



THE LOOKOUT

Huron Valley Group

Vol. 28 No. 1 Winter 2006



Water, Water Everywhere, But Will There Always Be Enough To Drink?

By Karen Flahie and Beth Heuser

Michigan is known for its abundant water resources, but this could change if the state doesn't enact strong water use regulations soon. Twenty years ago, under the Great Lakes Charter, Michigan, along with other states and Canadian provinces in the Great Lakes Basin, agreed to protect this valuable natural resource. Michigan is the only state that has failed to do so.

Because of this failure, industrial-scale water users have caused serious problems for communities and citizens throughout Michigan. So many examples of the environmental damage from over-use or pollution of our water resources have been in the news: a rock mining quarry in Monroe County extracting so much water that it dried up area wells; irrigation increases in Saginaw County causing wells to go dry; a gravel pit in Groveland Township in Oakland County using so much water that wells and ponds went dry, trees were killed and sinkholes created; and the aquifer pollution in Ann Arbor by the Gelman company, to name a few.

Under attack right now is Pleasant Lake in southwest Washtenaw County. The spring-fed kettle lake and 20 or so acres of wetlands, in existence since the age of the glaciers, may become endangered because a gravel company wants to expand its mining operations. The company has requested a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to mine under the water table and create a 125-acre, 140-foot-deep lake about a half mile from Pleasant Lake. As the gravel is removed, water will replace the solid materials, and the big question is: where will this water come from?

Pleasant Lake borders the River Raisin watershed and is part of the Mill Creek subwatershed of the Huron River watershed, the source of drinking water for many

communities in the area, including Ann Arbor. The Huron River drains into Lake Erie and is part of the Great Lakes watershed. As of now, there is no clear understanding of the groundwater system around Pleasant Lake. That means no one can say with reasonable certainty that residential wells, lake levels, wetlands and wildlife in the area—and possibly for miles around—would not be severely, and perhaps irreparably, damaged if the gravel operation is allowed to expand.

The state completed preliminary aquifer mapping under Public Act 148, but these maps fail to provide the necessary details for many cases, including this one. Digging test wells can supply certain information but is far from sufficient. Scientists also are working on computer models of three-dimensional aquifer maps which one day could predict the impact of activities such as the gravel pit lake expansion near Pleasant Lake.

Even more pressing, though, is the need for the state legislature to keep the 20-year-old promise to protect our water and water-dependent natural resources. Presently, companies can proceed with projects that may or may not cause great harm to water resources they are using. The problem is, when damage does occur, it is up to communities and citizens to spend countless hours and dollars to prove the company is responsible. This is not right.

But hope still exists. Governor Jennifer Granholm has made protecting our water one of her top concerns. The legislature is finally taking some action. In December, the Senate passed a package of bills on water usage. Though it is not a package most environmentalists would have cheered for, it is a positive development. The package includes requiring major

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**Under attack right
now is Pleasant
Lake in southwest
Washtenaw County.**





Home is Where the Habitat is:

Amphibians Relocated for Development Didn't Survive the Move

By Ariana Rickard

When development will destroy the habitat of a species that is in decline, sometimes there is an attempt to move the animals to a new location. This is called translocation. But it is an open question as to whether translocation can really solve the problem of continued habitat destruction. Should developers be allowed to destroy natural areas that provide habitat to threatened species because they allow animals to be moved before the bulldozers arrive? A recent case of amphibian translocation in southeastern Michigan provides some insight on this issue.



Volunteers came from various organizations to help and learn more about local ecology.

Not Finding What They Do Not Want to Find

Biologists believe that preserving critical habitat is the best way to preserve threatened and endangered species. But sometimes government regulations allow habitat to be destroyed to make way for development. And there are cases when the laws that should protect important habitat are evaded because developers would prefer not to comply, and regulators fail to properly enforce the rules.

When habitat cannot be preserved, translocation is sometimes used to try to reduce the impact on important animal species. The Blanchard's cricket frog is one of these species. Its

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Water continued from page 1

water users to get a permit from the state for withdrawals that could potentially cause adverse impacts. Although the bills start out just protecting trout streams, the other two-thirds of Michigan's waterways will also become protected in two years. A voluntary dispute resolution provision was added which would encourage the formation of committees of companies, local governments, and local citizens. If MDEQ determines that harm has been caused by large water withdrawals, then the committees can try to work out a voluntary, non-binding agreement. It also gives members the right to petition the MDEQ to investigate if water withdrawal

is causing harm. This provision is crucial for citizens of Pleasant Lake.

The next step is for the House to improve the Senate bill by protecting against water diversions outside the Great Lakes Basin, protecting all water resources, including wetlands, and requiring generally accepted conservation practices for each sector. These bills are expected to be taken up in January.

No matter what eventually happens in Lansing, it is crucial that Michigan citizens remain committed to guarding our waters. Write your state representatives and share your views. Let them know it is imperative to pass strong, permanent water protection bills. We all expect that clean, abundant water will flow when we turn on our faucets. But if we are not vigilant, one day we may find that there is "not a drop to drink."

To learn more contact Citizens Respecting Our Waters (CROW) at crowmichigan@yahoo.com.

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Cricket Frogs continued from page 2

numbers are declining at an alarming rate in the northern part of its range, which includes southeast Michigan. These declines have led to a protected listing status in many Midwestern states. Researchers at the Detroit Zoo recently experimented with translocation to increase the size of the Blanchard's cricket frog population in Michigan.

In June 2004, I learned that a cricket frog breeding site was slated for development. The developer of Lakewood Farms in Ypsilanti had plans to build condominiums and single-family homes on the property, and intended to fill in the cricket frog breeding ponds in order to build an entrance driveway into the complex. The company hired a consultant, Applied Science and Technology, Inc. (ASTI), to survey the site for cricket frogs and two threatened plant species.

ASTI surveyed the site three times in April and May 2004 and concluded, "the site does not contain the preferred habitat for the subject species . . . None of the subject species were encountered during the assessment." However the consultants' survey was conducted when the Blanchard's cricket frogs were unlikely to be found during visual encounter surveys. Contrary to ASTI's claims that the site contained neither cricket frogs nor their preferred habitat, we were later able to gain access to collect over 1,000 cricket frogs at the site.

After ASTI concluded that there were no cricket frogs on the property, the developer stated that it didn't "make sense" to require them to relocate the frogs. However, the Detroit Zoo, working together with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), negotiated an agreement with the developers to remove the frogs from the property. The DEQ required that the developer plan a mitigation site and mandated zoo staff to approve the mitigation plans. The developers planned to build the mitigation site

only after construction started, which would threaten the survival of the cricket frogs. So Detroit Zoo staff decided to translocate the cricket frogs from Lakewood Farms to more protected sites in other locations before construction began.

Moving Cricket Frogs

About 1,060 cricket frogs were removed from the breeding site before bulldozers arrived. The animals were released in three restored wetlands within the historic range of the species. Initial breeding attempts were observed at all three release sites, and over 240 juvenile cricket frogs were seen at one of the translocation sites in August 2005. But each of the three translocated populations had declined significantly by October 2005.

It appears that the translocations did not result in self-sustaining populations of Blanchard's cricket frogs at any of the release sites. The translocations probably failed because the release sites could not be guaranteed to be suitable habitats, as the causes for cricket frog decline are not well understood. This suggests that it is premature to conduct further cricket frog translocations.

Lessons Learned

Translocations will not solve the problem of habitat loss for cricket frogs. Conservation dollars and research should focus on habitat preservation, and on determining the cause of decline of cricket frogs in the Midwest. Further, government regulators, environmental organizations, and concerned citizens should be aware that poorly-conducted surveys that fail to identify populations of declining animal species can be used by developers to enable the destruction of critical habitat.

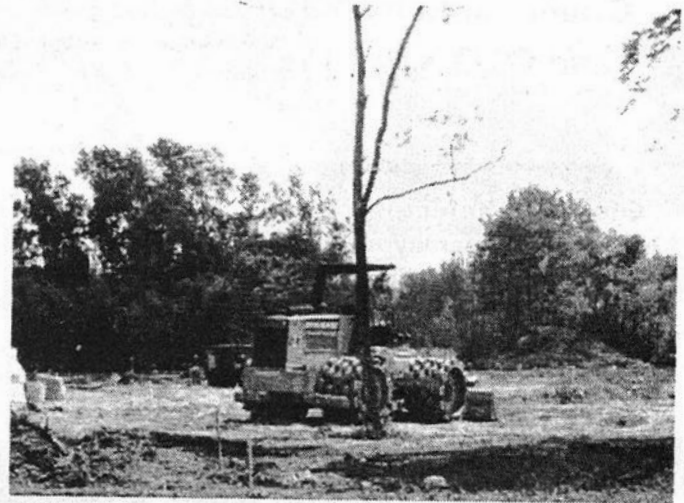


Unique color pattern of an adult cricket frog.

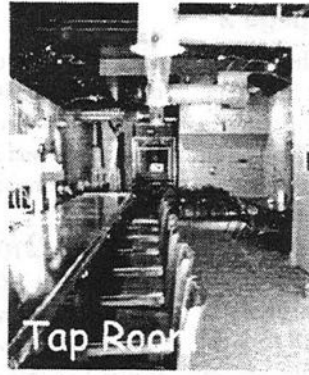
Ariana Rickard received her M.S. from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment. She is now with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, where she is working on habitat conservation in the natural resources program. For further information about the cricket frog project, please contact her at rickard@post.harvard.edu.



Lakewood Farms before construction.



Lakewood Farms after construction began.



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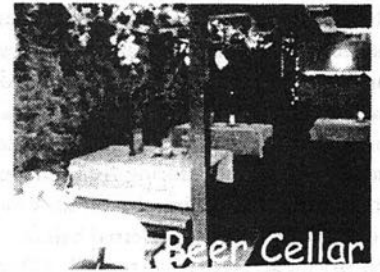
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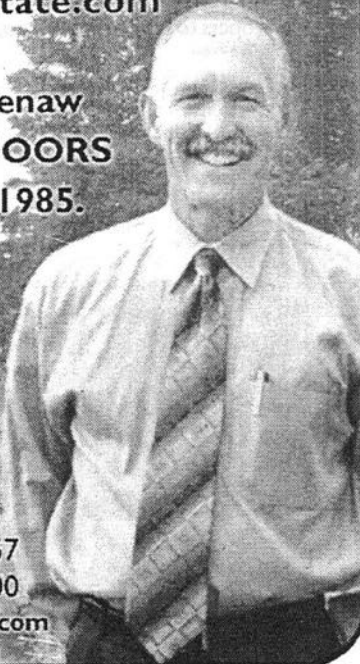
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Your representative:
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C. 20515

Or contact your senator's website via
www.senate.gov
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Off the Beaten Track Winter "Schwacking" Fun

by Bob Treemore

This winter's ski season is off to a fantastic start. Last year—the first time I kept track of skiable days—there were a paltry 18 quality ski days, defined as snow fresh or in good skiing condition, i.e., not icy or wet. (I skied them all, of course, and several of them two skis a day.) As of this writing there've already been more than a dozen quality ski days and we're barely to mid-December! (Yes, I've skied them all.) So you know what that means for the rest of the winter: ABSOLUTELY NOTHING.

Every time I think I know something about weather patterns, Great Lakes weather impacts and long-range forecasts, my posits are thrashed. I've given up on trying to predict Ma Nature in this time of global upset. I relish the opportunity to ski on the best trails in Michigan's southern peninsula, and go on every possible occasion.

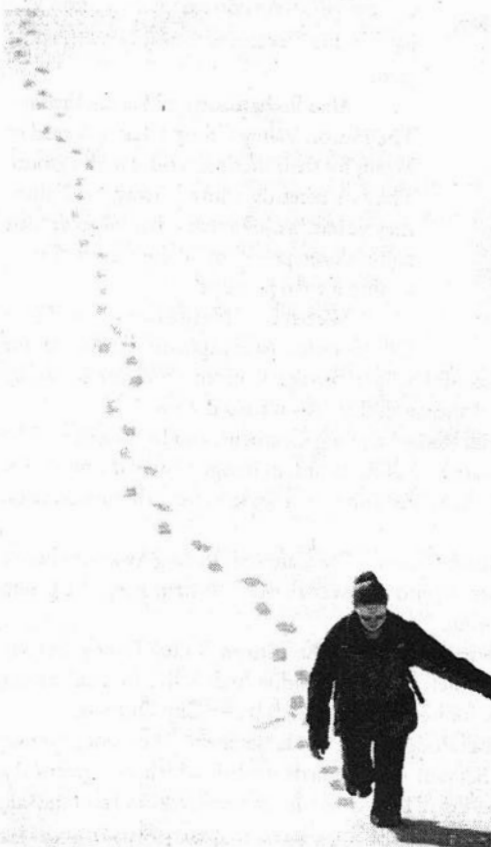
But what, you ask, of all those marginal ski days and unskiable days? For the outdoor enthusiast, the still-dormant Earth beckons one out for winter excursions. The absence of leaves and the flattening of underbrush by snow allow reasonable access to places to which I generally don't venture other times of the year. And to get to those places, the method is bushwhacking (a.k.a. "schwacking"). When the snow is old, get out in the cold—go schwacking!

My favorite schwacking spot involves a section of the Waterloo-Pinckney Trail (WPT) in the Waterloo State Recreation Area. The best spot to start this adventure is along Bush Road just northwest of the entrance to the Eddy Discovery Center and east of McClure Road. Look for a small parking area on the north side of the road where it intersects the WPT.

The trail begins going north in a flat area through mature woods. A long, narrow wetland paralleling the trail on the west side soon comes into view. When the leaves are down, views of Walsh Lake can be had looking east. After a half mile or so, the trail ascends an esker. Rather than ascend, though, follow a faint trail along the base of the esker heading west. (A side trail then runs north along the base of the esker on its west flank; it dies out after a while but does provide access to the outstanding bog.) For today's escapade continue west, crossing a failed attempt to drain the bog and onto upland on the bog's south side. This faint trail soon dies out too, but the woods are mature and open so that travel is quite easy.

I like to stay on the ridgetops surrounding these and other wetlands in the area, all of which are high quality. The ones throughout this area are isolated kettle wetlands, that is, they don't have an outlet. The steep slopes encompassing them, together with the mature oak-hickory forest shading them, keep these "pocket" wetlands frozen well into May and even June.

Start by heading west and then go north on the ridgetops. More wetlands can be seen on the western side of the slopes, backing up to private land fronting Bush Road further west. There are several opportunities to head east toward the WPT; I prefer to keep going as far as possible until heading over. There's just so much interesting ground to explore!



When the snow is old, get out in the cold!

Eventually one returns to the WPT for a relatively easy route heading south along the esker. All along this stretch, the views are outstanding and the trail rugged but defined. The last long downhill takes one back to the initial long flat stretch and eventually Bush Road.

Someday I'll have enough time to establish trails through this area. In the short term, schwacking provides access to one of the most beautiful and high quality natural areas in Waterloo. Don't be afraid to venture off trail; sometimes that's where the best places are!

Bob Treemore refuses to carry a compass on these excursions but understands that others may not delight in becoming hopelessly lost. He can be reached at rktreemore@aol.com

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And the Winners Are...



Mike Sklar,
newly elected
member of the
Michigan
Chapter Sierra
Club Executive
Committee

Congratulations to the following award recipients who were honored at the Huron Valley Group's December monthly public program.

Alan Richardson and Parma Yarkin – The Huron Valley Group Chair's Award of Merit, for their lifetime service to the group. They've recently moved away, and since they've left, we joke that it has taken at least half-a-dozen people to fill their shoes, if such a thing is even possible!

Webster Neighbors – The Conservation Accomplishment Award, for their successful ballot campaign to protect Webster Township farmland and natural areas – it passed 2-to-1!

Bill Rodgers, Doug Cowherd, and Julie Griess – The Conservation Activist Award, in recognition of the work that each of them has done on a wide variety of conservation issues.

Ruth Graves – The Care and Feeding Award, in honor of all her behind-the-scenes work to help keep the group functioning.

Susan Hollar – The Huron Valley Group Service Award, which recognizes individuals active in local service outings, for her past work with Inner City Outings.

Bill Rodgers and Linda Berauer – The George Sexton Public Servant of the Earth Award, which recognizes the contribution of local government employees and commission members whose efforts have helped protect our local environment, for their service on the Ann Arbor Parks Commission.

Ed Steinman and Vera Hernandez – Newcomers of the Year, Ed for his work with the newsletter, the Greenway, the Executive Committee, and more, and Vera for increasing her involvement by becoming one of the co-chairs of Inner City Outings.

All these folks are volunteers, and it's great to be able to recognize them for all the good work they do

Congratulations are also due to the newly elected Sierra

Club-Huron Valley Group Executive Committee members: **Doug Cowherd** (re-elected), **Nancy Shiffler** (re-elected), and **Jay Schlegel**.

The Executive Committee of the Sierra Club-Huron Valley Group is elected by you, the members of the Sierra Club. Thank you to everyone who voted or helped with elections.

Our long-time Huron Valley Group Co-chair, **Mike Sklar**, is a newly elected member of the Michigan Chapter Sierra Club Executive Committee for the 2-year term running January 2006 to January 2008. The Ex-Com consists of nine at-large elected members and ten representatives from the regional Groups. "Their responsibility is to establish and manage the chapter's budget, fundraise, set and implement conservation priorities and policies, oversee Chapter staff and address member concerns." In the recent election the name of our chapter was changed from "Mackinac" to "Michigan" — the Michigan Chapter now has approximately 20,000 members, part of the Sierra Club family of over 700,000 nationwide.

Mike has served as co-chair of our Group for 14 years and has been on the Group Ex-Com even longer. His energetic, enthusiastic, and steady support for Sierra issues and members in our Group will be a great asset for the Chapter. During his tenure here, our membership has tripled. He began the successful *Shopping for the Earth* program that has raised over \$70,000 to support our programs (See page 14), and he has been a leader of the successful ballot initiatives that are raising millions to protect open space and natural areas.

His candidate statement gives his vision for the Chapter: *"Now more than ever, the Sierra Club must be the thin green line between our shared natural heritage and those who would liquidate it for the short-term benefit of a few. If elected, I will work to make the Sierra Club our state's dominant force on environmental issues. To overcome entrenched special interests, indifferent political leaders, and a disengaged public, I believe we must:*

** Re-frame the debate on environmental issues as a matter of fundamental values rather than a debate between competing experts.*

** Leverage common interests with faith groups, progressive businesses, civic organizations, and local communities.*

** Further build our strength by boosting membership, recruiting and training new activists, and enhancing our finances. . . ."*

Congratulations Mike.
Best Wishes from Huron Valley Group.

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The Real Simple Life: Simply Eating

For years, I refused to cook. I lived on take-out meals or whatever I could unwrap and put in an oven. Then I downsized my life and pocketbook and was forced to learn to cook. To my utter shock, I found out that I love it.

Around this time, I started tuning into the Food Network. After a few hours of suffering through the "cooks," I realized that many of them weren't cooking at all, but rather opening bags of salad, packages of lunchmeat, and containers of ice cream while making stupid jokes and trying to be hip. Not only is that kind of eating unhealthy, but it's expensive. And those meals always take way longer than they say, by the way.

Never fear though, because it is actually quite simple (and quite cheap) to make your own food! I always try to be upfront with people, so I will tell you now: at first, this may increase your food budget a bit, and it will take some time—but not nearly as much as you think. And if you make cooking a "family activity," you will not only have good food, but you will have a good family memory in the process!

Today, I humbly offer three of my favorite, easy recipes: macaroni and cheese, oven fries, and "lazy" stuffed cabbage. Have you ever read the back of a Mac-n-Cheese box? Can you pronounce everything that is listed in the ingredients? How about frozen French fries? Do they taste even remotely like potatoes? And what do they *really* do to frozen stuffed cabbages before they put them into the package?

I don't know the answers to these questions. But I *do* know that all of these foods are fairly easy to make from scratch.

Homemade Macaroni and Cheese

(modified from Better Homes & Gardens
New Cookbook, © 1968)

Cook about one cup of elbow macaroni (or use the macaroni noodles from a box of store-bought Mac-n-Cheese, if you want to use those up). While the noodles are cooking, melt about 2 tablespoons of butter. Then mix in about 1½ tablespoons flour, a dash of salt and a dash of pepper. Add about 1 1/3 cups milk. Cook and stir until the mixture is thick and bubbly—this will take about 6 or 7 minutes. Then add about 1 1/3 cups (about 6 ounces) cubed American cheese (note: cheddar is also delicious). Stir until melted (about 2 or 3 minutes). By this time the noodles should be cooked. Mix everything together in a casserole dish. Top with bread crumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until bread crumbs are brown. As a main dish (with some spinach on the side), this feeds my husband and

me. If you serve it with tuna fish or with another side dish, it could probably feed a larger family. Of course, you can adjust ingredients to fit your family.

Oven Fries

(modified from Cooks Illustrated magazine)

Peel and slice 3 or 4 potatoes (I usually slice the potato lengthwise and then flip it on its side and cut through the middle.) Soak the potatoes in a bowl of hot water for about 5 minutes. While the potatoes are soaking, pour 3 tablespoons vegetable oil onto a rimmed baking sheet. Using a pastry brush, spread the oil around evenly. Sprinkle salt and pepper onto the oil. Drain the potatoes and toss them with a tablespoon of vegetable oil. Then place the potato slices on the baking sheet. Sprinkle with more salt and pepper. Cover with foil and bake for five minutes. Remove the foil and bake for another 15 minutes. Take out the pan and flip the potato slices. When you put the sheet back into the oven, rotate it—that is, the former back should now be in the front and vice-versa. Bake for another 5-15 minutes (the remaining time really varies...sometimes they are done in 5 minutes, but sometimes they haven't finished until 15 minutes). You may want to blot them with paper towels when they are done. This recipe more than feeds

my husband and me.

"Lazy" Stuffed Cabbage

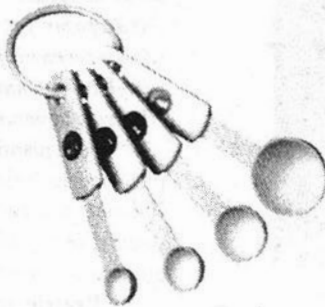
(courtesy of my Aunt Betty)

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a deep skillet. Slice a small head of cabbage and dice a small onion. Put both into the melted butter and sprinkle with a dash of salt and a dash of pepper. Cut up about ¼ pound hamburger into "bite size" pieces and add those to the skillet. Next pour 15 oz. tomato sauce (or cut up a like amount of fresh tomatoes if you don't want to use a can) over the mixture and add a half can of water. Cover and cook on low heat for an hour. The meat will cook well and fall apart during this cooking time (the first time I made this dish, I was convinced that the meat would be raw, but I was way wrong). You can also add garlic for added flavor.

I hope you enjoy these recipes. They are fairly simple and really good. And best of all, you don't need a multimillion dollar contract with the Food Network to afford to make them! Eat well, eat simply!



By Patti Smith



Restoring Native Michigan Prairies



By Kevin Bell

This past November, the Michigan Stewardship Network's Raisin Cluster hosted a workshop on prairie restoration at the Lake Hudson State Recreation Area in Lenawee County as a follow-up to a similar workshop held in 2004.

A breezy, unseasonably warm sunny Saturday morning greeted workshop participants. All listened attentively to workshop speaker Bob Clancy, Restoration Specialist with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Parks and Recreation



Bill Clancy shares his expertise with attendees of the prairie restoration workshop.

division. He talked about restoring native ecosystems and planting native seed—the seed collection process and the equipment alternatives used to plant seed—and provided an update on a test planting site established in 2004.

The MDNR continues to work with groups like the Stewardship Network to collect native Michigan plant seeds from local sources for prairie restoration projects at Lake Hudson and across the state. A draft master plan for the park is still under development. It includes language about establishment of local genotype seed production and restoration of grassland ecosystems where appropriate in the park.

Bob provided an update of the test site restoration:

Seed collection (2003 and 2004): Local genotype seeds collected included 1 pound of big blue stem (*Andropogon gerardii*), 16 pounds of little blue stem (*Andropogon scoparius*), 19 pounds of Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and 5 ounces of switch grass (*Panicum virgatum*).

Seed plantings (fall 2004 and spring 2005): The plantings included 2 acres of big blue stem, 2 acres of Indian grass, and 3 acres of little blue stem, using 2 pounds of big blue stem seed, 11 pounds of Indian grass, and 9 ounces of little blue stem.


Prairie maintenance (summer 2005 and ongoing): Herbicide was sprayed on the big blue stem and Indian grass sites to suppress invasive, non-native weeds and summer warm weather grasses. Herbicide was not applied to the little blue stem planting; instead, it will be mowed in the fall and spring. The site will be looked at and assessed again in the spring to determine if additional seeding is needed.

A scan of the test sites showed that the big blue stem and Indian grass were doing well, although the little blue stem planting was not as robust as had been hoped. When the prairies are restored, the grasslands will benefit upland game birds such as woodcocks, grouse, and pheasant, and provide year-round ground cover for other wildlife.

If you'd like to visit: Lake Hudson State Recreation Area is located near Clayton, Michigan, 12 miles west-southwest of Adrian, about 50 miles southwest of Detroit and 40 miles northwest of Toledo. From Ann Arbor, take M-34 west through Adrian. Six miles east of Hudson, travel 1.5 miles south on M-156 to the park entrance.

If you'd like to learn more or help: For more information on this prairie restoration project or upcoming Stewardship Network workshops and events, visit www.snre.umich.edu/stewardshipnetwork or contact Lisa Brush at 734-395-4483 or lbrush@umich.edu.





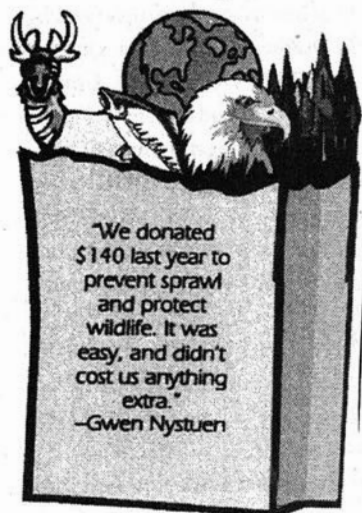
Bob Fisher
The Home Buyer's Agent

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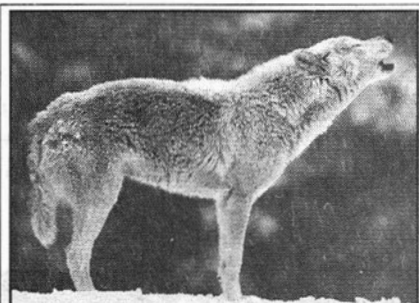
**How to Get HVG
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email!**

At each HVG general meeting, there is an email sign up list. For those who missed it, or haven't joined us at a meeting, here's how you can get our general meeting reminders.

If you would like to receive email notices of each month's Huron Valley Group general meeting and occasional notices about other local Sierra Club activities send an email to Doug Cowherd at dmcowherd3@comcast.net with your name and "HVG email list" in the body of the message.

**Are You A New
Member?**

Welcome to the Huron Valley Group of the Sierra Club. When you join the Sierra Club you are automatically a member of a local group, as well as a state chapter and the national organization. Membership entitles you to this newsletter as well as all editions of the state and national member publications. Check this page for our Directory with contacts on conservation, outings, political action, and the Inner City Outings program. Check the calendar in the middle of this issue for announcements of Monthly Public Program topics and our calendar of activities. We will be glad to see you at our next meeting or answer any questions if you care to call. Please take advantage of your membership as an opportunity to enjoy, preserve and protect our natural environment!



**BACK BY POPULAR
DEMAND**

It took a public outcry and an act of Congress to save the gray wolf from literally vanishing off the face of the earth. But we did it. Today, a lot of other creatures face similar extinction. And unless we step up our efforts to protect their habitats, they may not be so lucky. At the Sierra Club, we've mounted a major campaign to defend the Endangered Species Act and preserve threatened habitats before their inhabitants are gone forever. Please contact us to find out how you can help protect threatened and endangered animals. Because no amount of popular demand can bring an extinct species back to life.

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Contributions, gifts and dues to the Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.

Enclose check and mail to: **F94Q W2103 1**
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Winter 2006 Inside:

- Water, Water Everywhere. . . Enough To Drink?
- Home Is Where the Habitat Is (Frogs!)
- Off the Beaten Track
- A Spooky Night with Inner City Outings



Upcoming Events

The Huron Valley Group Monthly Public Programs are third Tuesdays at 7:30 pm, UM Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor.

Tuesday February 21. Topic: **Living a Nightmare: Animal Factories in Michigan**, by Gayle Miller, Sierra Club. Non-members welcome. Refreshments and social time too!

Tuesday March 21. Topic: **Aliens Among Us: Invasive Species and the Future of the Great Lakes**, by John Gannon, International Joint Commission. Non-members welcome. Refreshments and social time too!

Book Club:

Tuesday February 14. **Sierra Club Book Club.** 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month, Nicola's Books, Westgate Shopping Center, corner Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: ***The Beak of the Finch*** by Jonathon Weiner. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Dave Brooks 734-475-9851 for details.

Other Local Events

Sat. Feb. 11 - Independence Lake Ice Fishing Derby, 7:00 am – dusk. Washtenaw County Parks. Come for a fun-filled day of competition with prizes and a raffle! Registration begins at 7:00 am for two competitive categories: pike fish and pan fish, two age groups: kids and adults. Bring your own bait. Registration fee TBD; call for information: 734-449-4437. Independence Lake – vehicle entry fee.

Tues. Feb. 14 – Stewards Circle: Working with Volunteers, 7:30 am – 8:30 am. Stewardship Network – Huron Arbor. Join us for an informal conversation with volunteer and professional natural area stewards. How does the Network's cluster structure effect volunteers and volunteering within an area? How can we recruit new volunteers? What is a well-run work-day like? Bruegger's Bagels on North University, Ann Arbor.

Sat. Feb. 18 - Winter Tree ID, 1:00-3:00 pm. Learn how to identify trees by buds, bark, seeds, and other features of winter. Osborne Mill Preserve. For info: 734-971-6337 x318.

Sun. Feb. 19 - From Woods to Wetlands: A Nature Outing for Families, 2:00-3:30 pm. Washtenaw County Parks. Come and learn about some of the neat things found in these two different habitats. In case of a thaw, wear boots that can get muddy. DeVine Preserve. For info: 734-971-6337 x318.

Sun. Feb. 26 - Salamander Survey Kick-Off Meeting, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation. Join Ann Arbor's (and Michigan's) first Salamander monitoring program, in its second year! With your help, we will learn more about these species' population densities and distribution around town. Volunteers with a bit of identification experience and a willingness to get muddy, please apply. There will be a \$10 fee associated with the kick-off and survey-to cover the cost of materials provided to volunteers. Leslie Science Center Nature House, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor. For info or to register: 734-996-3266.

Sun. Feb. 26 - Frog and Toad Survey Kick-Off Meeting, 1:30 to 3:00 pm. City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation. Volunteers can learn more about Ann Arbor's amphibians while contributing to our inventory efforts. The meeting will cover general information about the annual survey and is required training to participate in the survey. Route sign-up will also take place. Leslie Science Center Nature House, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor. For info or to register: 734-996-3266.

Thurs. March 2 - Public Meeting: Prescribed Ecological Burn Program, 7:30 to 9:00 pm. City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation. Fire is used as a restoration tool in some of Ann Arbor's natural areas. This meeting will provide information and an opportunity for discussion about the Prescribed Ecological Burn Program conducted by Natural Area Preservation. Burns will be conducted in City Parks throughout the spring and fall. Leslie Science Center Nature House, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor.

Sat. March 4 - Sap to Syrup: Doing it Yourself, 1:00-2:30 pm.

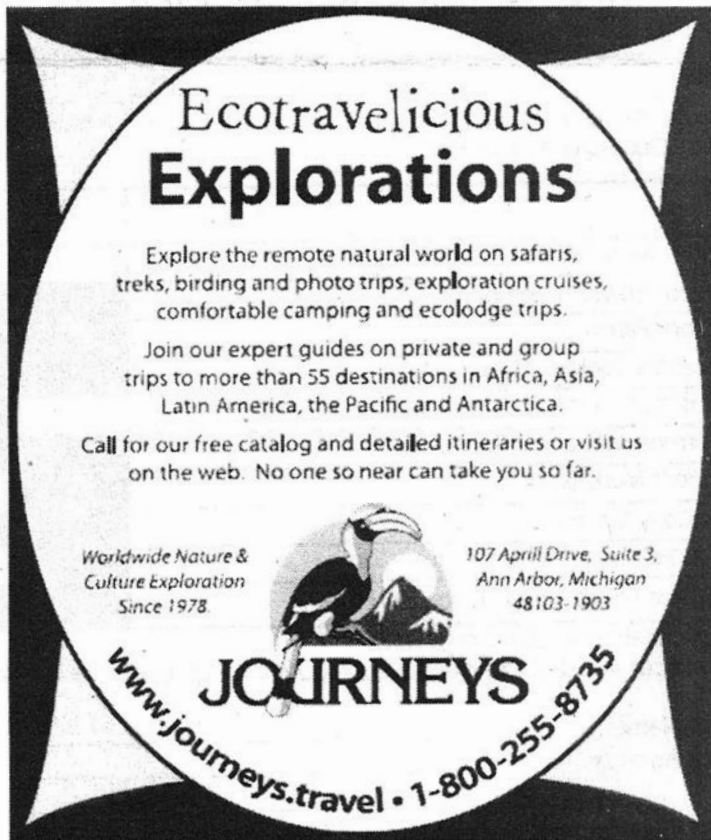
Washtenaw County Parks. Learn how to identify and tap maple trees, then how to boil the sap to delicious maple syrup! We'll be inside and outside, so dress for the weather. Participation is limited and pre-registration required – call 734-971-6337 x318. County Farm Park, Administration Building, Platt Road entrance.

March 5 and 6 – Wildflower Association of Michigan Annual Conference, Lansing. For info and to register: www.wildflowersmich.org.

Wed. March 8 - Prescribed Burn Crew Training, 12:00 to 5:00 pm. City of Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation. This is the required yearly training session for all volunteers interested in assisting with the prescribed burns to be held this spring and fall. Burns take place Monday through Friday between 10:00 AM and 6:00 pm. Pre-registration is required by March 3, as enrollment is limited. Leslie Science Center Nature House, 1831 Traver Road, Ann Arbor. For info or to register: 734-996-3266.

Tues. March 14 – Stewards Circle: Prescribed Ecological Fire, 7:30 am – 8:30 am. Stewardship Network – Huron Arbor. Join us for an informal conversation with volunteer and professional natural area stewards. Bruegger's Bagels on North University, Ann Arbor.

Tues. April 11 - Stewards Circle: New Invaders, 7:30 am – 8:30 am. Stewardship Network – Huron Arbor. Join us for an informal conversation with volunteer and professional natural area stewards. What are the new invasive plants that we should be on the lookout for? What control methods are known? Where have these been found in our area? Are they not here yet, but creeping in from other places? Bruegger's Bagels on North University, Ann Arbor.



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