

# *Crossroads Group*

## *Sierra Club*



WINTER 2019

### Hiking for Happiness

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity." This quote came from Sierra Club founder John Muir over 100 years ago. This message is needed today more than ever. Depression has reached an epidemic level in America, with nearly 1 in 5 people struggling with it at some point in their lives, and antidepressant usage constantly increasing.

The good news? Every year, more and more people discover what many have known for centuries: walking in nature helps reduce anxiety and depression. The benefits of hiking are numerous – ranging from lowering blood pressure to improving memory to reducing the chances of stroke, diabetes and heart disease. Hiking also leads to increased energy, a stronger immune system, and better sleep.

The benefits of walking in a natural setting have been shown to be much greater than for walks in urban areas. The increasing popularity of “forest bathing”, an activity that encourages immersion in the natural environment, supports this idea. Scientists have found that spending time in nature – even simply looking at nature – helps to relieve stress. Disconnecting from the day-to-day pressures of life and seeing the bigger picture can be very restorative to your mind, body and soul.

The winter months have increased cases of depression due to colder weather and fewer hours of daylight. Many people may not want to brave the cold and snow to get outside, but this may be when the benefits of hiking are needed the most. Even on cold or cloudy days, outdoor light can help with symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD). If you dress in appropriate clothing and keep moving, hiking in cold weather can be a fun and beneficial activity.

Another advantage of hiking with groups such as our Sierra Club group is the social connections. Hikers tend to be a peaceful lot, friendly and welcoming to other hikers. Countless studies have shown that social connections can help reduce depression.

We are lucky to live in a part of Michigan that has many beautiful parks filled with hiking trails. A quick search of Meetup, Facebook, or Google will show the numerous hiking groups and events in our area. See page 3 of this newsletter for a list of our group’s upcoming hikes and other outings. Join us and help to increase your happiness!

### PFAS in the Environment and Your Health

PFAS chemicals (Per-Fluoro-Alkyl-Substances), made since the 1950’s, are a class of some 5,000 chemicals that can accumulate and persist in the body for up to 20 years. They have been used in Scotchgard™, Gore-Tex™, the manufacture of Teflon™ non-stick cookware, fast food wrappers, fire-fighting foams, and many other consumer products. The chemical properties that make them valuable also expose the general population to significant health risks. The health risks of PFOA and PFOS, the only currently regulated PFAS compounds, have been known since the 1980’s. The response of DuPont to this public disclosure was to create and patent another version of PFAS, called GenX, that has contaminated the Cape Fear River in North Carolina to such an extent that the North Carolina DEQ has banned the release of ANY fluorine containing chemical, meaning the entire PFAS category, from the Chemours plant in Fayetteville. This illustrates that MDEQ should mandate testing for all PFAS compounds, as is done in Europe. Product substitution is the predictable result of not properly regulating the safety of new synthetic chemicals before their sale and distribution. Deficiencies in the Federal Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 continue to put Americans’ health at risk, and must be addressed to prevent these recurring crises.

PFAS chemicals released from a manufacturing site in Wixom have contaminated the Huron River, and have accumulated in fish resulting in a DO NOT EAT advisory that may last decades. MDEQ is testing Michigan waters, and more information on HEALTH, TESTING AND TREATMENT, MICHIGAN SITES, FISH AND WILDLIFE, and FIREFIGHTING FOAM can be found here: [www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse](http://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse). Sierra Club is tracking this issue nationally, so more information can be found at: [www.sierraclub.org/michigan/toxics](http://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/toxics).

## Political Roundup

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Sierra Club members around the state, including many Crossroads members, worked hard and tirelessly for candidates and ballot initiatives. This post-midterm elections report should be a celebration of the victories of endorsed environmental candidates Gretchen Whitmer, Dana Nessel, and Jocelyn Benson at the top of the ticket; new US Congressional District Representatives Elissa Slotkin (8<sup>th</sup>) and Haley Stevens (11<sup>th</sup>); and the successful passage of proposals to put redistricting in the hands of the people not politicians (Prop 2) and to implement voting reforms to make our democracy more accessible and more secure (Prop 3).

But the Lame Duck session (Nov 27-Dec 20) launched an unprecedented attack on environmental protections, authority of the incoming administration, and constitutional rights of Michigan voters. The majority caucus in Lansing pushed through destructive bills that serve polluting industries, put at risk our Great Lakes and the safety of our drinking water, and undermine the state ballot proposals Michigan voters passed Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>.

Among the worst of the bad bills passed in Lame Duck session: SB 1197. This awful bill allows for the uninterrupted flow of Canadian oil and gas in the aged Enbridge Line 5 pipeline for 10 years or more while a new “utility tunnel” is constructed beneath the Straits to house new Enbridge oil and gas pipelines and fiber optic cables. However, fiber optic cables already are attached to the Bridge and providing \$500,000 in fees annually to the Mackinac Bridge Authority for bridge maintenance. Moving cables to the tunnel will divert the income from the MBA to a brand- new Tunnel Authority (three men handpicked by outgoing Gov. Rick Snyder). When Michigan and the country should be focused on alternative energy production, Michigan taxpayers are now saddled with the risk of fossil fuels running under the Straits and the liability (in excess of Enbridge agreements or capacity to pay). So much for politicians lauding free enterprise unhampered by the State --.

The coming two years will be critical to making environmental corrections, and each of us is challenged to be aware, vigilant, and committed to opposing backward-looking and destructive legislation and supporting legislators working for a fossil-free energy plan.

We need you! Contact the Crossroads Political Committee [cg.political@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:cg.political@michigan.sierraclub.org) and/or the Crossroads Conservation Committee [cg.conservation@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:cg.conservation@michigan.sierraclub.org) to sign up and pitch in.

### Moonshine...

The darkness of winter and lessening light  
Makes me search for a glinter of moonshine tonight  
Aloft in the sky a splinter I spy  
And delight in intoxicating moonshine!

*Nature Poems By: Elaine S Seroka A.K.A. E. Forrest Poetree*

## Crossroads Group Outings

**Outings are subject to weather conditions.** To check for cancellations or changes, or to find out more information about any outing, see our website ([www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads](http://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads)) or Meetup page ([www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group)) or contact us at [crossroadsoutings@michigan.sierraclub.org](mailto:crossroadsoutings@michigan.sierraclub.org).

All outings are open to Sierra Club members and non-members. Bring water and snacks.

**\*\* Please arrive 15 minutes early for sign in, outings will start promptly at the stated time**

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### **Highland State Recreation Area Hike - Saturday January 19, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** 5200 Highland Rd, White Lake; meet at the trailhead parking area in front of the historic barn (go straight past toll booth 1.4 miles, look for barn on right side). GPS coordinates: 42.6345, -83.5512

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport

Join us for a 5 mile hike through hardwoods and wetlands.

### **Special Winter Stonefly Search - Saturday January 26, 10:30 AM - 2:30 PM**

**Location:** Start at the Huron River Watershed Council - NEW Center, 1100 N. Main Street, Ann Arbor, and then go out to stream sites in Livingston, Oakland, and Washtenaw Counties.

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy; **Cost:** free

Join the Huron River Watershed Council for this unique volunteer opportunity! Stoneflies are underwater creatures that grow during the winter months when most fish are more sluggish. They live only in good quality streams so searching for them tells us about problems in the river and its streams. The Huron River Watershed Council does stonefly searches to gauge the health of our streams. Volunteers will be working with experienced researchers in the collection of stoneflies. Registration required at [www.hrwc.org/volunteer/stonefly](http://www.hrwc.org/volunteer/stonefly). Please mention Crossroads Sierra Club when you register so that we will be put on teams together. See our website or Meetup page for more information.

### **Kensington Metropark Hike - Sunday February 3, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Kensington Metropark, park entrance is off Kensington Rd just north of I-96, Brighton; meet at the Nature Center

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires Metropark entry fee

Choose either a 5-mile or 2-mile hike around Wildwing Lake and through the wooded nature trails.

### **Huron Meadows Metropark Ski Outing/hike if no snow - Saturday February 16, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Huron Meadows Metropark, 8765 Hammel Rd, Brighton; meet at the Ski/Golf Center

**Skill Level:** novices to advanced; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires Metropark entry fee. Optional ski rental \$15.

Join us for an afternoon cross country ski outing. Ski / boot rental available. Enjoy miles of groomed trails both on the golf course and through the woods. We will ski on shorter and longer distance trails depending on experience levels. We will hike if there is no snow.

### **Island Lake Recreation Area NIGHT Hike - Saturday February 23, 5:30 PM\*\***

**Location:** Island Lake Recreation Area, 6301 Kensington Rd, Brighton;

meet in the Kent Lake parking lot (go straight past toll booth, 1st lot on left) near the boat launch area (west side)

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport

Join us for a 5-mile or 2.5 mile night hike on the Hickory Ridge trail. The last mile of the trail will be lit with lanterns, but headlamps are required for the middle part of the hike (after the sunset). Be sure to dress warm. Ice cleats (such as Yaktrax) could be helpful as it may be hard to see slippery patches. There will be a campfire and hot chocolate near the end courtesy of the Friends of Island Lake.

## Crossroads Group Outings, continued

### **Waterloo Recreation Area Hike - Sunday March 3, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Gerald E. Eddy Discovery Center, 17030 Bush Rd, Chelsea

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** Easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport

Choose between the 5.3 mile Hickory Hills Trail or the 3.6 mile Lakeview Trail. Both trails go through forests and wetlands.

### **Island Lake Recreation Area Hike - Sunday March 10th, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Island Lake Recreation Area, 6301 Kensington Rd, Brighton;

meet in the trailhead parking lot (turn right after toll booth, go 1.2 miles, turn right at Trailhead sign, go 0.3 miles, parking lot on left) GPS: 42.5083, -83.7079

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport

Join us for a 5.5 mile hike on the yellow loop trail.

### **Brighton Recreation Area Hike - Saturday March 16, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** Bishop Lake trailhead parking lot, Howell;

From the intersection of Bishop Lake Rd and Chilson Rd in Howell, go east on Bishop Lake Rd 1.4 miles, turn right at Bishop Lake Complex sign then quick right after toll booth into trailhead parking lot. GPS: 42.501, -83.835

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport

Join us for an afternoon hike to enjoy the Penosha Trail (5 miles) or the Kahchin trail (2 miles). The Penosha Trail was voted one of the "Most Scenic Hiking Trails in Michigan" by Pure Michigan!

### **Whitmore Lake Nature Preserve Hike & Optional Lunch - Sunday March 31, 10 AM\*\***

**Location:** north side of 7 Mile Rd, 1 mile east of East Shore Drive, Whitmore Lake; GPS: 42.4130, -83.7343

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy; **Cost:** free

The 3 ½ miles of trails that we will hike wind through mature woodlots, wetlands, fielded areas, and have views of two small lakes. The Preserve is part of Washtenaw County Parks. Optional lunch at a nearby restaurant after the hike.

### **Proud Lake State Recreation Area Hike & Optional Lunch Saturday April 13, 10 AM\*\***

**Location:** Proud Lake Foot Path Trailhead, Commerce Twp; From I-96 & Wixom Rd, go north on Wixom Rd 7.2 miles, turn right on Park Headquarters Rd, go 0.2 miles, see trailhead parking lot on left. GPS: 42.5707, -83.5548

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires state park entry fee or passport

Join us for a 5.7 mile hike on the River Trail. This scenic trail runs through a variety of landscapes including forests, marshlands, and parts of the Huron River. Optional lunch at a nearby restaurant after the hike.

### **LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve Nature/Photo Hike & Optional Lunch - Saturday April 27, 10 AM\*\***

**Location:** LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve, 2376 N. Prospect Rd., Superior Township

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy; **Cost:** free

Join us as we capture the magic of spring at two of our area's best nature preserves: LeFurge Woods Nature Preserve and Conservancy Farm. We will hike 3 miles through blooming wildflowers, beautiful wetlands, meadows, and quiet woods. These preserves are favorites among birders, and have had recent rare bird sightings. The hike will be led by amateur nature photographer Tony Pitts. Bring your camera or camera phone, or just come along to enjoy the hike. Optional lunch at a nearby restaurant after the hike.

### **Indian Springs Metropark Bike \*OR\* Hike - Sunday May 5, 1 PM\*\***

**Location:** 5175 Indian Trail, White Lake; meet at the Environmental Discovery Center lot. GPS: 42.7063, -83.4842

**Skill Level:** beginner; **Difficulty:** easy to moderate; **Cost:** free, but requires Metropark entry fee

Choose your own adventure: a bike ride on the 8-mile paved path or a 3 or 5 mile hike on various nature trails. Both the bike path and the hiking trails offer scenic views of woodlands, meadows and fields. Helmets required for bikers.

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See our website [www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads](http://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/crossroads) for additional outings including events sponsored by the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club.

## Crossroads Group Programs

Crossroads Group Sierra Club presents these programs at the Brighton District Library  
Free Admission

### A Wilderness Icon: Utah's Red Rock Canyonlands

Wednesday January 16, 7:00 PM

America's wild public lands are a proud part of the national heritage. Sadly, they are under attack. President Trump has initiated what would be the largest rollback of conservation protections in our country's history. He is seeking to repeal and replace the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase Escalante National Monuments - and reverse the steady progress towards protecting the largest unprotected wilderness area in the lower 48 states. This program includes a short movie dramatically documenting citizen efforts to conserve public lands in southern Utah's spectacular canyon country. The protection effort's history and current events will be covered by Clayton Daughenbaugh, conservation organizer with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance.



### Saving Our Pollinators

Wednesday March 20, 7:00 PM

Program by Dr. Manja Holland, Regional Education Manager for the National Wildlife Federation

The most important insects in the world are in danger: Our pollinators, including butterflies, moths and bees. These are the insects that pollinate the crops that put food on tables around the world. Dr. Holland will explain what is causing this global problem and how serious a threat it is. She will also talk about what you can do in your own yard to help pollinators survive

## Upcoming Programs

- May 15: Howell Nature Center presents "In Your Backyard", a program about the wildlife living in our own backyards. It will include interactive demonstrations and examples of how to help your wild neighbors thrive.
- September 18 & September 21: A 2-part orienteering program consisting of an education program on the 18<sup>th</sup>, and a field trip on the 21<sup>st</sup> where we will practice what we learned.

## An Outstanding Outings Year for Crossroads Group

Thanks to the hard work of our outings committee and the increasing popularity of Meetup, we are pleased to report that 2018 was our most successful year for Crossroads Group outings ever! Over 1,050 people joined our outings in 2018. We organized a total of 48 outings, consisting of: 27 hikes, 2 kayak/canoe rides, 3 yoga on the beach events, 2 cross-country ski outings, 2 bike rides, 7 service outings (trail & park work, highway cleanup, etc.), and 5 miscellaneous outings.

See [www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group](http://www.meetup.com/Sierra-Club-Crossroads-Group) for a great way to learn about our upcoming outings, see who is attending, view and share photos, etc. Everyone is welcome to come and join in our outings fun in 2019!



*hiking at Island Lake Recreation Area, March 2018*



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