



THE LOOKOUT

Huron Valley Group
Vol.30 No.1 Winter 2007-2008



Off the Beaten Track Woodland Trail Skiing

It is so bloody lame to complain about winter and cold weather. Dress for it, get some decent shoes, and go out and enjoy it. There's nothing like the feeling of cold on face, the sight of bright blue sky contrasted with bright white snow, the freshness of the air, the quiet of the woods. Even with minimal or no snow, winter is the most peaceful of our seasons.

For me, though, the ultimate winter experience is gliding along narrow trails lined by big trees, gazing out over frozen lakes and ponds and wetlands and cutting paths while speeding downhill. This is what I've coined "woodland trail skiing," and there's no better place in Michigan's Lower Peninsula to do it than the Erie-Saginaw interlobate of the Pinckney and Waterloo State Recreation Areas. There are numerous opportunities for great physical exercise and spiritually uplifting experiences just a few miles from where you read this.

I've tried various gear to ski my favorite trails and have settled on the following package: metal-edged skis, backcountry bindings and tall stiff boots. I've skied on "lesser" equipment and suffered only minor injuries, so it's certainly possible to use your current gear especially if you have above-average skill and are competent at setting broken bones in the backcountry. Chances are an ambulance can get to you on these trails within a couple hours, so not to worry, right?

Here are my four favorite loops for woodland trail skiing, in order from easiest to most difficult:

1. Cassidy Bog Loop. Short but sweet, this 2.5 mile loop is accessed on the north side of Cassidy Road, which runs northwest from the state prison on Waterloo Road west of M-52. Parking is best on the south side, pulling a couple

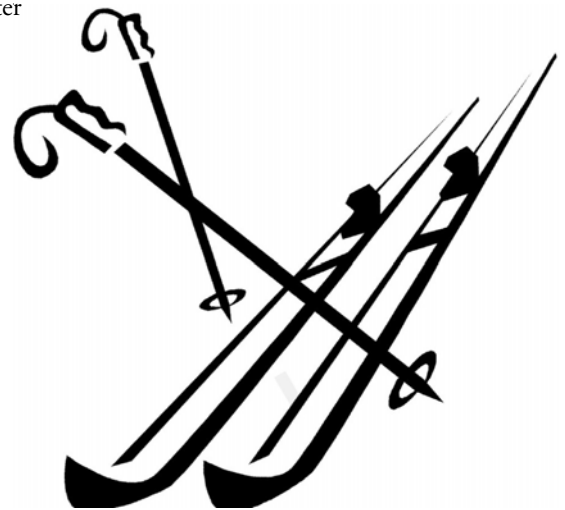
tires off this little travelled public road. The trail is somewhat inconspicuous at first, running north through the woods and to the edge of an old field, then cutting west along the field. It then skirts northerly again past the bog through mature woods, a red pine plantation, the corner of another field, and then easterly back into mature woods. When it comes to the edge of a giant old field, turn right and head southerly up a gentle hill, along the edge of the field and to the top of a long steep run between the bog and another wetland. From there it's a straight shot through mature woods back to Cassidy Road. This trail is often packed down by an illegal snowmobile, so it's best run as soon as there's adequate snow or after a second snowfall if such a thing occurs. I usually ski it twice to get my fill.

2. Juniper Ridges Trail.

Head north on Dexter Townhall Road from N. Territorial Road and turn onto the access road leading toward Silver Lake. Turn left just past the entry booth and onto the turn around; parking is on the south side. Ski along the north side of the large gorgeous wetland and gently uphill



By Bob Treemore



Skiing continued from page 1.

Bob Treemore has kept track of skiable days the last three seasons, which ranged from 23-34 total days but as few as seven quality ski days last year. He advises everyone to blow off everything on those days to maximally enjoy the beauty and challenges of our local landscape.

to the trail marker. Go right there but note that you'll be coming back from the left. The trail meanders through young woods and white pines, then climbs to an old stone shelter. There are great views of Pickerel Lake to the west as the trail descends through large white pines to a creek. Another short climb leads to a trail marker; take a sharp left to follow the loop. The trail continues up and down through a series of ridges topped by juniper trees (hence the name), through a wetland, past a small lake, through mature woods and eventually to another intersection. Turn left again here and go to the top of the rise. From there, if the snow conditions are good and you're skiing right, one can glide and pole all the way back to the parking area. It's a hoot. About three miles around.

3. **Cedar Lake Esker/Discovery Center.** My favorite place to reach the trails around the Discovery Center in Waterloo is the Cedar Lake Esker, accessible off of Cavanaugh Lake Road west of Chelsea on the road into Cedar Lake. At the fork, turn right and park a short ways down on

the left side. The trail runs fairly steeply uphill to reach one of the most scenic stretches in the rec areas. Three lakes—Cedar, Little Cedar and Doyle—can be seen from a couple locations. Several great downhill runs lead to one straight steep shot, at the bottom of which I turn right onto a developing trail to reach the Spring Pond Loop. I like to ski the Oakwoods Trail as well, but cut back rather than climb the stairs at its eastern terminus. Other trails are nice too, and mostly easy going. I know a kid who skied several of them when he was five! He's yet to do the esker though.

4. **Crooked Lake Trail.** The best ski trail in lower Michigan is also accessed from the road leading toward Silver Lake. In this case, continue past the entry booth to the farthest northwest corner of the western parking area. There's a large wooden sign displaying the trail system; ski past that and onto a boardwalk through a marsh. Soon after, there's a trail junction to which you will return; both directions offer excellent tests but I usually go right. There is a long stretch of smaller runs through mature woods, eventually climbing to the top of a hill that used to afford great views of Crooked Lake but is now choked by invasive autumn olive. A few more runs get one to the ultimate challenge: the Hairpin, a long, winding stretch that leads to a 90° right turn and a subsequent sharp right turn, then along the edge of the hillside just above a stream. There are numerous opportunities for fantastic wipeouts, but if you take it slowly and make the turns, it is most exhilarating. The trail continues on and reaches the north side of Pickerel Lake before climbing back into mature woods for another series of steep, winding, narrow runs, with a "home run" just before the original trail junction and a short easy trip back to the parking area. This trail is all the more difficult since mountain bikes started causing severe erosion, requiring there to be a minimum of 8-9" of snow to make it passable. It's a 4.5 mile loop with unparalleled rigor, beauty, and challenge. Those who ski it without falling are champions.

Woodland trail skiing is bliss, an out-of-body experience, the best way to experience the all-too-few days of real southern Michigan winter.

GREG JOHNSON
Someone You Can Count On

GregJohnsonRealEstate.com

**Serving the Washtenaw
County area INDOORS
and OUT since 1985.**

"Our environment is so important. Thank you, Sierra Club, for being there."

Real Estate One (734) 646.5957
(734) 929.3984
GLJRealtor@aol.com

The Huron Valley Group Newsletter is published 4 times a year by Huron Valley Group, Michigan Chapter, Sierra Club, 621 Fifth Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

A Year in Review with the ICO Kids

And more great outings to come!

2007 marked the ninth year in operation for Washtenaw Inner City Outings. Reflecting on that for a moment, I can't help but feel exhilarated considering all the time and hard work that the WICO volunteers and certified leaders, past and present, have dedicated to ensure the success of the program.

In 2007, Washtenaw Inner City Outings completed 13 trips with our youth participants from Hikone and Green Baxter Court. We went hiking, fishing, horseback riding, canoeing, swimming, boating, apple and pumpkin picking. We learned about raptors from Francie Krawcke at the Leslie Science & Nature Center. We learned how to make maple syrup with Faye Stoner at County Farm Park. We visited the Farm Center and Nature Center at Kensington and took a cruise on the Island Queen II. We toured the Matthaei Botanical Gardens conservatory and grounds. We spent the weekend playing in the Lake Michigan sand dunes, swimming, canoeing and hiking at the annual retreat of the Sierra Club's Michigan Chapter. Overall, it was a very active year.

As we head into our tenth year, 2008, I am looking forward to more adventures with our great group of volunteers, leaders, youth, parents, and agency staff. All these folks make it happen. Our plans for 2008 include hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, ice skating, more maple syrup making, park cleanup, cabin overnight, canoeing, fishing, swimming, bike riding, apple picking, a farm visit, and a return visit to the chapter retreat.

We are always in need of dedicated volunteers willing to share their knowledge and love of the outdoors with children who otherwise would not have the opportunity to experience the natural world. If you can spare a few hours a month or more, please contact us. We need you! There are a variety of activities that need your expertise – from fund-raising to managing our website. The Washtenaw Inner City Outings program has a critical need for trip leaders to keep the program strong. Please contact us for details on becoming a certified leader. Some of the requirements include assisting on two outings, having a criminal background check, completing First Aid training, becoming a Sierra Club member (if you're not already!), and providing 3 character references. It is easier than you think!

After our last outing for the year, we were sorting and dividing up apples from the orchard for each child to take a bag home. Many of the youth and their parents personally thanked me and stressed what a

wonderful time they had that day at the orchard picking apples and enjoying the beautiful, sunny fall day. The perfect ending to a great day, and I am so thankful that I was a part of it.

To learn more about the program, please contact us at washtenawico@yahoo.com or visit our website at: <http://ico.sierraclub.org/washtenaw>.

Hope to see you on an outing soon!

Vera Hernandez is the chair of the local Inner City Outings, a community outreach program providing opportunities to explore, enjoy and protect the natural world for children who might not otherwise have them. She invites anyone interested in learning more — or in lending a hand — to contact her at the email address listed above.



By Vera Hernandez



A fishing trip to Rolling Hills County Park was just one of a baker's dozen of fun activities offered last year to get local children out into nature. See details this page on how you can get involved in this year's activities.

Seven Ridiculously Simple Things You Can Do To Protect the Earth



By Patti Smith

We all want to protect the earth, but where do we start? Here are some easy things you can do. Some of these ideas may not be new to you, but I think it's always good to take an "inventory" of our environmental efforts. And, if you are already doing stuff to save the earth, pat yourself on the back and celebrate by buying yourself a brand new SUV (just kidding!).



1. Buy a reusable bottle and stop buying bottled water. This is my latest venture and, other than a slip-up yesterday following a long walk around downtown, I haven't bought bottled water in over 2 months. Just refill your bottle in the morning and keep it in your car.
2. Use canvas bags when shopping. I have overheard many people say they have a hard time getting into this habit. I suggest keeping the bags in your car. Of course, you have to remember to bring the bags into the store with you (I've forgotten to do this a time or 5), but at least they are in your car and within reach. I also took an empty tissue box and put a bunch of plastic bags in it. (These also come in handy if your dog is with you and leaves a present for you in the back seat.)

3. Unplug your phone charger after your phone is done charging.
4. Consolidate your driving trips whenever possible. I try to plan my errands and get them all done in one trip.
5. If you are a coffee drinker, buy a reusable coffee filter. It may sound kind of gross at first, but you get used to it. You just rinse out the filter every night, plop your coffee in, and there you are.
6. Buy a cute canvas lunch bag and reusable containers. I have a little bag that says, "Hooray for Braille!" (I am a teacher of the blind) and I love trotting it around places with me.
7. Stop beating yourself up if you slip up or can't do everything. For example, realistically, most of us cannot stop driving. And, quite honestly (and I may get myself in trouble here), I resent the implication that we should do so. I love my job, but it is 30 miles away. If I had \$1.00 for every time someone has gasped and said, "You drive to work!?", I could pay for a year's worth of gas. For better or for worse, commuting is a fact of life, so do what you can. For example, I try to minimize my driving trips after work and on weekends. The point is, one of the ways to save the earth is to save *yourself*—by not beating yourself up and not feeling guilty if you can't do everything. Enjoy your efforts and know that you are doing something great!

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

TRIPS, CLASSES & EQUIPMENT FOR EVERYONE
734.764.3967

Clinics- Learn new skills with a hands on approach! Choose from backcountry cooking, orienteering, Leave No Trace Ethics, rock climbing, snowshoeing, and many more.

Rental Center - Need equipment for your outing? From backpacks and canoes to backyard games and cooksets, we have everything you need to outfit your next outdoor adventure.

Wilderness Medicine - Become a more confident leader by learning the skills necessary to manage backcountry injuries. Outdoor Adventures offers both Wilderness First Aid and Wilderness First Responder courses.

LET OUTDOOR ADVENTURES BE YOUR
FIRST STEP TO THE TRAIL

WWW.RECSports.umich.edu/outdooradv





And the Winners Are...

Congratulations to the following people and groups who were honored at the Huron Valley Group's December monthly public program. If you see them, be sure to thank them for all the good work they do!

Erica M. Peplinski and her 5th grade class at Saline Schools – the Huron Valley Group Chair's Award of Merit, for a fantastic wetlands science project and a karaoke fundraiser to help preserve wetlands.

Washtenaw Community College - Environmental Committee and Building Services Staff – the Conservation Accomplishment Award, for multiple projects to save energy and improve the environment: installation of compact fluorescent light bulbs in the college library, starting a waterless urinal pilot project, expansion of the WCC recycling program, completing a prescribed burn for a natural area on WCC campus grounds, and more. If you haven't had a chance to visit WCC's campus lately, you should go – especially in the summer when the prairie wildflowers are in bloom!

Vera Hernandez – the Huron Valley Group Service Award, for work with developing the activists of the future through her leadership with Inner City Outings.

Ed Steinman – the Conservation Activist Award, for his work as a pilot with two environmental aviation groups. Ed helps groups get a bird's eye view of environmental concerns related to mountain top removal, factory farms, and forest ecology. His flights have also helped scientists develop new methods for monitoring the environment.

Jay Schlegel – the Huron Valley Group "Care and Feeding Award," for his behind-the-scenes work that helps keep the Group functioning. Jay helps build financial resources for the HVG through sale of Sierra Club 'goods' such as coffee, tea, and calendars. He also leads hikes, keeps the Sierra Club in the public eye by coordinating our booth at the Art Fair, and – in his spare time – does local organic gardening.

Gwen Nystuen – the George Sexton Public Servant of the Earth Award. This award recognizes the contribution of local government employees and commission members whose efforts have helped protect our local environment. Gwen has focused on funding and preservation of natural areas of Ann Arbor parks.

Barry Lonik – the John Muir Outings Award, for creating and leading Sierra Club members on a series of "secret hikes" in Washtenaw County.

Bob Johnson – the Environmental Stewardship Award, which recognizes and acknowledges the efforts of elected officials to protect our planet for future generations. Bob started work on the legal/political infrastructure needed to preserve Ann Arbor parkland.

Kris Denzin – the Rachel Carson Communications Award, for her innovative and welcoming methods of reaching out to and retaining Shopping For The Earth members. The Shopping for the Earth Program is the HVG's biggest fundraiser for local conservation work. Many thanks to Kris for all her hard work!

Mike Anglin – the Democracy in Action Award, which recognizes a HVG member whose involvement in our community goes beyond the ballot box. Mike made the next step from working in support of a political campaign to taking on the challenge of running for political office. He won!

Congratulations are also due to **Jay Schlegel, Doug Cowherd, and Nancy Shiffler**, for their re-elections to the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group Executive Committee.

Thank you to all of these people for all they do!

Making Changes—Getting greener, despite myself

By Cynthia Leet

I have a smoldering dislike of plastic shopping bags. They seem to be ubiquitous and constantly fall out of the sack where I store them. So several months ago I decided to stop using them. I collected a number of cloth totes in my car. Of course, frequently, I'd forget to bring the totes into the store and was stuck at check-out bagless, so I'd get plastic. I felt that having groceries in bags showed that I had paid for them. After maybe the tenth time, I mustered up my courage and said, "No bags, please. I have them in

the car." We placed my groceries back into the cart, and I wheeled them out holding my receipt ostentatiously in my hand. "No bags, please," is now no longer painful, and my animosity towards shopping bags has miraculously vanished.

Solving this problem, however, has not stopped me from using other plastic bags. My son now takes his lunch to school in plastic bread bags instead of shopping bags. (Do I really want to bake all my own bread to avoid bread bags? Weell, not yet, anyway.) I also hate to spend money on expensive cornstarch-based plastic trash can liners, so my campaign is far from complete. I'll buy cornstarch bags, I tell myself, when I can afford it.

Another place to conserve is gas. If I cut down on driving, I save money and lessen my carbon footprint. (Hybrid cars are beyond my current budget.) I have a perfectly usable bicycle, whose tires are inflated. I can find the bike lock easily enough and can ride it to places that are within a few miles of home. But, I counter, the car is faster and warmer. I plan on driving times, not biking times. Well, biking is real exercise, I argue back. It's good for you! So it saves you money AND it makes you healthy. Rethink your travel time. And you LIKE to bike. You are NOT afraid of traffic.

Clearly, I'm fighting myself. It took me several months to wean myself from plastic shopping bags. What will it take to wean me from my car for local errands? A bike handy and ready to go? The fitness argument? The joy of biking???

I think you get my drift. No matter how good my intentions are, changes can be hard to effect and take time. I have to work out kinks in my attitudes and alter my habits slowly.

But inexorably. I hope.



**For 100 Years,
Your
Downtown Source
for Bird Feed.**

**DOWNTOWN
HOME & GARDEN**
210 S. Ashley Ann Arbor, Mi 734-662-8122

 **People's Food Co-op
Café Verde**

Big enough to meet your needs...
Small enough to meet your neighbors!

*Community-owned and
environmentally conscious since 1971!*

(734) 994-9174 • 216 N. Fourth Ave. • Ann Arbor • www.peoplesfood.coop



Sierra Club—Huron Valley Group Calendar

Participants in Sierra Club outings will be asked to sign a liability waiver. If you wish to read the waiver before coming to an outing please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5630. When carpooling is used to facilitate logistics for an outing, participants assume the risks associated with this travel, as well. Carpooling, ridesharing and the like are strictly a private arrangement among participants. Park fees may apply.

For up to date information, visit our website at <http://www.michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/>

IMPORTANT! All hikes carpool from Ann Arbor City Hall parking lot unless otherwise stated.

Like nature? You could become a volunteer hike leader! The Sierra Club Huron Valley Group is accepting new volunteer outings leaders to lead short day-hikes in and around Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti. We will reimburse you for American Red Cross basic first aid training. You will first go on the outing that you choose, and then lead that outing on a later date - or propose your own ideas! Great for your résumé, good company, exercise, and fun! Call Kathy Guerreso at 734-677-0823 for information on how to get started

Wednesday April 2, 2008. Executive Committee Meeting, typically 1st Wednesday of each month, 7:15 pm. Contact Doug Cowherd at doug.cowherd@michigan.sierraclub.org for location.

Tuesday April 8, 2008. Sierra Club Book Club. 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month at Nicola's Books in Westgate Shopping Center, corner of Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: **Cold, Clear, and Deadly: Unraveling a Toxic Legacy**, by Melvin Visser, a chronicle of the effort to understand the persistence of organic pollutants in waters from the Great Lakes to the Arctic. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Nancy Shiffler at 734-971-1157 for details.

Sunday April 13, 2008. Brighton Recreation Area Hike, Kahchin Hiking Trail. 1:00 pm. 2-mile hike, family-friendly, hills and flat areas, natural surface. Contact Kathy Guerreso at 734-677-0823.

Sunday April 13, 2008. Inner City Outings. 7:00 pm, 2nd Sunday of every month. Inner City Outings introduces urban children in Washtenaw County to outdoor and environmental experiences that might not otherwise be available to them. Interested chaperones, sponsors, planners, and contributors are always welcome. For meeting location and more details, please visit ICO's events page or contact Vera at 734-665-8118.

Tuesday April 15, 2008. HVG Monthly Public Program. 7:30 pm, 3rd Tuesday of every month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Topic: **TBA**. Non-members welcome; refreshments provided.

Sunday April 20, 2008. Brighton Recreation Area Hike, Penosha Hiking Trail. 1:00 pm. 5-mile hike, hills and flat areas, natural surface. Please contact Lane Hotchkiss at 810-397-7209 for details.

Sunday April 27, 2008. Waterloo Recreation Area Hike with guest hike leader Barry Lonik. 1:00 pm. 3-4 mile hike on the natural trails in Waterloo. Family-friendly. Call Jay Schlegel at 734-477-5715 for details. Cancelled if rain.

Monday April 28, 2008. Conservation Committee meeting. 7:00 pm, typically 4th Monday of every month. Contact Dorothy Nordness at DorothyK@isr.umich.edu or 734-668-6306 for location.

Sunday May 4, 2008. Annual Potawatomi Trail Hike. 8:00 am. 17-mile hike, hills and flat areas, natural surface. Please be sure to bring a sack lunch and water. Contact Ruth Graves at 734-483-0058 for details. Cancelled if raining.

Wednesday May 7, 2008. Executive Committee Meeting, typically first Wednesday of each month, 7:15 pm. Contact Doug Cowherd at doug.cowherd@michigan.sierraclub.org for location.

Sierra Club—Huron Valley Group Calendar continued

Sunday May 11, 2008. Inner City Outings. 7:00 pm, 2nd Sunday of every month. Inner City Outings introduces urban children in Washtenaw County to outdoor and environmental experiences that might not otherwise be available to them. Interested chaperones, sponsors, planners, and contributors are always welcome. For meeting location and more details, please visit ICO's events page or contact Vera at 734-665-8118.

Tuesday May 13, 2008. Sierra Club Book Club. 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month at Nicola's Books in Westgate Shopping Center, corner of Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: **TBD**. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Nancy Shiffler at 734-971-1157 for details.

Tuesday May 20, 2008. HVG Monthly Public Program. 7:30 pm, 3rd Tuesday of every month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Topic: **TBA**. Non-members welcome; refreshments provided.

May 22-26, 2008. North Manitou Island Service Trip. Visit the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to help care for this lovely area. This service trip will include work on Saturday and a free day on Sunday. The backpacking is moderately strenuous, and there are some fees to cover food - please call Denny Burr at 734-482-9686 for details and reservations. There's a trip limit, and this one is popular, so call today!

Monday May 26, 2008. Conservation Committee meeting. 7:00 pm, typically 4th Monday of every month. Contact Dorothy Nordness at DorothyK@isr.umich.edu or 734-668-6306 for location.

Sunday June 1, 2008. Pinckney State Recreation Area Hike with guest hike leader Barry Lonik. 1:00 pm. 3-4 mile hike among the hills of Pinckney Rec Area. Family friendly. Call Kathy Guerreso at 734-677-0823 for details.

Wednesday June 4, 2008. Executive Committee Meeting, typically first Wednesday of each month 7:15 pm. Contact Doug Cowherd at doug.cowherd@michigan.sierraclub.org for location.

Sunday June 8, 2008. Inner City Outings. 7:00 pm, 2nd Sunday of every month. Inner City Outings introduces urban children in Washtenaw County to outdoor and environmental experiences that might not otherwise be available to them. Interested chaperones, sponsors, planners, and contributors are always welcome. For meeting location and more details, please visit ICO's events page or contact Vera at 734-665-8118.

Tuesday June 10, 2008. Sierra Club Book Club. 7:30 pm, 2nd Tuesday of every month at Nicola's Books in Westgate Shopping Center, corner of Maple and Jackson, Ann Arbor. Book: **TBD**. Join us for discussion - all are welcome. Check the Ann Arbor Observer or call Nancy Shiffler at 734-971-1157 for details.

Tuesday June 17, 2008. HVG Monthly Public Program. 7:30 pm, 3rd Tuesday of every month at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. Topic: **TBA**. Non-members welcome; refreshments provided.

Monday June 23, 2008. Conservation Committee meeting. 7:00 pm, typically 4th Monday of every month. Contact Dorothy Nordness at DorothyK@isr.umich.edu or 734-668-6306 for location.

July or August, 2008. Isle Royale Backpack Trip. This is still one of the most remote areas in Michigan. The natural beauty of this island is an absolute pleasure. Limit 10 people. Some group equipment can be provided. Contact Nancy Shiffler at 734-971-1157 for details, trip cost, and registration.

Clean Car Update

By Alan Richardson

Here is the running total of the economic and environmental consequences of my choice to purchase and drive a Honda Civic GX fueled by natural gas.

Period covered: 18 October 2000 (purchase date) to 5 December 2007

Distance driven:	106,337 miles
Fuel purchased:	3,258 gallons gasoline equivalent (GGE)
Fuel economy:	32.6 miles/GGE
Fuel cost of CNG used:	\$3,858
Average fuel cost:	\$1.18 per GGE
Cost economy:	27.6 miles per dollar
Savings over gasoline:	\$2,350
Payback mileage*:	83,421
Payback date*:	7 September 2006 (payback complete!)

* Payback of \$4,500 purchase premium for natural gas fuel option reduced by \$2,000 Clean Cities cash rebate and \$2,000 federal income deduction at 28% marginal tax rate in effect at time of purchase.

Estimated exhaust emissions of different passenger vehicles driven 106,337 miles (pounds)

	average car	California LEV**	Civic GX
Hydrocarbons	656	17.6	0.70
Carbon monoxide	4,895	796	37.48
Oxides of nitrogen	326	46.8	4.68
Total (pounds)	5,877	860.4	42.86

** Standard for 'Low Emission Vehicle' passenger car required by California starting in 2001

These kids need YOU!



See page 3, *A year with Inner City Outings* for ways you can help more young people become acquainted with the great outdoors.



Escape winter in Central Florida!

Fully furnished modern house in Ocala National Forest, three bedrooms, two baths, will sleep six adults. Close to Salt Springs, Juniper Springs, Florida hiking trails, Silver Springs, Silver & Ocklawaha Rivers. Hike, swim, bird-watch, canoe, or kayak! \$350/week.

For info: ggcook@hughes.net, (843) 563-4419 or (734) 994-5456.



In Memorium

Pauline Mitchell, longtime publicity chair of the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group, passed away this past summer after a battle with cancer. The local Sierra Club extends our sincere condolences to all of Pauline's family, friends, and colleagues.

She was known for her ready smile, and for being a major Sierra Club calendar "salesperson" at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR) where she worked for a number of years. When one entered the area where she worked at ISR, one could imagine being in an orchid greenhouse. She successfully grew an array of spectacular orchids, most of which seemed always to be in bloom. She generously shared cuttings from her various plants as well as advice on how to grow and coax them into bloom. A number of her plants live on in offices around the Institute, although most do not reach the glory that Pauline was able to bring out in them.

Pauline's volunteer work with the Sierra Club centered around spreading the word about how to get connected with exploring, enjoying, and protecting the planet, here where you live. She was the point person for contacting the media about upcoming events and activities. Through her gift of time to the local club, residents throughout the region have heard about Sierra Club hikes, educational programs, and volunteer opportunities.

A fitting way to remember Pauline would be a contribution to the Sierra Club where she volunteered. If you'd like to make a gift in her memory, please send gifts payable to Sierra Club Huron Valley Group to Ken Morley, Treasurer, P.O. Box 7124, Ann Arbor, MI 48107. On the memo line, please mention that this gift is in memory of Pauline Mitchell.

Pauline's love of nature – flowers and more – was inspiring and lives on.

Where flowers bloom, so does hope.

- Lady Bird Johnson



What About Our Other Mother?

By Lorna Brown

The second Sunday in every May, Americans make a special effort to honor mothers. After all, they fed, clothed, and taught us for all those years. But what about our *other* mother? The mother who has provided us food and shelter, delighted our senses, and made available to us all the wonders that she does. Mother Earth, Gaia or Terra Firma — whatever you call her, we can't get along without her. The earth provides what we need, and if we don't pay attention to what the earth needs, we will do it — and ourselves — irreparable harm.

Outside the window, snow blankets homes and trees with a foot of white fluffy stuff, beautiful as it clings to branches and reflects back the moonlight, but threatening as it converts to ice on the steps or is piled up in impenetrable drifts. It's a gift both good and bad for us, potentially helpful or harmful. What is beautiful out my window may be disastrous to you as you go down my road. As the earth provides the raw materials, it is up to us to find the balance between function and chaos.

The current body of research has forced most of us to acknowledge the impending chaos of global warming. It's happening, and its impact is frightening. What can we do? Global solutions are discussed *ad nauseum*; nations around the world try diverse strategies; state laws are changing to address actual and perceived threats.

We can do much in our own backyards to right the wrongs and re-establish a balance between our needs and the limited resources offered by this planet. We must assume the role of responsible caretakers of what we are given, and it had best start where we are, at home. Balance is the key.

Freedom Township is the most rural corner of a county with a Big Ten university, two major urban areas, many smaller towns and villages, and lots of farms. Washtenaw County has its fair share of industry, both high- and low-tech; and our soil produces corn and soybeans, wheat and wildflowers — and also contains much sand and gravel eagerly sought by mining companies.

In Freedom Township, southwest of Ann Arbor, much gravel mining occurs in the watersheds that service both the Huron and Raisin Rivers. This area

runs largely east and west and is chock full of sand and gravel. Five mining companies own a large part of this township. Residents often disagree with the companies about whether it is best to remove the gravel and sand, thus establishing man-made lakes that potentially increase residential development, or to protect the land and aquifers that sustain essential food crops, wells, and wetlands and other natural features. We strive continually to seek compromise and cooperation that meets residential, commercial, and environmental needs. These efforts are supported by Citizens Respecting Our Waters (CROW), founded several years ago to highlight the importance of protecting local aquifers and lakes.

But a grassroots group like CROW is just one way that residents work to protect the environment in which we all must live. For example, local landowners have protected several large parcels of land with the Washtenaw Land Trust — 2,789 acres of land in Washtenaw County, of which 300 are in Freedom Township.

This acreage will remain protected from development.

A l o n g
w i t h
c o n s e r v a t i o n
a g r e e m e n t s ,
l o c a l
c i t i z e n s
h a v e e n r o l l e d

h u n d r e d s o f
a c r e s o f l a n d i n
o t h e r g o v e r n m e n t -
s u p p o r t e d p r o j e c t s
e n s u r i n g t h a t t h e s e l a n d s a r e
p l a n t e d i n n a t i v e g r a s s e s a n d
h a r d w o o d s , a n d a s s u r i n g
p r e s e r v a t i o n o f w e t l a n d s a n d o t h e r

natural habitats for native animals and birds. These projects use native plantings to re-establish habitats for wildlife.

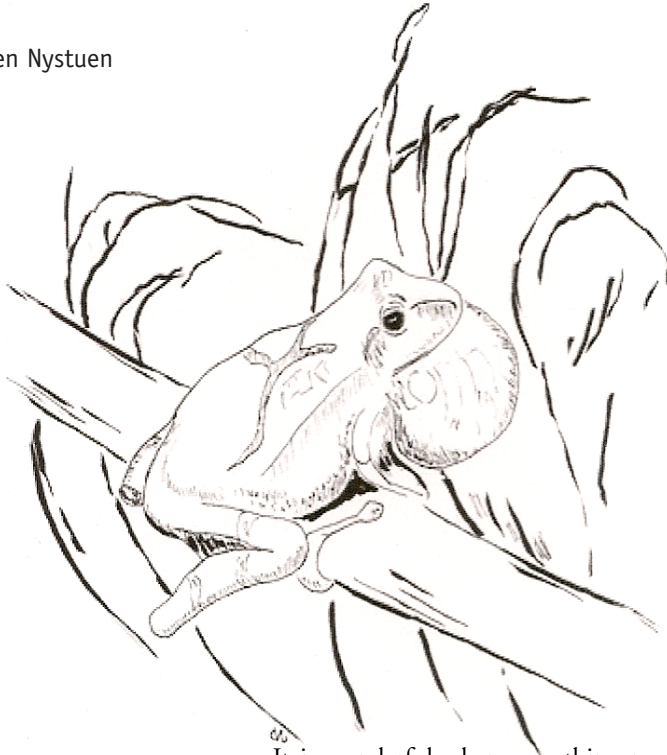
As in much of the county, we have the luxury here in Freedom Township to do these things. We have space, fertile soil, good moisture and sunlight, and minimal urbanization. We owe it to ourselves and to Mother Earth to continue as responsible stewards of the land.

Lorna Brown is a member of Citizens Respecting Our Waters, a grassroots activist group based in Freedom Township.



Is the Spring Peeper Going to be Michigan's State Amphibian?

by Gwen Nystuen



Peeping Peeper
drawing by John
Nystuen

Remember the live
animal is only an
inch long!

It is wonderful when something new comes along in the middle of a most snowy and rather dreary winter. And it happened to me last week when I had a call from Rep. Pam Byrnes asking me if I would support a Michigan House Bill #4703 designating the Northern Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*, formerly *Hyla crucifer*) as our State Amphibian. While that had never occurred to me, I thought it was a great idea. Very shortly I committed to speaking at a hearing before the Great Lakes and Environment Committee of the House in Lansing February 27. (This Committee is chaired by another environmental friend, Rep. Rebekah Warren.) Note the appropriateness of the date—almost on “leap day” February 29.

I needed to figure out what to say at a hearing. So in the last week I have thought lots about Spring Peepers, pulled out dozens of books, and found the biggest photo possible from a collection of frog calendars. I also searched the web for any recent news. I have a very diligent friend in Oregon who sends me the latest links, but this called for even more searches. I discovered several things. This is the Year of the Frog! Also I had never heard of a state amphibian. Did other states have state amphibians? The answer is yes. Would you believe that 16 states and Puerto Rico have a state amphibian. Amazing! But none I found had selected the Spring Peeper, so Michigan could be the first. I didn't stop thinking about Peepers as Saturday, March 1st was the kickoff date for the Ann Arbor Natural Area Preservation salamander surveys, now the 4th year, and in the afternoon the 14th year for our frog surveys. And in all this came the Huron Valley Group newsletter to be formatted for publication. And our editor has a soft spot for frogs and thought a story

about our loudest call of spring would fit right in. The Peeper is always one of the earliest and loudest and recognized voices. John and I have made a record of this on two Ann Arbor routes and one Washtenaw County DNR route for 13 years and are eager to start the 14th.

The little vernal ponds throughout our state are home to the Spring Peeper. It is a tiny miracle of a frog only an inch to an inch and half long. It survives the harsh cold and ice of winter, even at times freezing solid in the same manner of the Wood Frog and the Gray Treefrog who have an anti-freeze type component to their body fluids. A few weeks from now, usually late March, some little ponds will thaw and the chorus of Peepers will begin. Most everyone has heard this little frog. Very few have actually seen it.

Frogs, including Peepers, appear in art and literature and folklore. One book I have is a classic, *The Frog Book* by Mary Dickerson, 1906. She was a herpetologist and also editor of *Natural History* magazine. For all of you who may have heard the Peeper and then walked up to the pond to see this creature making so much noise and found that your approach has caused complete silence, and that, look as you will, you can't find a frog, I think you will enjoy the following excerpts. Keep in mind that Dickerson was a keen observer and artist as well as a fine naturalist. She wrote of four excursions, these are two:

“In two weeks we go again. It is afternoon, and the temperature is at 65 F. The pussy-willows are no longer grey; they have developed into spikes of golden or green flowers, and are surrounded by early bees and flies. The sound of a chorus reaches us before we leave the car, although the marsh is more than a quarter of a mile distant. The combination of sounds is almost ear-splitting. The largest company seems to be in the connected pools about the roots of a tangle of grey birches and swamp-maples. It is easy to penetrate here. We step from tree root to tree root or from log to log over shallow pools of black water filled with brown leaves, grasses and sticks. A slow painted-turtle walks through the shallow water, now in the shadow a black movement only, now showing distinctly as it come into a spot of sunlight. But where are the frogs? The voices are all about us. There is one particularly loud one at our very feet. We look; we scrutinize every leaf and stick and bit of grass. It is maddening that we cannot see the singer. With our slightest movement the sound ceases. And so again and again. We finally retreat, with the Peeper still a mysterious piping voice”

“Here is a boggy piece of land that must be pasture in mid-summer. It stretches into meadow on all sides. There is no difficulty in getting to the very centre of it by stepping from one grass hillock to another. We heard the chorus at a distance of many blocks, and it has continued as we approached; but as we step onto our first hillock it becomes quiet all about

continued pg. 13

2008 is the Year of the Frog

Why? “Earth is facing one of its most severe mass extinctions since the disappearance of the dinosaurs. From one-third to one-half of the planet’s 6,000 amphibian species — frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, and caecilians, which have thrived for 360 million years — are in danger of extinction. To mitigate this crisis, the world’s leading conservationists have joined together to name 2008 “the Year of the Frog” in hopes of raising both awareness and the critical funding needed to address the crisis.

“Amphibians are severely affected by habitat loss, climate change, pollution and pesticides, introduced species, and over-collection for food and pets. While habitat destruction is the major threat, the most immediate cause is a parasitic fungus called chytrid, a deadly disease that has quickly spread from Africa across the planet over the past 30-40 years. Chytrid is currently unstoppable and untreatable in the wild, even in protected areas. The fungus can kill 80 percent of native amphibians within months, leading to widespread extinctions. It is believed that chytrid’s spread and effect may be exacerbated by climate change. Warmer temperatures are driving some populations to higher altitudes to remain in their preferred temperature zone, while some who are stressed and have nowhere to go are disappearing.” (These quotes are from the 2008 Year of the Frog calendar published by *2007The Amphibian Project* www.helpafrog.org.)

The general declines in numerous amphibian populations around the globe are not well understood. All the conditions listed above offer some causes and a few extinctions are normal over decades and centuries, but why the response to these conditions has brought such widespread rapid declines and extinctions is not evident and currently the topic of research globally.

My assessment over the last twenty some years is that scientists have gone from initial concern to outright alarm and action. First efforts were to better establish baselines on “normal” populations that generally fluctuate dramatically with each year’s variation in rainfall and temperatures. Now it is rapid assessment, research, and captive breeding programs for species facing eminent extinction. There is a lot of information on this at some good web sites: Amphibian Ark program: www.amphibianark.org and for other programs: www.helpafrog.org. The Amphibian Ark program is a global effort to protect and breed endangered species in dedicated biosecure facilities at zoos, aquariums, and other institutions with the hope that they may eventually be reintroduced to the wild. Michigan participates through our Detroit Zoo that has one of the most outstanding amphibian exhibit and research facilities in the world.

So how is Michigan doing with our frogs? So far no dramatic changes except for the increasing loss of habitat that reduces locations where frogs were formerly abundant.

The Blanchard’s cricket frog and the Pickerall frog were formerly found in many localities of SE Michigan including Ann Arbor, and now in only a few sites—none in Ann Arbor. You may recall the Cricket Frog rescue in Ypsilanti Township a couple of years ago led by the Detroit Zoo Amphibian Center. The Department of Natural Resources as well as Ann Arbor and now other cities and townships are doing frog surveys and accumulating information statewide. If you are interested, here are a couple more web sites: the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) who were instrumental in designating 2008 Year of the Frog: www.aza.org/yearofthefrog and North American Amphibian Monitoring Program (NAAMP): www.pwrc.usgu.gov/frogquiz/

So who cares about frogs disappearing anyway? Hmmm!?! Frogs have highly permeable skin; contaminants readily enter their bodies making them exceptional indicators of environmental quality. They are affected by pollutants and climatic stressors. They are considered like “canaries in coal mines” — warning of threats to life including humans.

Spring Peeper continued

us; the quiet spreads, and now the whole bog is silent. We penetrate a little farther and then stand still. After what seems a long time, one Peeper calls far to the right. The call is taken up by frogs nearer and nearer, until we are surrounded by sound. This time our search is rewarded. We see one frog. He is so small, that, instead of its seeming strange that we had not found them before, we think it a miracle that we have discovered one now. He swims vigorously from a clump of grass to a flat twig, which to him is a log, climbs upon it, and is in full view for a moment; then plunges into the water again, and swims to another clump of grass and leaves almost at our feet. Instantly he begins singing, and although he is partially concealed by a projecting leaf, we can see his swollen throat gleam like a great white bubble under the level rays of the late afternoon sun. The transparent inflated throat is one-half as large as the frog’s head and body together. It does not greatly change size between the calls, but collapses at the end..... We try to capture him, and get only a handful of mud for our pains..... We retreat with the congratulatory remark, “At any

rate, we have seen a Peeper!”

Between the last of March and the beginning of April we will have a thaw. This spring I know you will hear a Spring Peeper, and if you have never seen one, we can tell you it is worth the patience. You will understand why herpetologists usually listen and look at night, and you will have quicker success with waders and flashlight. Peepers have very good eyesight. A large moving creature is surely bad news and takes a Peeper’s voice right away! However standing very still and not casting a shadow (if you go by day) is usually rewarding. We nevertheless always marvel at how long it takes us to see the first one. Keep in mind that what you are looking for in the marshy water full of yellow and brown grass and reeds and dead leaves and sticks, is a little body of tan-brown with a blotchy darker cross on its back, and he is only an INCH long. The loud peep can be right under your nose and you may not see him until he moves or you see his throat pouch inflating with a piercing peep. Good luck!



Shop to Stop Sprawl!

Living creatures need space to live. Over the past decade, Shopping for the Earth has helped generate \$110 million to preserve natural areas and farmland.

You can help us do more by buying EarthCash vouchers for the stores where you already shop.

For every \$20 of vouchers, you get \$20 in store credit and earn \$1 for the local Sierra Club.

Complete details are available at <http://michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/sfte.htm>

"A bonus for nature for every grocery purchase I make—even chocolate!"
--Rita Mitchell

Help preserve nature at no cost to you!

Shopping for the Earth Order Form

Indicate the number of EarthCash vouchers you want for each store and available dollar amount below. Enclose your check payable to "Sierra Club-Huron Valley Group." Total order (\$500 maximum): \$ _____

	\$5	\$10	\$20	\$25	\$50	\$100
Ann Arbor People's Food Co-op ¹						
Arbor Brewing Company						
Arbor Farms						
Borders Books & Music ¹						
Busch's ² (reloadable)						
Hiller's Markets ² (reloadable)						
Kroger ² (reloadable)						
Whole Foods ¹ (and affiliated stores)						
Meijer	A rebate program, no vouchers (neither paper nor cards). Please see http://michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/SFTE_Meijer.pdf or call Betsy at 734-997-9348.					

¹ non-reloadable card • Consider buying several cards.

² reloadable card • The Sierra Club receives a contribution when you reload card, so only one needed per person.

Arbor Brewing, Arbor Farms, Holiday are paper vouchers.

- check here to receive local Sierra Club e-mail updates
 if not a Sierra Club member, check here to receive local Sierra Club newsletter

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Mail to:
 Betsy Noren
 (betsynoren@gmail.com)
 1210 Clague St.
 Ann Arbor, MI 48103
(Your data will not be shared)



**Huron
Valley
Group
Directory**

www.michigan.sierraclub.org/huron/

Chair	
Doug Cowherd*	662-5205
Vice-chair	
Nancy Shiffler*	971-1157
Treasurer	
Ken Morley	677-7791
Secretary	
Joel Dalton*	
Chapter Representative	
Nancy Shiffler*	971-1157
Conservation Chair	
Dorothy Nordness	668-6306
Inner City Outings Chair	
Vera Hernandez	665-8118
Outings Chair	
Kathy Guerreso	677-0823
Inner City Outings Liaison	
Membership Chair	
Ed Steinman**	665-0248
Political Chair	
Acting Program Chair	
Doug Cowherd*	662-5205
Shopping for the Earth	
Betsy Noren	997-9348
Fund Raising Chair	
Jay Schlegel*	477-5715
Web Designer	
Suzie Heiney	377-8248
Newsletter Team	
Suzie Heiney, Editor	377-8248
Mary Roth	
Kevin Bell	
Kim Waldo	971-1941
Jay Schlegel*	477-5715
Patti Smith	649-4647
Gwen Nystuen	665-7632
Effie Hanchett	
Ed Steinman*	665-0248
Executive Committee	
Mike Anglin*	
Rita Mitchell*	665-0248

* = HVG Excom Member

How to Get HVG reminders via 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!

Membership

Yes, I want to help safeguard our nation's precious natural heritage. My check is enclosed.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ ZIP _____
 email _____

Check enclosed, made payable to Sierra Club
 Mastercard Visa Exp Date ____/____
 Cardholder Name _____
 Card Number _____

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.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

	INDIVIDUAL	JOINT
INTRODUCTORY	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
SUPPORTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
CONTRIBUTING	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
LIFE	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
SENIOR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
STUDENT	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
LIMITED INCOME	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

F94Q **W-103**  **SIERRA CLUB**
 FOUNDED 1892
Sierra Club
 P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO, 80322-2968



Articles are for informational purposes only. No endorsement of particular positions, groups, or activities is implied.



Huron Valley Group Newsletter
The Sierra Club
621 Fifth Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Non-profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 215
Ann Arbor, MI

Winter 2008 Inside:

- Woodland Trail Skiing - page 1
- A Year with Innerr City Outings - page 3
- Awards & Election Results - page 5
- Making Changes—Getting Greener - pg 6
- Calendar of Events - page 7-8



Like nature? You could become a volunteer hike leader!

The Sierra Club Huron Valley Group is accepting new volunteer outings leaders to lead short day-hikes in and around Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti. We will reimburse you for American Red Cross basic first aid training. You will first go on the outing that you choose, and then lead that outing on a later date - or propose your own ideas! Great for your résumé, good company, exercise, and fun! Call Kathy Guerreso at 734-677-0823 for information on how to get started.

For a list of upcoming hikes, please visit www.michigan.sierraclub.org/huron.