the Year.

Buchholtz credited the Escanaba Wheel'n team for the award while telling Turkey Country magazine, "There is nothing better than getting people back out in the great outdoors doing what they enjoy most. The word 'can't' is not in our vocabulary; if there is a 'wheel' there is a way, and a smile makes it all the worthwhile."

He's also been named volunteer of the year by the Delta County Chamber of Commerce, received the Roger M. Latham Sportsman's Service Award from the NWTF, been named a partner in conservation by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, been named a hero of conservation by Field & Stream and received the distinguished citizenship award from the Escanaba Elks club.

In the health field, he was named volunteer of the year in 2019 by the National Association of Activity Professionals.

Just as awards follow good deeds, so does revenue to the Wheel'n Sportsman organization. The group's annual barbecue banquet held outdoors in August was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. But earlier this year, Buchholtz was asked to speak to the Gladstone Lions Club about the program, which resulted in a \$1,000 donation. Attending was a local bank manager who followed with a \$3,000 donation from M-Bank.

"We've got close to \$5,000 in donations already, and we aren't going to build anything," Buchholtz said. "We'll be fine."

The Escanaba Wheelin' Sportsmen has come a long way from humble beginnings. Buchholtz recalls working with a high school shop class to build a handicap trailer from "an axle and two tires that held air, and off we went."

Now the group has three such trailers with little chance that Wheelin' Sportsmen or Buchholtz will run off the road. A sign hanging near the main entrance of Buchholtz house reads, "Kindness is a language that even the deaf can hear and the blind can see."



# Social Distancing can also mean Growing Closer to Family

*Michigan dad shares love of hunting with his teenagers – and it's a gift they'll never forget*

**Sponsored by the Michigan Wildlife Council**

**J**eff Ross has bagged his fair share of game over the years. But it's the time spent hunting with his children that's his greatest pride.

"Turkey season this spring was probably one of the best I've ever had because I got to take my son and daughter out so often while schools were closed because of the coronavirus," said Ross, who lives near Lansing with his wife, Jennifer, and children, 18-year-old Alison and 15-year-old Charles.

The Rosses weren't alone.

Plenty of Michigan hunters took advantage of stay-home orders this spring, prompting a 25% jump in overall hunting activity, driven heavily by a robust turkey season. Regular hunters came out more often, new hunters tried out the sport, and the number of youth hunters was also up, according to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

"Turkey hunting provided one of the best ways to enjoy the outdoors and still abide by the social distancing needs associated with COVID-19," said Al Stewart, DNR upland game bird specialist.

DNR records show 105,827 spring turkey licenses were sold in 2020 – a 27% increase over the 83,062 purchased the previous year.

There's also been a major uptick in the 10-16 and 17-24 age groups for hunting and fishing in 2020.

"Already this year, we've seen thousands more youth hunters out there discovering the great outdoors than in previous years," said Ed Golder, DNR public information officer. "Our hope is this



**Charles Ross is happy with his first tom turkey, bagged this spring. The Ross family took advantage of extra time off school and extracurricular activities this spring to hunt for turkey.**

trend will continue growing this fall and beyond."

## **Licenses = wildlife management dollars**

More license sales also mean more dollars for fish and wildlife management.

In fact, the primary funding for some of the most important conservation work in Michigan is generated by hunting and fishing

license sales – not state taxes. In 2019, license sales contributed \$61 million for wildlife management in every corner of the state.

With more sportsmen and women in the woods and water, Michigan may also receive additional revenue generated through the sale of hunting and fishing equipment. Michigan's share of firearms, ammunition and hunting gear purchases totaled \$20.2 million in 2019, in addition to \$11.4 million from fishing equipment sales. All





**Siblings Alison and Charles Ross have hunted pheasant and duck with their dad, Jeff, for years. This spring, they got the chance to try turkey hunting – and loved it.**

those dollars are also used to fund wildlife management work.

“That’s a significant amount of money generated specifically by hunters and anglers,” Golder said.

But before the Michigan Wildlife Council (MWC) was formed in late 2013, many Michiganders were unaware of the important role sportsmen and women play in preserving Michigan’s cherished outdoors.

Over the last five years, the council has conducted a public awareness campaign to explain the many ways that scientifically based conservation and wildlife management practices – including regulated hunting and fishing – are essential.

The MWC shares its message across the state through unique billboards, TV and radio spots, social media posts and online news

articles to explain the many ways Michigan’s quality of life is inextricably tied to our world-class wildlife management and conservation efforts.

“We are proud to help inform the public about the important role our hunters and anglers play in Michigan,” said Nick Buggia, Michigan Wildlife Council chairman.

## Hunting is family time

The Ross kids grew up hunting pheasants with their dad. But it wasn’t until this spring that they really had the time to hunt turkey.

Charles Ross, a sophomore at Haslett High School, said he’ll never forget the day he and his dad each took a tom turkey within seconds of each other.

His sister, Alison, said that between school and extracurricular activities, she hadn’t had time to hunt in recent seasons. This spring, though, after graduating a semester early from Haslett High and with her dad working from home for a cellular company because of the “Stay Home, Stay Safe” order, more time was available.

“While I didn’t get a bird this year, I had many invaluable experiences,” Alison said. “I got to spend a handful of peaceful mornings and afternoons sitting in the woods while the chipmunks and squirrels ran around me – and shared more than a few laughs and McDonald’s cheeseburgers with my dad.

“I’m starting college this fall in search of greater adventures. But I’ll always hold the memories of this season close to my heart.”



## *Destination Out-of-Doors*



# Recreating Responsibly in Gaylord, MI

**A**s we continue to navigate through these challenging times in the travel and tourism industry, it's fitting that we look to the wild places of our state — especially the heart of the Northern Lower

Peninsula, Gaylord. People in rural areas, with world-class trout fishing, paddling, hiking and prime wildlife viewing opportunities, are ready for visitors to practice responsible recreation.

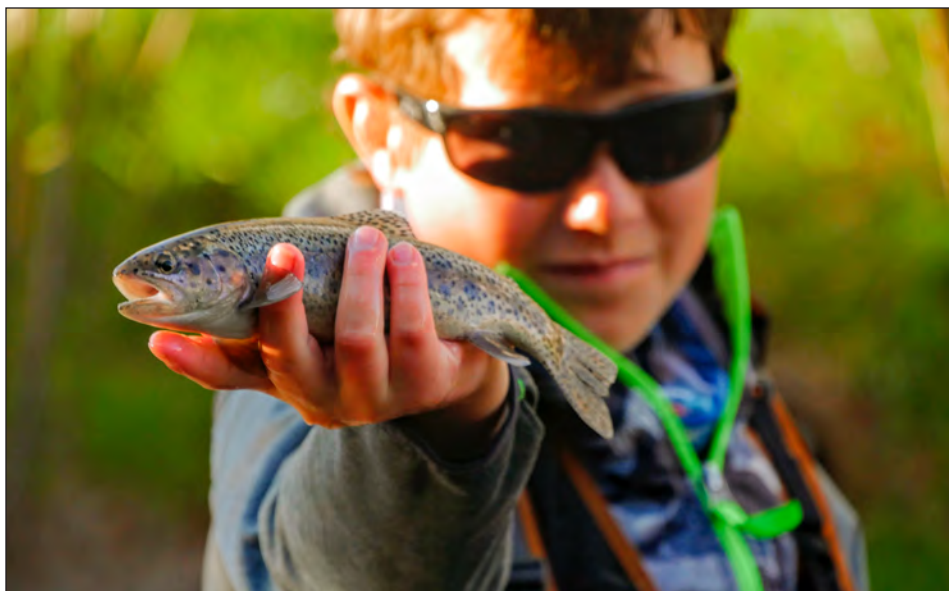
A recent story in the Detroit

News indicated that sales of bikes, kayaks, fishing equipment and outdoor gear is at an all-time high, and in fact, some major outdoor retailers are completely sold out of these items. If you're one of those people who recently restocked, Gaylord is a great place to try out all of these new purchases. In looking at the Gaylord community, many realize that the area has some of the best outdoor recreation offerings in Michigan for exploring all of the outdoors.

Just look around and you'll quickly realize that the outdoor recreation offerings in this part of the state are extensive and expansive. Gaylord is home to the Pigeon River Country State Forest with over 110,000 acres of wild forestland replete with rustic campgrounds, trails, sinkhole lakes and rivers. They have over 90 small inland lakes and the headwaters for five major river systems. Gaylord boasts one of the most beautiful hiking and biking trails in Michigan, the North Central State Trail, which will safely take you south to Waters along Otsego Lake or north all the way to the Mackinac Bridge.







walk among the giants who have received this award,” said Michigan Out-of-Doors Editor Nick Green. “I’m excited to join my writing colleagues and friends for some responsible recreation in Northern Michigan this fall and accept this cherished recognition on behalf of our members and conservationists from across the state.”

The lakes, trails and scenic spaces we enjoy every day bring a great deal of happiness and peace to visitors of Gaylord. We hope you will find some time to get there this fall, do some bird hunting, hike a trail or wet a fly on a tucked-away trout stream.

Finally, there are gorgeous public areas, including Aspen Park, Groen Nature Preserve and Pine Baron Pathway.

Having these assets is important because as people are beginning to return to travel, they are looking for unique outdoor experiences — experiences that are readily available in the northwoods outside of Gaylord. The town is open for business, and people can travel and enjoy the outdoors in such a manner that allows for social distancing.

Gaylord will also play host to the Association of Great Lakes Outdoors Writers (AGLOW) annual meeting this fall. Members of this group write extensively about outdoor experiences, with a particular interest in hunting and fishing. They are some of the best outdoor communicators in the country, and the city of Gaylord will be showing them their best. Staff from all over the city have worked incredibly hard the past three years to bring this talented group to Gaylord, and their articles, social media posts and blogs will show off the excellent opportunities that this region has to offer for years to come.

MUCC will be recognized at this conference with a Golden Glow Organization Award, which is the highest honor bestowed to an organization or individual by AGLOW.

“It is an honor for MUCC to

## *Some of Michigan's best bird hunting!*

**The Pigeon River Country State Forest.  
All Outdoors on 110,000 Acres!**

Photo by Dennis Buchner, Unsplash



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# Gotten Squirrelly

By Blake Sherburne

I have picked up a new habit over the last couple of falls, and honestly, a new vice is the last thing I needed. I have too many hobbies already. I have mentioned them in this column in the past, but they include deer hunting, upland bird hunting along with training a bird dog, snowmobiling, skiing, a little bit of boating, kayaking, camping, gear fishing and a real severe fly-fishing addiction. Chasing bushy tails was never entirely on my radar.

My maternal grandfather was a big-time tree rat chaser. He had a great line of dogs with which he chased raccoons by moonlight, and he sent them after squirrels during the day. In fact, he was twice featured on the Michigan Out-of-Doors television show with his dogs back when Bob Garner hosted. He and Garner maintained a life-long friendship afterward, culminating with Bob delivering a eulogy at my grandpa's funeral.

I only hunted with my grandfather behind his dogs one time. Just as I was getting old enough to go along, my grandpa sold his dogs and quit squirrel hunting. My dad was not a squirrel hunter, so I was never really exposed to it.

This all changed a couple years ago when a friend and I decided to trick out our 10/22s. When I was researching my first .22, my dad suggested I ask my grandpa which one I should buy because he had so much experience with raccoon and squirrel hunting. Without hesitating, he suggested the Ruger

10/22, and he was right.

We decided to go the full Monty on our 10/22s. By the time we were done, the only parts left that were still Ruger were the receiver and the bolt. Aftermarket triggers, barrels and stocks were installed, and scopes were replaced.

When you have a new toy, you feel like you have to take it out for a test drive. So, we decided to try our hands at squirrel hunting.

The first season was easy. Small game season coincided with the most significant White Oak acorn drop I have ever seen. The

*"Actually, most of them got away due to our lazy approach, but it was fun driving our favorite two-tracks..."*



two-tracks along the Manistee were, literally, crunchy. My hunting/fishing buddy and I just cruised two-tracks until we found a squirrel or two working underneath a white oak tree that had produced. We jumped out of the truck, treed the squirrel and tag-teamed finding them and shooting them. We never killed many squirrels this way. Actually, most of them got away due to our lazy approach, but it was fun driving our favorite two tracks in the warmth and comfort of the cab of a pickup through the snow accompanied by a thermos of coffee after the cold and wet of deer season and especially Christmas tree harvest season. We stayed warm and dry but put enough squirrel meat in the freezer to serve all our friends during our Super Bowl party.

Last season, however, turned out to be a different story. The White Oaks in our usual haunt did not produce any mast, and the Red Oak production was spotty. We had to branch out a little to find squirrels. Weekend after weekend failed to turn up more than a squirrel or two. When snow finally fell, our usual route failed to show us even tracks in the snow. We knew we had to change tactics a little.

I finally found a good population of squirrels on a small chunk of property we own. There was a small Red Oak acorn drop and a good bit of Beech mast on the ground. Squirrel sign abounded in the few inches of snow that fell in early December. Several days, Kenny, my aforementioned, omnipresent hunting/fishing buddy, and I pulled onto that property after our swing through the usual haunts. We failed every time, but I knew the squirrels were there.

Finally, I decided I would have to get off my lazy butt and learn how to hunt squirrels. The next time I pulled into the property, I parked farther away from the mast-producing trees and quietly exited my truck. A few inches of snow silenced the landscape, but still, when I shut my front door, I saw seven different bushy tails



make haste for the nearest trees. I slowly put my jacket and vest on and slid my .22 from its case. I knew I would have to move slowly, unlike what Kenny and I had been doing on previous attempts. I made my way to the nearest safety tree that I had seen a few squirrels head towards when I spooked them with my truck. Using a tip from Steven Rinella's *The Meateater*, I had brought my binoculars along. They proved to be helpful when trying to locate hidden squirrels up in the top of the multi-trunked soft maple

in which the squirrels had taken refuge.

"Head shots only," was the lone piece of squirrel hunting advice besides the Ruger 10/22 that I could remember from my grandfather. I had already tested this wisdom the hard way and had found that Grandpa Hamilton was right. Squirrels were much easier to skin and clean, and there was much less meat loss when the only damage was to the head. This requires more patience than I usually possess, but with the gift



of experience to go along with his advice, I have been able to hold off and be selective about my shots. Kenny, on the other hand, is a little more interested in production and prefers to take any shot that will allow him to hit them "in the squirrel." I took great care when sighting in my new squirrel hunting rig. I knew headshots would be preferred. Kenny deemed his sighted in when he got it fine enough to be "minute of squirrel."

Turns out, binoculars are a great tool when it comes to locating squirrels. Squirrels do their level best to hide, climbing as high as they can, laying out flat or circling around the opposite side of the trunk from their pursuer. I located two beautiful black squirrels in the top of that first tree. The first I targeted used the avoid-and-evade technique, consistently keeping the tree between me and it.

I pursued it quietly, slowly and patiently, circling around the tree, until I found an angle where he thought he was hidden and I had a rest on a nearby smaller tree and a

slight angle at the back of his head. Quickly, my first squirrel of the day was in my game bag. The second squirrel in that tree used another technique. It climbed as high as it could and laid out flat against a limb that was not quite big enough to provide cover. One tree, two squirrels down and already my most successful trip of the season.

I continued on into the area of the property that has more mast-producing trees. When I cleared some brush, I stopped to take stock before I continued. I could see about a dozen squirrels from that one spot. Excited, my next move was too sudden and I spooked a squirrel I had not seen at only about fifteen yards. It shot up a small Hemlock where I knew the cover would be too dense to get a decent shot, so I sat (or stood) tight. Eventually, the squirrel couldn't buck its curiosity anymore, and it peaked around the trunk at about the level of the lowest limb. Three squirrels were in the bag.

Upon collecting my third squirrel, I spotted my fourth. It

was making its way along an enormous blowdown beech log. It was a long shot, but I decided to give it a poke anyway and missed clean. The squirrel vanished, so I made my way over to the log to make sure I had not hit it and knocked it off the log. It was not there, so I sat down on the log to give the woods a few minutes to calm down again.

With my binoculars, I soon located the squirrel in the top of a giant red oak that the beech had fallen around when it came down. With my fourth squirrel in the bag, I headed deliberately toward the back of the property.

I spotted another in a maple right on the back line of the 20-acre piece. It was out in the open, not yet aware of my presence. I elected to take another too long shot. The first shot did not even scare it, so I took another. This time, the lucky varmint scooted down from his perch and up a nearby tree where it disappeared into a hole.

When I turned back towards my parking spot, I would have sworn there was not a squirrel left







on the property. All of the recent racket and movement had made the remainders nervous enough that they had apparently all sought out their hidey-holes. Seemingly satisfied with being just one short of my bag limit, I started moseying back in the direction of the warm truck.

Being one short of my limit and of a mind to rectify that problem, I kept my eyes towards the treetops and located one more on the trunk of a big oak. I circled around the tree trying to get an open shot on the squirrel's head. For those not keeping track, I had spent seven .22 rounds to down four squirrels. I finally found an angle I liked, lined up the crosshairs, only to hear the firing pin drop on an empty chamber. I had failed to top off my magazine when I had left the house. I dug around for my other mag only to realize that I had left it in the truck in my haste to pursue the bushy tails I had spooked when I shut my door. Greed consumed my heart, and I hot-footed it back to the truck and then returned to the tree to find the handsome black squirrel right where I had left it. I

left with five squirrels in my game bag and new-found confidence in my squirrel hunting ability. All of a sudden, I knew that I could leave the comfort of the truck and find success when it was failing to just fall into my lap.

The table fare that squirrels provide has only heightened my passion for my new addiction. We have prepared squirrels for a fair number of experienced wild game eaters. All have been impressed with the quality of the food. Rinella's squirrel wing recipe is my favorite as it combines my love of chicken wings with wild game. Kenny and I prepared 'squirrel wings' for one of the wild game chef contributors to Michigan Out-of-Doors Magazine to have him exclaim that he was changing the way he cooked squirrels.

The dining room is about the only aspect where this new vice has improved my life, however. If one was to ask my wife, I probably have not gained any brownie points by finding a new reason to spend more time out of the house (or maybe not). In addition, I already had a hard enough time watching the

road. Most outdoorsmen will probably commiserate when I admit that most of my windshield time is spent looking for deer, bears, coyotes, owls, eagles, etc. I apologize to any other driver who has encountered me driving along any piece of water. Cuidado! because the road is about the last place to which I am able to pay attention to. My wife is often surprised at what my color-blind eyes can pick up. About an owl I spotted one time, she asked how I could have picked that out of the stand of Aspens in which it was roosted. "You can't look at the road," I replied. All I can say in my defense is thank goodness for country roads and rumble strips. Now that I have added squirrel hunting, and along with checking out new Grouse coverts, I am compelled to scout new mast locations and mentally note the coordinates of any squirrel unlucky enough to encounter me on the road. To the rest of you out there, I apologize. Keep your eyes out for a blue F-150. I promise you that my swerving is not a result of texting. I just cannot keep my eyes on the road.



# The Value of Fish

**By Charlie Booher**

*MUCC State Policy Fellow*

**A**s anglers and conservationists, I would hope that we can all agree that fish have some value. Whether you measure it in dollars per pound or sunsets on the lake, fish, and the pursuit of those fish, is worth a whole lot.

For those of us who deal with policies relating to fisheries, we are always trying to put dollars to that value. In doing so, you can't get very far before you encounter the words "ecosystem services" — and especially the notion of quantifying them. Ecosystem services are the many and varied benefits to humans derived from healthy ecosystems and range in example from fish and timber to water filtration and clean air.

Certain scientists and politicians are always trying to put a dollar value on these things so that they can be compared somewhat equitably.

There is a significant debate about whether or not these values should be calculated in the first place. Folks who oppose this tend

to point out that if you can put a dollar value on something, there is always someone who is willing and able to buy it — and that the value of baitfish, non-game species and aquatic plant life is hardly ever fully expressed through these calculations. For this article's sake, we'll set these concerns aside (which shouldn't be overlooked as you read on).

A number of different people and groups seek access to these public resources for food, recreation, medicine, culture and many other reasons.

Years ago, I had the privilege of visiting Iceland and spending some time in Reykjavik. Between hiking around glaciers, watching puffins and talking to cod fishers and whalers, I had the chance to visit a number of local businesses within the Iceland Ocean Cluster. Located in an old fish house on the docks, this modern glass building is now an incubator space for small businesses centered around the fisheries of the Northern Atlantic. In visiting, I vividly remember one of the executives describing a piece of their mission: to extract as much value as possible from each fish

that is brought to market.

Now, this seemed like a reasonable proposition. There is certainly more value to a pollock than just the fillets that we find under the bun of a McDonald's Filet-O-Fish, and there is a great deal of interest in turning other parts of the fish, often considered waste, into valuable products. Companies in the cluster include pharmaceutical professionals, food scientists, clothing designers, netmakers and fishmongers — all focused on fish physiology and product development. They do an excellent job of this and have been able to multiply the value of a single fish many times over.

As the thinking here goes, if we can extract additional value from each fish, then we don't need to catch as many to make a living. But there are other ways to increase the value of a fish.

Maximizing the value of individual cod in those fisheries systems falls to the industry, but here in Michigan, the responsibility of gleaned the highest "value" of those fish lies with the state government.





Fish in the United States are considered a "public good" — a resource owned by everyone, not any one individual. According to decades of case law and the Michigan state constitution, these resources are entrusted to the care of the state legislature for maintenance and improvement. Years ago, the decision was made that the best mechanism for funding this maintenance was through the sale of some of its excess — a practice we take up every time we buy a fishing license.

However, the system that the state has developed over many generations does not center around nets. It instead focuses on rods and reels.

In thinking more deeply about this now, I came to realize that there are many fish species that — if you're trying to maximize value — you'll never truly achieve its full potential in the nets of a commercial angler.

Even if you utilize nearly all of the mass of the fish, the value proposition still pales in comparison to the willingness of someone to pursue that fish. Aside from the fillets, parts of the fish could be used in medical supplements, pharmaceuticals, health and beauty products or fish leather from the skin. While these products use more of the physical fish, they do not maximize the fiscal value of

that individual fish — especially for native Great Lakes species like walleye, perch and lake trout.

Now, where this does make a whole lot of sense is with fish like whitefish, Atlantic cod or lake herring (cisco). I love smoked whitefish dip and try to make a habit of eating fish that was caught by someone I know. I also have a heck of a time catching whitefish with a rod and reel. So, I am more than happy to pay a commercial fisher (whether state or tribally licensed) to catch and smoke some for me.

However, there are a number of species here in Michigan that I, and others, would pay handsomely to pursue.

The Michigan sportfishing industry contributes \$2.3 billion in direct expenditures to the state economy and supports more than 35,000 jobs. These same figures were reported in two distinct economic studies commissioned at both the state and federal

levels — one by Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) and the other by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Importantly, more than 90 percent of this industry is made up of small businesses — including manufacturers of tackle and boats, retailers and charter boat captains. There are over 570 charter businesses in Michigan that own and operate more than 650 boats on the Great Lakes. In





2019, these businesses took more than 77,000 people fishing and made almost 20,000 trips.

Yet these fishing trips aren't just for ultra-wealthy out-of-staters. A study conducted by researchers at Michigan State University found that almost two-thirds of the recreational anglers who pursue lake trout, steelhead and/or salmon from a boat on the Great Lakes make less than \$100,000 per year.

In the state of Michigan, the Great Lakes commercial fishing industry brings in less than \$10 million in dockside value, including both state-licensed and tribal commercial fishers. So, we are facing a comparison between \$2.3 billion (with a "B") and \$10 million (with an "M").

According to the principles and tenets of the public trust doctrine, the state, including the legislature, the Department of Natural Resources and the Natural

Resources Commission, has an obligation to the citizens of the state of Michigan to get the greatest value, for the greatest number of people, out of Michigan's fisheries. It's important to remember that Michigan shares these fisheries with a number of other sovereigns, including Native American Bands and Tribes, other states and Canadian provinces. To be clear, the public trust doctrine, in this case, is only being applied to fish under the jurisdiction of the state of Michigan — the division of fish among these governments could (and does) take up volumes of books.

Harvesting fish, on a license from the state, is a privilege. It can be revoked by the state for a year or two or for life.

So when you buy a fishing license, jig off your dock, troll from the boat, pick up fillets from the

grocery store, take a fish oil supplement, feed your dog a fish-based food or anything else surrounding Michigan's fisheries, think for a while about what value that brings into your life. Then think about how that fish could be used differently and why it was used in the way that it was. If you like it, you're happy with the price you paid for it and you're comfortable with who is making money off of the fish that you own, excellent. I do it all the time — and you can bet that I'm not going to stop buying whitefish dip from the fishmongers around the state. But if it doesn't quite make sense — or you'd have more fun catching that fish — tell your elected officials just that. If you don't quite know what the best way to do that is, visit us at [mucc.org](http://mucc.org) and we'll point you in the right direction.







# SPORTSMEN'S IMPACT *on Michigan's Economy*

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

**\$11.2B**

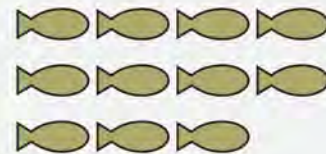


The amount generated by **MICHIGAN'S HUNTING AND FISHING** industry for the state economy each year

## NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

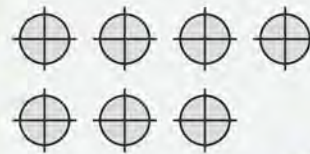
Anglers

**1.1 MILLION**



Hunters

**700,000**



## JOB CREATION

The hunting and fishing industry supports more than **171,000** jobs in Michigan

HUNTING **135,579 JOBS**

FISHING

**35,422 JOBS**

## SALARIES & GDP



The hunting and fishing industry contributes **\$3.3 BILLION** in salaries and wages to Michigan households



The hunting and fishing industry also has a **\$7.2 BILLION** value-add to Michigan's GDP

## INDUSTRY

Michigan is No. 1 among Great Lakes states for jobs created from hunting and fishing purchases. In every region of Michigan, the number of jobs created and supported by hunting and fishing puts the industry in the **TOP 10 PERCENT OF JOB-CREATION** industries





A close-up photograph of a brown trout with a fishing lure in its mouth, held by a person's hand. The fish has a golden-brown body with dark spots and a white stripe along its side. The lure is a small, silver, cylindrical object with orange and red details. The person's hand is visible, wearing a green jacket and a grey glove. The background is dark and blurry, suggesting a body of water.

# Fall Visitors

By Jim Bedford

**A**s I have previously written in these pages, hunters are not the only Michigan sportsmen that seem to be continually yearning for autumn. Fall is also an exhilarating time for Michigan river anglers. Chinook, coho and pink salmon, brown, lake and brook trout, and Atlantic salmon all spawn in the fall and to varying degrees migrate up Great Lakes

tributaries to procreate.

Steelhead are spring spawning fish, but a portion of these great game fish run the rivers in the summer and fall. Thus the river angler has a real variety of salmon and trout to tempt with his offerings in the fall. Often it is possible to catch four or five species of these fish in the same river on the same outing.

Before we get into more detail

on fishing for our anadromous salmonids, let's talk about their current plight in lakes Michigan and Huron. Mussels have depleted the plankton levels to the point that alewives are mostly gone from Lake Huron and quite low levels in Lake Michigan. These plankton-feeding fish have been the primary forage base for salmon and trout in these lakes. Chinook and coho salmon have been especially dependent





**The author with a deer-season steelhead.**

on them for food. Luckily, round gobies have been feeding heavily on the mussels and steelhead, brown trout, Atlantic salmon and, especially, lake trout have adapted to feeding on this fish. Coho salmon are also eating gobies, and I think chinook will also get more serious about dining on them.

The bottom line is that there are fewer salmon and trout in Lakes Huron and Michigan now. We have reduced the stocking rates to match the forage base, but it is also important to note that smolts have a difficult time finding enough to eat when they transition to the lakes. And, because prey fish are scarce, the salmon and trout in the lakes have no problem becoming cannibals when baitfish are scarce.

Because wild smolts have spent varying amounts of time finding their own food and dodging predators, they are much more able to survive their trip to the lakes and at surviving once they get there. Hatchery smolts have led a sheltered life and have never had to find

their own food, so their survival to adulthood is much lower.

Thus, it is important that we practice selective harvest when we fish in the rivers in the fall. Releasing wild fish, especially the females, is prudent. Often, we hear that the coho and chinook salmon are going to die anyway, so why not keep them all. This statement doesn't take into account that their successful spawning is important.

While Atlantic salmon and summer steelhead may begin their runs in early summer, their river numbers build to a peak in early fall. While Atlantic salmon are currently mostly limited to the St. Mary's River, the DNR has started to stock them in other Lake Huron tributaries and harbors, and a fall run has been established in the Au Sable.

Summer steelhead are primarily a Lake Michigan fish. The Skamania strain has been the most successful with Indiana supplying Michigan with eggs in exchange for eggs from our Little

Manistee winter strain. These fish start running in June depending on the river temperatures, but the most dependable time to find good numbers is in late summer and early fall. While summer steelhead are only stocked in the St. Joseph River by Indiana and the Manistee River by Michigan, they frequently stray to other rivers.

Chinook salmon also begin their spawning migration in late summer with runs peaking in September. In some northern rivers, these fish will run upstream in midsummer, but most of these fish won't spawn until September or October.

These salmon have been extremely successful at reproducing themselves, and you would be hard-pressed to find a sizable stream that doesn't host a run of these fish. The majority make their only spawning run at ages between two and four years. In recent years, the average size and number of returning kings have decreased with last year a significant exception. Fishing is often better in the rivers when fish are not crowded in the holes.

In early September, it is best to look for kings in the deep holes of the lower reaches of the tributary rivers. As the month progresses, more and more fish will move to the spawning gravel. By early October, spawning activity will peak and the runs and holes near the gravel and the spawning beds themselves will be the place to concentrate your efforts for our largest autumn migrant.

Pink salmon also reach their peak river numbers in September. None of these fish are stocked, but because of their short river residence, they have been very successful at reproducing themselves. The largest runs occur in Lake Superior and northern Lake Huron tributaries in odd years.

While many coho enter the rivers in September, the main run usually arrives in October. Migrations of this fish continue into November and December. The coho tends to remain in good shape





***Terri Bedford admires a chinook in the net during an October fishing excursion.***

in the river for a longer time than its Pacific cousins. Bright silver cohos have arrived in Lansing after negotiating over a hundred miles of river and finding their way up five fish ladders.

These salmon spend their first year and a half in the river, so they have been much less successful than the kings and pinks at natural reproduction. Like the pink salmon, they only spend a year and a half loading up on forage fish, but since they get a head start from a much larger smolting size, the cohos average several pounds larger. As you would expect, the best coho action will be in rivers that receive large plants.

Cohos are often aggressive on their spawning migration and are eager strikers of a wide variety of lures. They are frequently found in deep, slow holes near good spawning gravel.

While many brown trout attempt to spawn in the lakes themselves,

they do add to the river angler's bag. They begin to run in mid-September and most spawn in late October or early November. They

have a curious trait of remaining in the river after spawning, often staying until the spring runoff begins.

Little is known about the success or failure of the lake-run brown's attempts at natural reproduction. The best runs seem to occur where there are large plants in river harbors.

Runs of brookies or coasters are quite sporadic. The best runs occur in Lake Superior and northern Lake Michigan and Huron tributaries. Often these fish spawn in small trout stream tributaries which are closed to fishing by the time the brookies get there.

The vast majority of lake trout spawn on rocky reefs in the Great Lakes. Many large tributaries do host runs of these fish, and the lakereels seem to spawn before returning to the lake. Michigan's St. Joseph, Grand and Manistee rivers are the best bets for anadromous lake trout, but in recent years, their numbers have been very low.

Good numbers of our Great Lakes steelhead join their summer run cousins in October and November. Ample fall rains will increase the proportion of these spring spawners, which add themselves to the autumn anadromous

***The author caught this 17-pound coho during a November fishing trip.***





bounty.

Since fall steelhead are still many months from spawning, they are in prime shape and usually battle spectacularly. Many anglers focus on catching these fish and the other species taken are bonuses. Runs and holes in the lower parts of the rivers are the best places to intercept autumn steelies.

River-run trout rarely actively feed and the Pacific salmon are actually physiologically incapable of ingesting food. The notion that steelhead and lake run browns follow the salmon to "gorge on their eggs" is not true, but these fish, along with the other trout species, remain opportunistic. They will pick up food items that drift very close to them, but usually, they do not swallow the food.

Spawn, wigglers, wax worms, crawlers, and other natural baits smell and taste right, so even though they may not be swallowed, the lake-run trout will hold on to them long enough for you to get the hook set. Very fresh-run salmon will also pick up bait, but to increase your chances for all of the fall anadromous fish, I suggest you use brightly colored lures. Salmon will hit flashy lures right up till their last days. Fluorescent drift baits, silver and gold spoons and spinners, and minnow and high-action plugs will attract the attention of all the migrating salmonids.

Releasing a portion or all of your catch will help ensure that these fish get a chance to spawn. Try to land them before they become exhausted and take time

to resuscitate if necessary. Keep them in the water if possible, and if a photo is desired, have everything ready before you lift them out of the water.

If you desire some fresh fish for the table, remember that male salmon and trout can spawn with more than one female but if you keep a hen that reproductive potential will be lost. It takes less out of these fish to produce milt compared to eggs, so the flavor and firmness of the males will often be superior.

Autumn is an extraordinary time for the Great Lakes tributary angler. The rivers are full of exciting battlers, and you never know which one will hammer your lure next.



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# Artifact Hunting

By Jason Herbert

"**C**heck this out!" I had to wipe sweat from my eyes and take a breath before I could focus on what my dad was trying to show me.

Smiling wide, he was holding out something unique. Upon further examination, my dad had just discovered a chunk of a primitive blade or projectile point lying right in my front yard! We were in the process of building my new house, and the ground was getting overturned everywhere. He found it in a drainage ditch I dug for one of my gutters. I couldn't believe how sharp this artifact was and wondered what stories it could tell. I remember thinking that it was pretty cool to know I would be raising my family on shared ground with a primal hunter. I wondered what raising a family was like back then? I didn't have time to take a break because I had to keep moving on the house. My dad took the find as a sign of good luck and gave it to me. It's still on display in my shed antler case today.

A handful of years later, with this spring's quarantine, I found myself with all sorts of free time



***Here is a piece Kevin Ward recently found in a southwest Michigan field. This could have been a scraper, projectile point or knife blade.***

to pursue new hobbies. I love shed antler hunting and foraging for mushrooms so naturally, artifact hunting folded in nice with those hobbies. I'm always man enough to admit when I don't know anything (which is often), so the first thing I did was reach out to people on Facebook artifact hunting groups and try to find some local experts. It turns out one of the most avid and successful artifact hunters in Michigan, Kevin Ward, lives just down the road from me! Kevin has taught me so much about the sport. Here's what I have learned from speaking with Kevin and my own

experiences.

Most beginning artifact hunters probably stumble upon way more specimens than they realize and simply discard them without any appreciation. Not every artifact is a perfectly shaped arrowhead. While digging in my yard this spring, I found an almost completely round stone that I would have simply cast aside years ago. Now that I look at things from an artifact hunter's point of view, I realize it is a grinding stone and was probably a native family heirloom passed down through generations. Native Americans certainly used



arrowheads and projectile points, but they also had all sorts of tools and decorative items at their disposal. If you find something and it doesn't look natural, the chances are good that it's not. If you can, bring what you found home, take some pictures, put them on a Facebook group, or share with other experts and gather opinions. You may have just discovered something cool.

A great place to look for artifacts is a recently tilled agricultural field. It's not that the native people use these areas for farming as we do, it's just that the farm equipment does the hard work for us by constantly turning over fresh earth. This spring, after our fields were planted, I found a fascinating chunk of a projectile point or a knife blade on our farm near a hill. After doing some research, I realize this particular type of Collingwood chert was traded south to Michigan from Ontario. One expert I talked to described what I found is a "Paleo Point," meaning that this thing is very old. The Paleo era would be in layman's terms "caveman or ice age sort of stuff."

Hilly spots are great places to look. When native people camped or made small seasonal homes, they liked to be on the top of hills. The high ground always gave them a site advantage, and they could see all around them for potential threats. Also, something my dad taught me is that native people also like to be on top of hills because the windier the area was, the fewer bugs they had to deal with. So naturally, hilly spots are a great place to look for artifacts.

Kevin's favorite place is a field along a creek. Kevin shared with me that the creeks and river edges were like highways to native people. The ancient people needed freshwater, but the waterways also bottlenecked their traffic patterns. So naturally, any area where a lot of native people walked back and forth and camped would be ripe for artifact hunting.

Another thing I've learned from Kevin is that sandy areas



***This is a unique piece that the author's dad found on the family farm years ago. It appears to be fire cracked. It also has three perfectly gouged out holes that were probably used for grinding grain, corn or nuts.***

are great places to find artifacts. He shared with me that the native people did not like the camp in the mud, which makes total sense. In Kevin's words, "Arrowheads can be found in almost any field in Michigan, but some fields are better than others." The better fields are typically the ones along creeks. The makeup of the soil is also fundamental. The soil must be well-drained and the sandier the better. These sandy locations along the creeks make perfect camp locations. On camp locations, you can find many types of artifacts such as hammerstones, chert flakes, arrowheads and drills to name a few. Another overlooked artifact to search for is FCR or fire-cracked rock. FCR is a cracked rock that was heated by fire or boiling water. Often these rocks will have a reddish tint to them and will be broken into chunks.

One of the best ways to find artifacts is simply by talking and listening to the old farmers and other people in the area. They may know where an old native village or campsite was. People may also tell you where they have found artifacts before. Ask questions to locals, and then listen to their responses.

Local historical societies, libraries, townships, counties, etc... probably have old maps on hand. There's a local historical society in my county that has a map of native villages. If you could somehow get your hands or eyes on an old map and coordinate with landmarks from today, you would have a great place to start looking.

Artifact hunting in some circles is a controversial and sensitive subject. First and foremost, it is pretty much illegal on all public lands to remove any artifacts. If





**Many artifacts are simply this — flakes. Here is some flaked flint that the author found on vacation down south on spring break. Much effort had to go into flint knapping to make the perfect projectile point or blade, and there would always be leftover pieces like this. Flake piles are a good sign of a camp. So, if you find flaked material, keep looking, you may be near a projectile point or other artifact!**

you're planning on hunting private land, get permission from the landowner. I have only found a handful of artifacts in my life, and I remember every detail of each of them. Kevin even goes so far as to photograph each artifact where it lays, and after he has harvested it. He also documents the exact locations and dates of each find.

I could never even think of parting with the artifacts I have discovered, but not everyone has the same level of respect. Some profiteers are simply out to find artifacts and sell them. That understandably leaves a bad taste in many people's mouths. I would encourage you to learn more about the sport and respect the artifacts from the culture you have found. Don't just try to turn them into profit.

I asked Kevin if there was anything else we should know. "With these simple tips, you can enjoy another great hobby in the state of Michigan. Michigan was home to Native Americans for thousands of years, with some cultures

even dating back 12,000 years. These people hunted all sorts of animals such as caribou, mastodon, elk, bear, deer and migratory birds. If only these artifacts could talk!"

Michigan is such a unique state with a very rich heritage. Although European people have been here for

a few hundred years, native people were here for tens of thousands.

The Native American culture was, and still is, a resilient and innovative group. Proof of their existence is all around. Now, go out and find some artifacts of your own!

**While digging in his yard this spring, the author discovered this almost perfectly-round grinding stone.**





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# Paying it Backward

By Shawn Stafford





**H**e had always been a giver to my brother and me. He sacrificed so much of his time and effort to ensure we had a better childhood than his, but he also understood how to help us become gentlemen. Eventually, I think, we grew up to be responsible, successful adults in his eyes. However, amongst many things my dad was and still is, he was not a hunter. I had never seen a picture or heard a story about any of his hunting adventures. For that matter, we didn't even own a gun until I begged and pleaded for my first BB gun.

As always was the case, though, when I showed interest in something that would allow us to spend quality time together, especially in the outdoors, he found the time to make it happen.

After showing some interest in archery and hunting, I vividly remember him teaching me how to string an old longbow that suddenly showed up at our house. I was young and could hardly pull it back, but that didn't matter to either of us.

With little knowledge of what we were doing, I ended up with some Easton aluminum arrows and a box with a paper groundhog target taped to it. He encouraged my practice sessions, which ultimately led to hunting becoming a major part of my life.

My brother followed suit, and eventually, we both graduated to Winchester pump shotguns. Mine was a 12 gauge, as I was the elder, and his was a 20.

It took many years, but I eventually found success and took my first deer with the gun. Dumfounded and excited, I called my dad to let him know.

Without hesitation, he left work to come to the aid of his euphoric son. The two of us stumbled through the process of cleaning the deer and struggled mightily to retrieve it from the steep holler. We hung it from a tree in the back yard, and I gleamed with pride having finally reached true hunter status. He may have been more

proud than I was.

Another clear moment when the three of us headed out together led to my brother taking his first deer. Sitting in a powerline right-of-way near the Indiana/Illinois state line, I knew the approximate location of my dad and brother to my north, but the unmistakable sound of his shotgun confirmed my suspicion later that morning. I had the pleasure of watching the soon-to-be-expired deer cross the open ground followed shortly thereafter by two orange hats. Looking back on the scene etched into my mind of them entering the wood line and dragging the deer back into the open, I now realize how very fortunate my brother and I are.

While I could go on about numerous instances from the past,

I want to fast forward 30 years or so.

Having the good fortune to purchase my own hunting land recently, I had planned to hunt the Michigan gun opener.

Having kids of my own and realizing how important it is to savor each moment with them, I was reminded that over my adult years, I haven't been able to spend as much time with my dad as I'm sure either of us would have liked. Why I hadn't thought of it before I don't know, but like a light bulb turning on, I called my dad and invited him to join me. Much to my pleasure, and in his usual fashion, he didn't hesitate to confirm he would be there with me.

It was so enjoyable having conversations with him leading

***The author's dad trudges off toward the blind in his hunting clothes. If you look close, you'll see the tag still on the backpack he had to pick up the day before the hunt to carry a few necessities.***







***The author, his dad and his brother pose with a healthy looking Northwoods buck. This is the only deer the author's father has harvested to his knowledge. To this day, it's still the author's favorite hunt.***

up to the hunt talking about gear, food, high hopes and timing. His excitement was contagious, and I felt like a kid again anticipating the hunt. The drive up was spent engaged in conversation, and upon arriving at the property for a quick peek, I could feel a sense of pride once again in both of us based on my hard work and being able to live the dream of owning my own piece of hunting heaven. Not sure who was more proud.

Most of my outdoor experiences as a youth were positive memories largely in part due to the care and patience my father exhibited.

On this opening morning, though, it would be my turn. There had been a significant snowfall just a few days prior, and cold temps kept the snow on the ground. I dropped him off at the gate to give him a head start to his blind while I drove the truck off to park. It just

so happened that as I was preparing for the half-mile hike back to the gate, the neighboring property owner pulled up. We had never met, so we talked a bit, swapped information and I even lent him an orange vest, as his apparently didn't make it into the truck.

By this time, I was running behind and double-timed it towards the blind. Entering the field, I was still feeling good about the morning, and with the snow, I could see my dad's blind hovering to the north. Expecting dad to be settled in his blind, I was caught off guard when I caught a glimpse of him well away from the blind heading in the wrong direction.

In the past, I may have been agitated by this scene. This morning, however, was different. I quickly changed direction and headed directly towards him. My feeling was not of irritation but of concern. Upon arriving to his

side, he had encountered several ditches in which he was physically unable to cross. Coupled with the darkness and his unfamiliarity of the location, he had made the decision to head back to the gate. Exhausted, soaking wet and mad at himself, he urged me to get to the blind to hunt and that he would be fine. A selfless act, but one I knew was the wrong choice.

Following in the footsteps of a great and generous man, I put my own agenda to the side and returned the favor by blazing a trail through the snow back to the gate. After mitigating the situation to the point that any harm was unlikely to occur, I set off in the daylight to the blind he had originally intended to sit. Oddly enough, through the whole situation, I was calm and never concerned by the change in plans. My only bother was his insistence on me leaving him in a situation I was not comfortable



with.

His stubbornness showed through as he insisted he not return to the truck but instead find a blowdown to sit in to try and salvage the morning. Eventually, I made it to the blind and began to see deer movement despite the morning's activities. Continuing to text and monitor dad's situation, I finally convinced him heading back to the truck would not impact my hunting. Shortly thereafter, I saw him pass through the gate headed for the warmth of the truck. Of course, he urged me to stay out and finish the hunt. I obliged his request and was ultimately rewarded with some fresh meat. Together we tracked the deer, cut out some pieces for a post-hunt meal and generally savored the whole process.

Unforgettable moments from the hunt were etched in my mind just like they were 30 years ago.

Coming full-circle, I see my

*"Eventually, I think, we grew up to be responsible, successful adults in his eyes. However, amongst many things my dad was and still is, he was not a hunter."*

dad's plan worked. I feel I was able to return at least one of the many sacrifices he made for me, and in the end, I was rewarded tenfold. I see now all those times he went the extra mile for me was because he wanted too. Much like I wasn't the least bit hesitant to delay or even forgo opening morning to ensure he was safe and would get to enjoy the remainder of the trip.

This also carries over to how I approach my children. Learning

from the best, while I'm not perfect, I do everything in my power to make our time together fun, educational and memorable. So take your kids hunting and remember to be patient above all else, but don't forget about dear ole' dad. Likely you wouldn't be where you are right now without him. If you're fortunate enough to still have him around, maybe you should return the favor and take him hunting next year.

**The author's father takes a break from a family hunt to take in the scenery. For the author, it is moments like these that he is glad he took the time to capture and be able to look back on.**





# THE CAMPFIRE



**By Max Bass**  
*MUCC Camp Director*

This year has certainly been a weird year for everyone. In case you did not already know, we here at the Michigan Out-of-Doors Youth Camp were forced to close our camp program due to COVID-19. It was a heartbreaking decision, but we felt that it was ultimately the correct decision for the health and safety of our staff and campers.

Even though we did not have our traditional summer programs for kids, that did not stop us from helping families get outside to enjoy the great outdoors. As soon as the decision was made to cancel camp, our education team dove headfirst into creating the first-ever Michigan Out-of-Doors Youth Camp "Camp-To-Go" packet. This packet is a 177-page collection of various program curriculums, games and activities that are similar to some of the activities that we run down at the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center. There were sections on animals, arts and crafts, camp magic, campfire cooking, forest ecology, night hikes, water ecology and wilderness survival. Throughout the

summer, we sent out more than 150 of these packets to various families across Michigan, as well as a few out of state. If you think your family may be interested, you can still get a copy of a Camp-to-Go packet — email camp director Max Bass at [mbass@mucc.org](mailto:mbass@mucc.org) for more information.

Closing the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center also did not stop us from making improvements to the property for future campers. Over the last few years, a leak had developed in the kitchen area and had fortunately been dripping into the sink. Since it was dripping into the sink, it was not an immediate need. When the walk-in cooler went down last year, it moved up higher on the list and the roof project shifted to a priority for another year. With the drastic loss in revenue from not operating camp this summer, it did not look great for replacing the roof in 2020. The lodge is the largest and most used building at camp: it is where every camper eats meals and visits the camp store, and it's where parents drop their campers off. It also serves as classroom space for rainy days.

Through some connections of the MUCC board, Owens Corning donated the materials and supplies



to replace the entire roof. With materials lined up. Ed Moore, part owner of Moore and Sons Roofing and a Region 5 MUCC Executive Board member, based out of Grand Rapids, volunteered to donate the time and expertise of one of his crews to get the roof project accomplished.

Besides the leak in the kitchen, the rest of the roof was more than 30 years old and required some major repair work. Moore came down this spring to assess the issues and came up with a plan for his team. At the end of June, Moore and Sons Roofing and their crew of 11 workers came down and got straight to work on the roof. We have had several roofs replaced over the years at camp and they usually take several days with a mix of volunteers and staff. We figured this project would take at least a week, if not longer. With Ed's team of professional roofers, they had the old shingles and roof stripped off by lunch. Materials for the new roof arrived around 10 am, and watching this crew work was impressive. The crew was able to complete the entire roofing job in the span of about 10 hours. We want to extend a special thank you to Moore and Sons Roofing, Ed Moore and Owens Corning — without support from businesses like these, we would not be able to keep running our programs.

We would also like to take the opportunity to thank all of our affiliate clubs and families that donated to us during these difficult times. We really appreciate the support we received; these funds went towards the stabilization of the program. We would also like to give a special thank you to the Abrams Foundation and SCI-Novi's Riley Foundation. These organizations each allowed us to repurpose the grants that they gave us this year and focus the funds towards creating our Camp-To-Go packets and helping with the large operations deficit created by the lack of program fees.

As of today, the plan is to be back up and running for the 2021 camp season! We cannot wait to get back to the Cedar Lake Outdoor Center and for the lodge to echo with the laughter and excitement of our campers. We are beginning our search for our amazing summer staff — so, if you or someone you know would make a great fit for our summer camp staff, please email us at [mbass@mucc.org](mailto:mbass@mucc.org).





# CONSERVATION *Through* EDUCATION

## Kids on the Hunt

**By Shaun McKeon**  
*MUCC Education Director*

Throughout 2020, the importance of being outside has resonated throughout society. Outdoor spaces like local city parks to wilderness areas across the country saw record attendance numbers as people sought refuge in the space and health benefits provided by being outside. We saw spikes in more families hiking on their local trails, higher attendance numbers at parks and more than 22,000 new turkey hunters purchasing a license this spring as people flocked outdoors. As of the time of this writing (July), fishing license purchases were also higher than last year. With fall on the horizon, I am hopeful the outdoor activity trend will continue.

While September through January is a time of year many of us look forward to year-round, there is no time like the present to introduce another new person to the outdoors' value. September, especially, is the month of the youth hunter. With designated weekends for deer and waterfowl and the opener of small game — there is no better month than September to get a child out into the woods.

We have a bumper sticker in our office that reads, "Hunt with your kids, not for them." With that phrase in mind, here are a few tips for getting kids out into the woods this fall as the hunting seasons begin:

**1. Safety first** — With the ability to hunt with your kids also comes great responsibility. Safety should always be the number one concern for hunters. However, when

hunting with a child, safety should occupy an even more prominent place in your minds than usual.

**2. Equip them adequately** — Kids need to be comfortable. Make sure their boots are warm and water-proof. Invest in a good, warm coat, hat, and gloves and check to make sure they still have circulation in their fingers. This does not necessarily mean to pamper them, and experiencing some of the hardships of Mother Nature can be good for them.

However, six hours of freezing rain is not going to be something they want to tell their friends about at school.

**3. Make the duration age-appropriate** — Younger kids may not have the attention span or the desire to spend four hours standing in a puddle waiting for the ducks to come in.

The best way to expose kids to hunting is in short bursts when success is possible. Kids like to be in the action, and sitting still for a

**MUCC Executive Board Member Patrick Hogan takes his six-year-old daughter Victoria out for her first hunt. This was only Pat's third turkey hunt, too.**







**MUCC Executive Board Member Ed Moore poses with his daughter Emma and her first turkey. Emma also called in a first turkey for another MUCC member in 2020.**

9-year-old child with nothing to do may seem like a punishment. Keep the hunt times appropriate, and do not be afraid to quit early some days. Sometimes kids just might not be interested that day, and that is okay.

**4. Exercise patience and understanding** — Kids drop things, break things and lose things. They are loud, and they are wiggly. Going into the hunting experience knowing these things and being aware of how you will respond to them can make a big difference. If a kid is being yelled at constantly for not doing things how you would do them, they will not be having any fun. Take a deep breath to allow them to work through problems and be patient. These are

opportunities for the kids to learn.

**5. Kids need success** — Younger kids need to be where the action is. Sitting for long stretches in a deer blind may seem like torture. Many youths will get more out of an outing if it is plinking squirrels or shooting a box of shells on the range than they will be sitting in a deer blind for six hours and not seeing any wildlife. Try to put them in the action.

**6. Teach your kid** — Do some research together before you hunt to allow your child to learn more about the animal. Teach them the biology of the animal. What do they eat? Where do they live? How are you going to hunt for the animal? Talk to them about your

first hunt or some experiences you have had and why hunting means so much to you. During the hunt itself, use every chance you get to teach and instruct. Kids are curious by nature, slow down and let them ask why.

**7. Allow your child to get involved** — If you allow your child to feel like they are more than just a spectator, the hunt becomes more memorable to them. See the hunt through their eyes and let them be an active participant.

**8. Don't leave out the girls** — Women are the fastest-growing group of new hunters, and before there are women hunters, there are girl hunters. Your daughter would probably like to spend some quality time with mom or dad just as much as your son does. So if she wants to go, take her with you.

**9. Don't burn them out** — We all know that too much of a good thing is often bad for us. By taking your child out with you every time you go hunting, you may be burning them out and turning them off from the sport.

Talk to them and ask them if they want to go hunting. They may not be as excited about four days in a row of 5:00 AM wake up calls, and sometimes they may just need a day to hang out with their friends. Making the sport enjoyable and not a chore is important.

**10. SNACKS, SNACKS and more SNACKS** — It cannot be stated enough: kids love snacks. Snacks are the best. Even as an adult, one of my favorite parts of hunting is the snacks. Sometimes I share with my hunting partners, but most of the time, I do not. Always share with your kids.

As you continue to use the outdoors as a place to stay healthy this fall, bring your kids out into the woods, fields and waters. Remember, nobody frames pictures of their kids playing Fortnite.



# A Conservation Sunset

**By Morgan Jennings**

*Former MWC Coordinator*

Good things come and go in our lives, but very few leave a lasting legacy on thousands of people and acres of wildlife habitat. By definition, a cooperative is a group of like-minded hunters and landowners that work collaboratively to manage a species and its habitat. Wildlife cooperatives modernized the concept of private land management by encouraging the thoughtful participation of hunters and landowners in landscape-level wildlife improvement projects and practices.

From the creation of the Michigan Wildlife Cooperatives Program in 2015, over 6,000 hunters and landowners have formed a cooperative totaling over 356,000 acres – nearing Michigan’s amount of state land. In a state that is, 72% privately owned, this amount of acres serves as a significant tool in science-based wildlife habitat management at the hands of invested and educated individuals.

Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC), the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) and Pheasants Forever (PF) generously supported the program until 2020. Together, these partners reached hundreds of people each year through educational workshops focused on the accessibility of resources (financial, knowledge and material) for conservation projects and decisions. The most popular events included the Deer and Pheasant Rendezvous, Habitat Series and the Joint Partner Habitat Day. Each brought a mix of conservation veterans, new enthusiasts and wildlife professionals together.

Unfortunately, as we have reached 2020, the sun is setting



on the Wildlife Cooperatives Program after six years of aiding in the improvement of land stewardship in the fields and woods of Michigan. Myself (Morgan Jennings) and Anna Mitterling had the distinct honor of leading this program throughout its lifetime. As someone that witnessed the heart-filled work of each cooperative, I can personally promise you that these groups have made, and will continue making, an irreplaceable difference in wildlife and habitat. They have done their duty as conservationists — to leave the land better than how they found it. Our future in the outdoors is better because 6,000 people came together to make change and lead by example. I extend my gratitude and appreciation to each cooperative member for the time, personal finances and passion they have contributed to these efforts.

If my sentiment is not enough, the proof is in the numbers. Below is a condensed list of what cooperatives in Michigan have accomplished since 2015 based on a

survey conducted in early 2020:

- **46,890 acres have been directly impacted by habitat improvement projects, including food plots, timber stand improvements, edge cover, grassland plantings/restoration, cover crops, early successional habitat, winter cover and wetland restoration.**
- **Cooperative members have mentored 516 new adult hunters and 499 youth hunters.**
- **Cooperative members have donated ~18,000 lbs of wild game.**
- **Over 50% of cooperatives are still growing in acres and membership.**
- **~90% of cooperative members**



**said that they were more satisfied with their hunting/conservation experience because of their involvement.**

Aside from these measurable accomplishments, cooperatives have worked on a multitude of partnership projects with Farm Bill Biologists, Conservation Districts, program partners, foresters, private consultants, nature conservancies, agriculture representatives and other conservation organizations. These partnerships highlighted the value of wildlife diversity and a holistic approach to habitat management.

Although most habitat improvement projects completed within a cooperative followed this holistic approach, some prioritized a certain species because of the hunting potential. Deer cooperatives utilize trail camera, browse and observation surveys to collect data on the local deer herd density. They use this data to determine if the habitat was supportive of the present herd. Depending on their findings, hunters and landowners make collective decisions about how they can both improve habitat and make harvest decisions to meet their management goals. Goals often include improving the herd age structure, growing larger bucks, improving the survival rate of fawns, increasing or decreasing doe harvest (based on survey findings) and increasing the amount of usable vegetation for cover and food.

Deer cooperatives also have worked closely with MDNR and QDMA to monitor CWD and other diseases in their area. Building a relationship between private landowners and state agencies provides both with information significant to disease management. Cooperatives have also been active in disease outreach in their communities to inform other local hunters; they have even sponsored drop boxes for disease testing. Pheasant cooperatives generally have two focuses – increase the



**(From left) The first cooperatives coordinator Anna Mitterling, the most recent cooperatives coordinator Morgan Jennings, Alex Foster from QDMA and Josh Hillyard from QDMA pose at Deer Rendezvous.**

amount of grassland habitat on the landscape and increase the local pheasant population. To track the success of these efforts, cooperatives participate in crow count surveys. Participants drive a scheduled route in the spring and count the number of male pheasant calls they hear within a set amount of time. This collection method requires multiple consecutive years of data to effectively measure population growth. Initial and unofficial numbers have shown an increase in the number of male pheasants heard around each cooperative — a positive direction for any upland bird enthusiast.

The Michigan Wildlife Cooperatives Program has also been active with the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative (MPRI), a committee comprised of multiple partners interested in these efforts. MPRI actively promotes grassland projects on both public and private land while offering resources, including financial assistance program information to landowners.

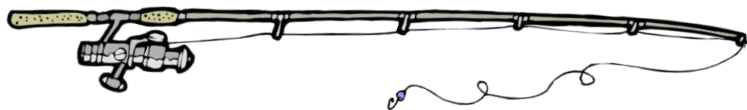
Throughout its lifespan, the program has served as the voice

of private land managers. These conversations are built by trust and fueled by mutual compassion for wildlife and habitat. I have learned many things in these trying times, and one of the most important is that if the heart lives, nothing ends. The heart of this program is not its name, where the job is done or who holds the job title; the heart of the program is within each of the 6,000 members. I relinquish the title of Wildlife Cooperatives Coordinator to them, for now. It is, and always has been, theirs. Without them, the program would not have a heartbeat. I was just one of the lucky ones that were able to follow it thousands of miles and hours to every part of Michigan. I remember every meeting, conversation, handshake, piece of advice and hunting story. Thank you for allowing me to witness the power of collaborative conservation.

\*\*\*MUCC will continue to host resources for starting a wildlife cooperative on its website, including a map of established locations. If you are interested in joining this community, start at [www.mucc.org/cooperatives](http://www.mucc.org/cooperatives).



# ONE LAST CAST



By Nick Green, Editor

I write about dogs a lot. I know this, my cubicle neighbor knows this and my boss knows this. My life would be boring without dogs.

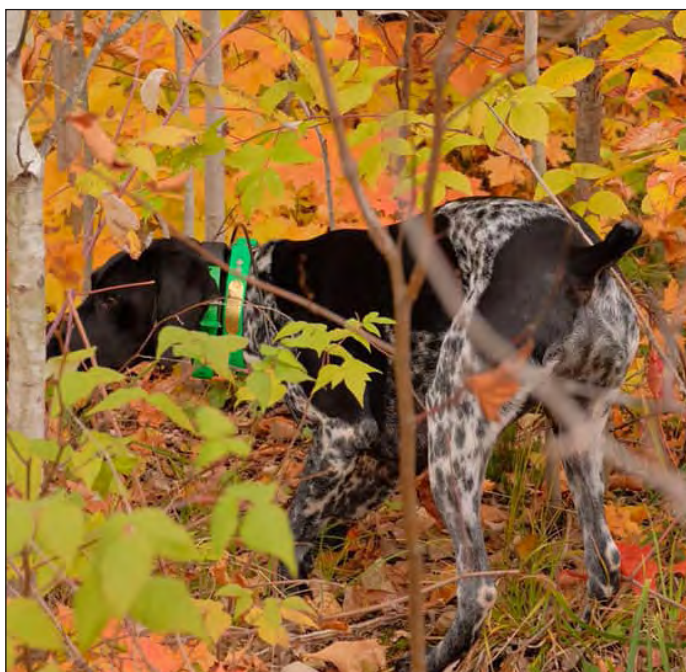
About this time of year I start seeing my dogs' demeanor change. When I get up to go to the bathroom at 4 a.m., my lab runs into the gun room to see if I am grabbing my waders and shotgun. When I put on my ball cap to take a stroll on the state land across from my house, the bird dogs do circles around the house barking thinking that birds are on the menu.

I can't imagine a life without my dogs. So, instead of boring you with more of my rantings, I figured I would keep it short and sweet — and share some pictures from last year's seasons with my dogs. I hope you have had the ability to have a four-legged hunting partner at some point in your life. Those of us who hunt over dogs know it isn't about the hunt; it's about the best friends we spend it with.

Tight Lines,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Green'.

**A big thanks goes out to Abraham Downer for photographing my dogs the last few years.**



**Bottom Left: Annie, a Labrador retriever, after retrieving one of her first ducks — a beautiful drake wood duck.**

**Top: Summit, a German shorthaired pointer, nails a woodcock point on Drummond Island during the 2020 season. Bottom left: Calvin, a small Munsterlander, holds a point on a pressured grouse in Northern Michigan.**







# 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.



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