

# The Lookout

Newsletter of the Sierra Club Huron Valley

JULY 2022

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*Do you have a question you'd like the Sierra Club to address? Email us at [hvgsierraclub@gmail.com](mailto:hvgsierraclub@gmail.com)*

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## Thoughts from the Chair

Jason Frenzel, HVG Executive Committee Chair

I've been thinking a lot about the articles in this newsletter by Dan Brown and Dan Ezekiel. The Dans are very powerful and influential in my world.

Mr Brown is a thought leader on climate change, environmental pollutants, politics, and recreation (follow him on any number of social medias). He thinks deeply and offers insights about matters that Sierra Club members care about. Every time I talk to Dan B I learn something, including how to retrofit my bicycle.

Mr. Ezekiel is one of the most grounded and rooted people I have ever met. Every time I mention his name someone says "he was my teacher" or "he was my kid's teacher". And

this statement is always followed by a statement about how Dan impacted that person's life, in a positive way. Everyone respects him, even if they were once on opposite sides of an issue. Every time I talk to Dan E I learn about the commitment to respect and community.

Both of the Dans are wise beyond their years. So I would like to raise up some of their points. I think all of us and our favorite organizations could learn from their lessons. I certainly have. The biggest point from Dan Brown's article, in my current reflection, is that we must be aware that the fossil fuel industry has adopted a new strategy of trying to sow division among envi-

ronmentalists. We guard against allowing the perfect to become the enemy of the good. Once I started seeing this point I see it everywhere in our organizations.

And then there are amazing people like Dan Ezekiel, who reminds us that taking one step forward not only helps us create the path - it invigorates, reinforces, and enlivens our passion in our good work. Stepping forward as an environmental advocate, as a stealth educator, as a volunteer, say for a 'camping trip', and as a voter are all critical.

In this edition of The Outlook, you'll find numerous ways to get involved. Please do so, the world

## Letter to the Editor: A2 Zero Millage

Hello,

I'm looking for information about the A2 Zero millage. I would love any information or resources you could provide so I can finalize my decision and also help my friends and neighbors understand its ramifications. Thanks!

Kim in Ann Arbor

Kim,

Thank you for your question. The best source for that information is [A2 Climate Action](#).

Ed.

# Editor's Welcome and Call to Action

John Metzler

Welcome! As we began planning this issue, targeting a publication date in advance of the primary, we at *The Lookout* turned our attention to issues we hoped you would consider when you cast your vote: Climate change, social justice, building the future. Times have changed. What we contemplated is still relevant, but new issues have joined them.

The last month has seen an assault on women's reproductive rights, healthcare, and autonomy over their own bodies and on the State's ability to protect us, be it from gun violence or climate change. These actions by the Supreme Court both encourage and enable those who want to push their far-right social agenda across our Nation.

These forces are frequently the same that push back against the fights for social justice. If I have learned anything in the last month, it is that the ultraconservative forces in our society are stronger than I expected. I ask you all to join the resistance.

What can you do? Several things: Donate! Vote! Volunteer! Talk!

This is NOT a plug for the Sierra Club, nor for the Democratic Party – I don't care which organization,

which cause is most important to you. I care that you get up and join the fight, for our rights, our democracy, however you can. It is a fight we need to win.

If you are fortunate enough to be able to donate money, do so as generously as you can. Whatever issue or issues concern you most - Women's autonomy, social justice, gun violence, and, yes, climate change – all have multiple organizations that need even more financial resources if we are to win these battles.

As Daniel Brown reports in his article, voting is important. In the last month, we have lost protections and powers we thought our Constitution and legal precedent provided. We must pick ourselves up and rebuild. Part of that rebuilding in Michigan is ensuring our State Constitution provides protections we thought we had – protections for women to exercise bodily autonomy and protections of voting rights we thought we enshrined in prior ballot issues. See the resources we have in this issue, for information about how and where to vote and about the proposals that will be on the ballot this fall.

**But voting is not enough.** You need to get up and help, in person. Volunteer! As Dr. Tyler notes in

our interview with him, mentoring can be a significant act toward social justice. Invest some of your time in mentoring and you help change tomorrow. And every organization that can use your financial support will be even more appreciative of your time (including us). Please see our [volunteering directory](#) for a list of advocacy organizations you can investigate.

Lastly, and possibly most difficult, is Talk! Talk to your family, your friends, your coworkers. Daniel Brown discusses who to talk to – not everyone can be persuaded, but many, many can be. Please, make the effort.

The country I thought we had is being threatened by what is, on most of these issues, a small minority. What we all need is to talk more, so that more people understand that the reactionary forces are a small, unrepresentative minority. They fear the future and recognize their views are held by fewer and fewer people. This makes them all the more dangerous, as they attempt to force their views on the Nation and protect that force by assaulting democracy itself.

We have the numbers, we have the financial power, we have history, we have the right.

We need YOU!

## Donate. Vote. Volunteer. Talk.

# Summer Flowers and Pollinators



Top left: a bee resting atop Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*)

Top right: a great spangled fritillary (*Speyeria Cybele*) atop a purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Bottom left: Eastern tiger swallowtail (*Papilio glaucus*) on buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

## Volunteer & Get Involved!

Here are a few activist groups that you can investigate. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor does it constitute an endorsement by the Sierra Club, but it is just a short listing to get your gears going and juices flowing. Be sure to also research the links in [Amanda Sweetman's](#) and [Daniel Brown's](#) articles!

### Reproductive Rights

[Planned Parenthood of Michigan](#)  
[Reproductive Freedom For All](#)  
[Center for Reproductive Rights](#)  
[National Abortion Federation](#)

### Climate Change

[Citizen Climate Lobby](#)

### Social and Environmental Justice

[Michigan Voices](#)  
[Soulardarity](#)  
[Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition](#)  
[Ecoworks](#)

### Gun Violence

[Moms Demand Action](#)  
[Everytown](#)

# Growing the Future

## An Interview with MSU Extension Director Dr. Quentin Tyler

*The Lookout was fortunate to be able to sit down recently with Quentin Tyler, Director of Michigan State University Extension since June 1, 2021, and Associate Dean and Director for the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) at MSU since 2018. Interview conducted and transcribed by John Metzler and edited for length.*

**The Lookout:** *I have pretty limited experience with MSU Extension (MSU-E). What are some of the big programs or focuses for you?*

**Dr. Tyler:** Extension has been around for over a hundred years. It's the outreach arm of the University. MSU is a land grant institution, involving research, teaching and extension. Extension takes the science, the expertise, the resources, and the programs developed at the University to the community. We are embedded in Michigan's 83 counties. We are the folks that people know, and that they've recognized for over a hundred years. As we talk about the importance of Extension, we fill the gaps in terms of what the community needs.

Extension has four institutes. The Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute is what we traditionally think of as Extension: we help our farmers increase the return on their investments. We help them increase their knowledge and expertise in their operations. We also help them make sure that they're environmentally sustainable in terms of their environmental practices. And we advance agriculture through applied research.

The Community, Food, and Envi-



Photo courtesy of Dr. Quentin Tyler

ronment Institute is all about strengthening our communities. We do that through advancing entrepreneurship, enhancing the people's quality of life, developing local food systems, and working with our local leaders, such as our county commissioners.

Our Health and Nutrition Institute addresses foodborne illnesses, how to develop proper meals,

budgeting, and also what's really important in today's society - mental health. We have a lot of mental health [information] sharing in that Institute.

Last, but certainly not least, one that I am particularly fond of - because I'm a product of youth development programs - is our Children and Youth Institute that works with folks from birth

## Growing the Future con't

through age 19. We work with teen mental health and development programs. We have our traditional 4-H programs, but also we have our SPIN (Special Interest) club programs. And particularly we have statewide initiatives and local initiatives. It's about developing youth and meeting those folks where they're at.

**Lookout:** *One question some people in Sierra club are deeply interested in is the issue of the farms that focus on feeding large numbers of animals, or have large numbers of animals and some of the waste pollutants that they can generate. Does MSU-E have programs to try to address these issues?*

**Dr. Tyler:** We talk about environmental sustainability, stewardship. We work with farmers in terms of that. We'll have to feed 9.5 billion people by the year 2050. Our farmers in Michigan are at the head of that. What we do is provide them the resources to be able to do that in an environmentally sustainable way. One of the reasons I came to Michigan State is the breadth and depth of the community, the over 300 different commodities that are developed in this state, and the presence that Michigan State University Extension has not only within the country, but globally

**Lookout:** *Are there some programs of Extension that you'd like to have be better known?*

**Dr. Tyler:** Well, all of our programs. People refer to Extension as the best kept secret. As we talk

about what's going on, nationally and globally, Extension can fill in the gaps and educate folks and prepare folks. We have mental health training for adults and teen mental health for identifying who to go to and who to work with in terms of mental health, which is really important. We have folks that are dedicated in developing the next generation of talent. Youth development programs are very, important. Within the last couple years, a lot of folks are

***"I'm sitting there with light bulbs going off in my head; this is what Extension is about."***

starting new businesses or are trying to get their businesses back and we advance entrepreneurship in that particular area. We help with enhancing people's quality of life, developing local food systems - we have all of it from my perspective.

**Lookout:** *What was your path for getting to Michigan State University Extension?*

**Dr. Tyler:** We talked about the importance of developing the next generation of folks. I have had a lot of great mentors in my life. This is really important. A mentor is someone who sees something in you that you don't see in yourself. And I've been fortunate enough to have mentors all over the country and all over the world that don't even look like me, who advocated for me. That has been really im-

portant in my life.

I started off as an 18 year old intern in Extension at the University of Kentucky. And that path came from a farmer who said to me, "Hey, you know, I think you'd be great in my home community. Look at Extension, look at this opportunity." And it was one of the best things that happened in my life. My supervisor, my mentor then was Jay Stone, an agriculture agent. We would take trips throughout the county and he would point out different things as we [rode] in the truck and he'd say, "that's what this is. This is what happens to this. And this is what this farmer needs." We would go to a lot of farmers' houses and people wanted to know my story. Even though Christian County [KY] was a huge community in terms of agriculture, I wasn't exposed to that and [the farmers] would talk to me and give me some lessons on life.

One of my mentors was an Extension professor who oversaw cooperatives in the state of Kentucky. I ended up taking over that role. I was in a national leadership program with [MSU] interim Dean Kelly Millenbah at the Food Systems Leadership Institute. And she told me, "Hey, we have a position open at Michigan State" and I was like, I'm not going to Michigan. <laughing> I'm not going to Michigan at all, but they always say, never let your folks leave campus.

And I left the state that I loved, I left family and friends to come to Michigan State and I fell in love

Growing the Future cont.

with Michigan State University and Extension and what they do. When I came to Michigan State, then-Director Jeff Dwyer would always meet with me and would talk a little bit about Extension and I'd ask a bunch of questions.

It's like you have a toy, then you see somebody else's toy, you're looking at it, and you want to play with it. And I was thinking about that in terms of Extension. When he retired, he said, "Quentin, you're the right person to lead this organization going forward."

**Lookout:** *The extension program at Michigan State is what, about six hundred some people?*

**Dr. Tyler:** At full capacity about 700 faculty and staff throughout the whole state, making the difference in people's lives. And from my perspective and what I've observed, [MSU Extension] is a leader in this country.

**Lookout:** *You're also the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Can you explain what that means to you?*

**Dr. Tyler:** I've been really successful in the work around diversity, equity, and inclusion. The reason why is [because] I look at it a little different from a lot of folks. To me, it's all about people, no matter what people look like, where they are from, to me, it's meeting people where they're at, giving folks the resources they need to be successful.

Growing up in Extension, a lot of times I was the only person that

looked like me. And those folks in the ag industry welcome you with open arms. I think if we're going to be successful in this industry, we have to understand people not only within the state, but within this country and also globally.

It's providing those folks with the resources they need to be successful, meeting people where they're at. So DEI from my perspective is all about people, how can we support people? How can we give people what they need and the education they need to be successful.

A lot of times I say we don't know what we don't know, but also we fear what we don't understand. So to me, it's [about] filling in those gaps in terms of uncertainty. And also educating people from different aspects of life. So for example,

it may be, educating an urban kid on where their food comes from, or an out-of-state employee who comes from Kentucky to Michigan and everybody in Michigan State uses acronyms. Right? So to me it's giving those people that need those skills I need to be successful as well. DEI is about treating people kindly, living by the golden and the platinum rule: treating people how they want to be treated.

**Lookout:** *I hadn't heard it called the platinum rule before.*

**Dr. Tyler:** You know, the golden rule is *treat people how you want to be treated*. But the unique thing about that is everybody doesn't want to be treated how you want to be treated, the platinum rule is *treat people how they want to be treated*.

**Lookout:** [That] actually makes a



Photo courtesy of Dr. Quentin Tyler

Growing the Future cont.

lot more sense .

Dr. Tyler: It does. I did a presentation, DEI presentation, at a middle school. To me DEI is about sense of belonging. And what I focused on was the golden rule and the platinum rule: respect and belonging.

**Lookout:** *What are some of the things you do to help create a sense of belonging for people?*

**Dr. Tyler:** Acknowledging when people do well, filling in those gaps when they don't know, creating that open door policy where folks can come to you. One of the things that [I learned] in Kentucky, from a culture survey, is that when people feel a sense of belonging within your organization, they're more likely to wear your logo. So to me, it's how often do folks wear the Michigan State Extension apparel, and how can we provide people that apparel? One of the initiatives I'm doing is small little tokens of appreciation when folks do small things that matter to this organization, that matter to the community. I developed something special and it has a little phrase at the end that says, thank you for all that you do.

**Lookout:** *I think you also said that part of the DEI work you're doing is not just internal to [MSU's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources], it's also trying to expand your customer base*

**Dr. Tyler:** It's important because [at] MSU Extension, we really rely, especially from the youth develop-

ments standpoint, on our volunteers. So it's expanding what we do and the impact that we have on our respective communities. We have over 200,000 youth that participate in our programs annually. We have 16,000 or so volunteers. So volunteers are very important in terms of youth development. And it's a reciprocal process, because those youth see people volunteering and they grow up to volunteer themselves. So 4-H, that green and white, is in our DNA.

**“To me, DEI is about a sense of belonging.”**

**Lookout:** *I grew up in a rural county in Northern Indiana and 4-H was what the farm kids were in. I assume in Michigan, 4-H is more than just for farm kids. How do people in Ann Arbor or people in Detroit volunteer to help in your youth programs?*

**Dr. Tyler:** Generally, I think you hit the nail right on the head. Farm kids are very important, because those are the folks that are going to be feeding the next generation of folks. But also we recognize the importance of our urban population. We have what we call urban program coordinators. Those folks develop programs that are pertinent to our urban clientele. So, again, meeting people where they're at, that's what those programs really focus on. It's a holistic approach.

At Extension we have the Detroit Partnership of Food, Learning and Innovation. We have Detroit program coordinators in that particular area. Extension is a resource. I was on a community call in Detroit and folks were talking about the needs of the community. They were talking about education for youth, development for youth, they're talking about developing local food systems. And they talked about entrepreneurship, all these different areas. And I'm sitting there with light bulbs going off in my head: this is what Extension is about. So we must increase our footprint in all communities.

**Lookout:** *When you talk about increasing your footprint, how much of that do you envision being pulled by the people in the areas you're hoping to serve, reaching out for your services and how much of it is things that you hope to do in increasing the marketing, and the awareness of your programs.*

**Dr. Tyler:** It's both things, from my perspective. We have a lot of new employees, so ensuring that we talk about places to be at our onboarding processes. We have been having conversations with our communicators about our messages and who we are as Extension.

We all have a job and to me, as a new Director of Extension, being everywhere I can be whenever people talk about or want to know about Extension, I'm here, as you can see here doing this interview, to talk about the great things that

Growing the Future cont.

we do, because we did have two years or so where folks weren't on the ground running. To me, this is an opportunity to rebrand ourselves, reinvent ourselves, let folks know that we're here and we're not going anywhere.

**Lookout:** *As a final question, what three noteworthy books are you reading or have read recently?*

Dr. Tyler: One is, *The Legacy of the New Farmers of America*, by Antoine Austin, Dexter Wakefield, and Netta Cox. Basically, it talks about the importance of a youth development organization that had a national impact, particularly in the south. That's a really great read.

Maya Washington has a book,

*Through the Banks of the Red Cedar*. Her dad was Gene Washington, who was on a past [MSU] football team. They talked about his experiences, coming to Michigan State University and beyond in the NFL.

And the last, certainly not least, book that I'm reading right now is, *Stand Strong: 365 Devotions For Men By Men*.

**Lookout:** *Thank you for your time! This has been enlightening.*

**Dr. Tyler:** Thanks for having me.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Quentin Tyler



# MSU Extension

## Did you know?

You can submit questions to MSU Extension. [Ask Extension](#) offers one-to-one answers from MSU Extension experts and Extension Master Gardener volunteers on topics such as **lawns, gardening, agriculture, food safety, food preservation, natural resources, community development, youth programming** and more!

## Helpful Links

- [Michigan 4-H](#)
- [MSU Product Center](#)
- [Lawn and Garden](#)
- [Food and Health](#)
- [Natural Resources](#)
- [Agriculture](#)



# A is for Advocacy

Amanda Sweetman

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” asks the ump-teenth adult at my grandparent’s 1988 house party.

“The first female president! Vote for me in 2020.” says the three-year-old Amanda.

Clearly someone had done the math for me, and as of 2022 I haven’t lived up to my political aspirations. I have, however, discovered why someone might want to be president. It’s not your name on everyone’s lips, or the fancy address, it’s getting the chance to make positive change—lasting, systemic change through effective policy solutions.

Effective policies can make remarkable change: the Endangered Species Act mandated an ecosystem approach to conservation; the Clean Air Act has saved tens of

thousands of lives by reducing emissions; the Montreal Protocol saved the ozone layer and slowed climate change. In contrast, ineffective or non-existent policies can cause catastrophic damage.

Agricultural subsidies in the United States are a perfect example of a mis-informed, ineffectual set of policies that are causing irreparable environmental and social harm. Starting in 1933, crop subsidies were given to farmers to reduce crop surpluses and raise crop prices<sup>1</sup>.

Today, crop subsidies remove or mitigate free market forces, using taxpayer dollars to reduce risks to farmers by covering part of their crop insurance premiums. While these subsidies help maintain a robust farm economy which helps protect against food shortages, they have degraded our wa-

ters,<sup>2,3,4</sup> furthered economic disparities between the wealthiest and poorest farmers, increased food prices, and increased the tax burden<sup>5</sup>. Subsidies have also contributed to the obesity and diabetes epidemics by increasing both the number of calories consumed and shifting our diets toward more grain and fat consumption.<sup>6,7</sup>

To address the shortcomings of today’s agriculture policies, Presidential hopeful Sweetman would have based her 2020 campaign on a platform of “Sustainable Food Systems for All.” While not as catchy as “Yes We Can”, it is more solutions oriented. A sustainable food system “delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compro-



Amanda Sweetman (photo courtesy of Amanda Sweetman)

## A is for Advocacy cont.

mised”<sup>8</sup>.

Creating sustainable food systems and increasing nutrition security for all is one of the best solutions to some of the biggest problems facing us today: malnutrition, obesity, and climate change. In 2020, 11% of total US greenhouse gasses came from agriculture<sup>9</sup>, much of which is attributable to the use of synthetic fertilizer and the conversion of wild lands to crop lands.

Food insecurity rates among US households with children rose to 29.5% during the pandemic. Malnutrition directly contributes to a host of negative outcomes including reduced educational performance and increased rates of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions. We cannot afford the business-as-usual response to these snowballing issues. The estimated cost of climate-related disasters in 2020 was \$95 billion<sup>10</sup> and the healthcare costs of hunger and food insecurity are approximately \$160.7 billion/year<sup>11</sup>.

How do we move toward a more sustainable food system? A [2020 report in the American Journal of Public Health](#) outlined 21 policy solutions that include shifting “USDA subsidies and insurance from commodity crops such as corn, sugar, and soy that are the foundation of unhealthy ultraprocessed food products to ‘specialty’ fruits and vegetables” and modifying “USDA policies to incentivize and support a transition to regenerative, sustainable, whole-farm agricultural systems.”

Broadly, the suggestions made in the report address food security, reducing racial disparities in health outcomes, reducing carbon emissions, protecting food workers, and making healthy affordable food available to all Americans.



Photo courtesy of Amanda Sweetman

Most, if not all, of the report’s suggestions could and should be written into the next Farm Bill, which will be written in 2023. The Farm Bill encompasses not only crop subsidies, but also natural areas preservation and food assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Now is the time to start advocating for positive policy change. Michiganders have a direct link to the Farm Bill because Senator

Debbie Stabenow is the Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. [Contact her today!](#)

In addition to contacting your elected officials, I also encourage you to think about your sphere of influence and how you can become an advocate for change in those spaces. For example, while I may not be a presidential nominee, I am working hard on local solutions to improving our food systems, reducing health disparities, and protecting our environment.

**A is for Advocacy cont.**

For the last seven years I've had the pleasure of leading [the Farm at Trinity Health St Joseph Mercy Ann Arbor](#) (the Farm). Founded in 2010, the Farm's mission is to grow a healthy community by empowering people through food, education, and relationships. As one of the first hospital-based farms in the country, the Farm has been part of a growing trend to take health care out of the hospital and into people's daily lives.



Photo courtesy of Amanda Sweetman

Our flagship program, the Collaborative Farm Share, is a Community Supported Agriculture program that aggregates supply from a dozen local farms to meet the demand from a variety of customers. To ensure that healthy, local food is available to all, no matter their income, our Farm Share Assistance program provides free or reduced cost membership to people experiencing food insecurity. This program not only increases revenue for small farmers, generating more than \$200,000 of income for local farms in 2021, but also makes the healthy choice the easy choice for our members.

In 2021, members reported eating more servings of fruits and vegetables (100%); trying new fruits and vegetables (97%); eating more meals at home (78%); and, gained confidence in preparing food new ways (69%). I am a passionate advocate within my company, which has a national footprint, and to our elected officials for moving toward a sustainable food system for all. In fact, the

importance of advocacy to the success of the Farm is, in large part, what opened my eyes to the value and power of advocacy in creating opportunities for positive impact.

I strongly believe that we must all advocate for the change we want to see in the world. Being an advocate can mean volunteering with a political campaign, donating money to groups that are aligned with your values, and speaking up for change within your areas of influence. Looking for a place to start? The Huron Valley Group and Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club provide numerous resources and opportunities such as their Democracy in Action [guide](#) or their [get involved](#) page. They even organize regular visits to Lansing to speak to our elected officials.

**Want to get involved with the Farm?**

- Join the [Farm Share](#)
- Send your kids to summer camp
- [Volunteer](#)
- Donate

<sup>1</sup> Library of Congress. "[History of the United States Farm Bill.](#)" Accessed on 7/1/2022

<sup>2</sup> Ribaudo, Marc, Michael Livingston, and James Williamson. November 2012. [Nitrogen Management on U.S. Corn Acres, 2001-10, EB-20.](#) U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

<sup>3</sup> Boehm, Rebecca. 2020. [Reviving the Dead Zone: Solutions to Benefit Both Gulf Coast Fishers and Midwest Farmers,](#) Cambridge, MA: Union of Concerned Scientists.

<sup>4</sup> [Stowe: When Iowa's water quality reached turning point \(desmoinesregister.com\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Lincicome, Scott. December 2020. [Examining America's Farm Subsidy Problem.](#) Cato Institute.

<sup>6</sup> [Why Good Nutrition is Important | Center for Science in the Public Interest \(cspinet.org\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> Desilver, Drew. December 2016. [How America's diet has changed over time | Pew Research Center](#) Pew Research Center.

<sup>8</sup> Nguyen, Hanh, FAO 2018. [Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework \(fao.org\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Sources of Greenhouse Gas Emissions | US EPA](#)

<sup>10</sup> [2020 U.S. billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in historical context | NOAA Climate.gov](#)

<sup>11</sup> [www.hungerreport.org/costofhunger/](#)

# Avoiding Climate Action Traps and Pursuing Solutions

Daniel Brown

The landscape of climate action and climate science communication has shifted dramatically since Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. We know more about the science, and we know how to communicate it more effectively, but climate action still faces stiff challenges from new forms of denial and distraction. The fossil fuel industry has changed their tactics, and attacks on climate action from the political left are growing increasingly problematic.

## Where We're Headed

If we continue to follow current practices and trajectories for reducing planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, the Earth will warm by 2.4°C to 2.9°C by 2100. That future, if allowed to come to pass, will severely disrupt ecosystems around the world, cripple global food supplies, and exacerbate refugee crises. In Michigan, we would see an accelera-

tion of the effects of climate change we're already experiencing. Storms would become more dangerous and more frequent. Our seasons would continue to shift, and climate conditions would change faster than ecosystems can adapt.

If we hold true to our pledges, we will fare significantly better, with warming just above the upper 2°C Paris Agreement goal, far short of where we need to be but much better than we're currently headed. So far, unfortunately, we are not holding true to our promises.

There are some exceptions where technological advances have made limiting emissions easier than expected, but overwhelmingly, we are still emitting too much carbon at local, state, federal, and international scales.

## The Barriers are Political, not Scientific

The barriers to climate action are entirely political, not scientific or technological. That has been the overwhelming finding from recent science evaluating policies and practices to address climate



Crooked Lake Trail, Pinkney, MI

## Avoiding Climate Action Traps cont.

change. We have the tools to limit warming to 2°C globally. What we lack is the political will and the investment to scale up and deploy solutions fast enough.

Closing the gaps from pledge to policy to action will require convincing more of our neighbors—*and especially our elected officials*—to make climate change a priority issue. How to convince people to listen to the science and take climate change seriously is challenging, to say the least. The good news is that the research has shown us where we need to start, and we’re gaining a better understanding of who we can reach.

The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University are two of the leading groups studying climate science communication and public perception. They produce a regular analysis, *Global Warming’s Six Americas*, that segments Americans into six distinct groups ranging from “Alarmed” to “Dismissive”. Someone in the Alarmed category is very likely to prioritize climate change as an issue and support climate action policies. A Dismissive person may believe climate change is an elaborate, multigenerational, international conspiracy to expand government control, or they may believe climate change isn’t a significant problem.

In the middle of Yale’s Six Americas are the “cautious” and “disengaged” groups. These groups may support climate action but don’t consider it a priority, or



Insect web at Barton Nature Area, Ann Arbor

they may be unaware of the effects of climate change. Over time, the Disengaged group has maintained a steady percentage of the population, but in recent years, the Cautious, Doubtful, and Dismissive groups have shrunk while the groups likely to support climate action have grown.

There are many reasons for this favorable shift in public perception, but chief among the causes is that the effects of climate change have become painfully clear. Climate science communicators have also figured out how to more effectively neutralize the fossil fuel industry’s disinformation campaigns by engaging demographics more likely to be swayed by facts. Dismissive and doubtful voters are entrenched and unlikely to be convinced. Spending time convincing cautious and concerned voters to prioritize climate action, on the other hand, has been effective.

Those findings can give us all some pointers on where to spend our

own efforts. In practical terms, this means we’re better off trying to motivate amenable friends and family to do more rather than debate skeptics over irrational arguments or cherry-picked data. Climate science communicators now recommend ignoring climate change deniers *unless there is a chance their misstatements could spread to cautious or disengaged people around them*. For that reason, it’s sometimes worth our effort to combat disinformation over social media and cite respected sources when doing so.

### Talk About It

Deniers and skeptics aside, most Americans want to do more to address climate change but are reluctant to engage. About 76% of people in the U.S. understand climate change is real and affecting us now. Unfortunately, more than 60% rarely, if ever, discuss climate change, and only 24% discuss it with regular frequency. Curiously, a majority of people want to talk more about climate change, but a

### Avoiding Climate Action Traps cont.

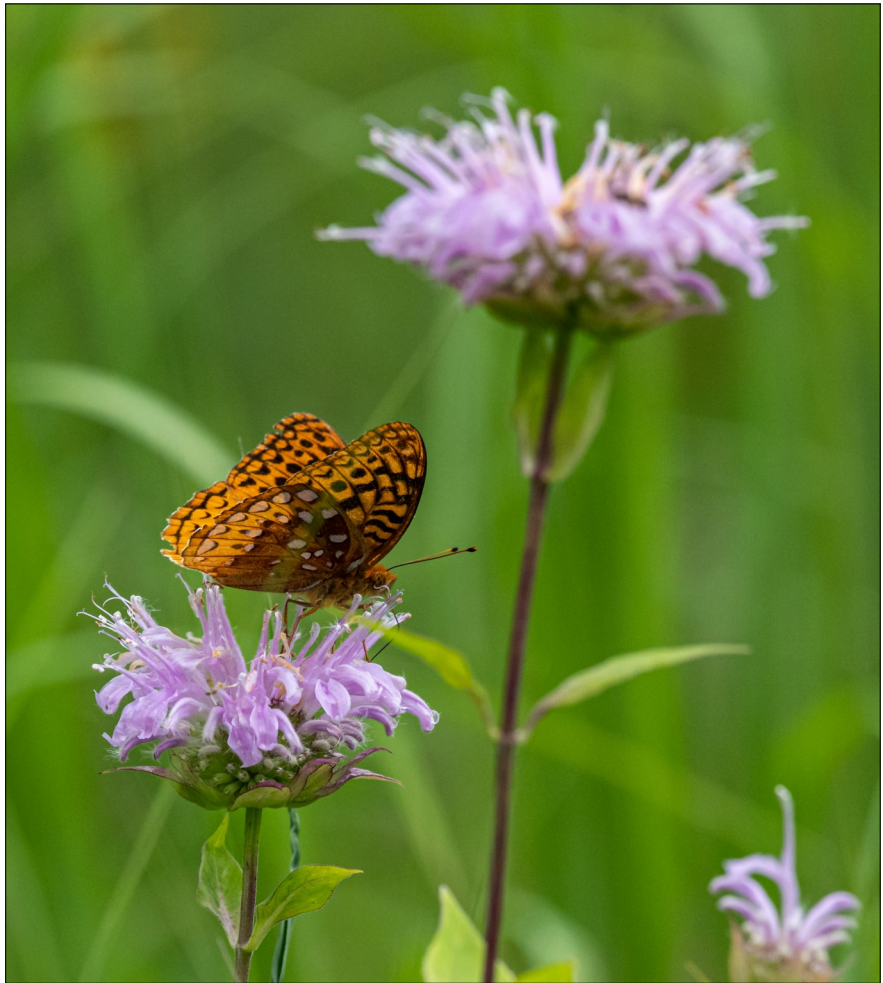
larger majority think that others do not want to talk about climate change. It's created a false social perception that climate change is viewed as a more polarizing topic than it actually is. People are afraid of bringing it up because they fear they may alienate themselves, while most other people are hoping someone else will bring it up.

The solution, therefore, is to incorporate climate change into routine conversations and decision making as much as possible throughout government, business management, and personal social networks. World-renowned climate scientist and science communicator Katharine Hayhoe repeats her mantra often: "One of the best things we can do to fight climate change is talk about it."

Where then, do we start? Well, the teams at Yale and George Mason have answered that question too.

**The Key Message to Share**  
**More than 99% of climate scientists agree that climate change is real and caused by burning fossil fuels.**

That singular statement has been found to be *the* key argument in swaying public opinion to climate action. Just as importantly, knowledge of the scientific consensus on climate change inoculates less engaged individuals against future misinformation. And make no mistake, they will undoubtedly encounter climate



Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) with a fritillary butterfly (*Speyeria cybele*)

change misinformation, because the fossil fuel industry has funded elaborate and far-reaching campaigns to mislead voters for decades. While there is overwhelming, undeniable consensus among climate scientists, only between 50% and 60% of Americans realize there is such a high level of agreement. Making more Americans aware of that consensus has been critical to attenuating the spread of misinformation. Talk about climate change more, and frequently remind people of the reality of the scientific consensus.

### Share Why We Care About Climate Change

Another key finding from communication experts is that two core values resonate strongly across all demographics of voters: responsible management and protection of the natural world. Responsibly managing the world around us, to provide a better future for our kids and grandkids, resonates as deeply as any value, and it's at the very heart of climate action. The same is true for protecting and preserving natural resources. We are a

### Avoiding Climate Action Traps cont.

part of the ecosystem, and it is a part of us. The more we protect it, the healthier we'll all be.

Those are great starting points for reaching broad audiences and getting people excited to vote in support of climate action.

### Avoid Traps in the New Climate War

Mobilizing motivated voters that are already Alarmed or Concerned presents challenges as well, however. The fossil fuel industry has realized that their disinformation campaign has become far less effective than it used to be, so they've shifted strategies. As climatologist Michael Mann explains in his book, *The New Climate War*, the fossil fuel industry is now trying to delay action and garner support for false solutions to climate change that will benefit their profits. At the same time, they're now funding more subtle campaigns that seek to divide groups on the left, using confounding issues liberal-leaning voters tend to prioritize as divisive wedges. This strategy is straight from the old playbook of the tobacco industry from the 1970s and 1980s: If you don't have the truth on your side and can't win the argument, change the argument and get the other side to fight amongst themselves.

Myriad issues intersect climate change in different

ways. Tax policy, affordable housing, renewable energy generation, immigration policy, sustainable food systems, equitable access to natural resources—the list goes on—all either rely upon or influence climate action decisions. Powerful special interests aggravate friction that arises between climate action and other issues. The most dangerous trap that fossil fuel interests set is trying to get climate solution advocates to become “kitchen sinkers.” They want advocates to pursue everything, everywhere, all at once, to accept nothing but complete victory, to make “the perfect” the enemy of “the good.” The fossil fuel industry knows iterative progress is a greater immediate threat to their bottom line. By getting environmental groups to overwhelm themselves with debate, complexi-

ty, and stall, they prolong their hold on energy markets.

Interest in climate change is shifting around the world and close to home. We will increasingly see more weather events that affect our day-to-day lives, and as the past few years have shown us, disruptions anywhere can have ripple effects through the economy everywhere. The impacts will become more real, and complicating issues will continue to intersect climate action in unforeseen ways. Fossil fuel companies and their alliance of misinformation spreaders will continue to evolve and will continue to find new ways to divide people who would normally ally with climate action.

To be prepared for that we all need to fact check ourselves against the conclusions of real-



Eastern Pondhawk (*Erythemis simplicicollis*)

## Avoiding Climate Action Traps cont.

world, credible climate scientists. We all need to make sure what we're advocating for is grounded in objective scientific fact. To stay updated on the trends and challenges of discussing climate action effectively, there are no better resources to follow than the [Yale Program on Climate Change Communication](#), [climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe](#), and [climate scientist Michael Mann](#). By sticking to what the science says and conveying it clearly throughout our own social networks, we can avoid traps in the New Climate War.

## Finding Solutions

Environmental organizations are not monolithic. Despite disagreements, sticking to a few guidelines and prioritizing a few types of actions can help.

First, the science is clear that eve-

ry fraction of a degree matters, every ton of carbon kept out of the atmosphere matters, and reducing some carbon emissions immediately is just as important as eliminating all carbon emissions eventually. Iterative progress can't be the enemy of reaching eventual net zero targets.

Second, the science is clear we should never shame others over individual actions. An example of this mistake might be a vegetarian who shames someone for eating meat. Shaming people for not taking a positive action can backfire and divide an otherwise united coalition. Again, that is what special interests want. To address climate change, it's far more important to build collective action by addressing the root causes of problems in systems. Convincing a meat eater to become vegetarian is insignificant when compared to

the effects of a policy change that makes a food system more sustainable. When significant climate actions have been taken around the world, it's because a coalition stuck together around key priorities despite their differences.

## Priority Solution: Land Protection

This raises the question of what climate actions should be prioritized. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently described the categories of priority actions that we can apply to Southeast Michigan. Most of the actions will not come as a surprise. We need to decarbonize transportation systems as fast as possible. We need to improve the efficiency of buildings and infrastructure. We need to reduce methane emissions, and we need to protect land. A2Zero and Resilient Washtenaw are excellent models pursuing many of these goals that other local units of government can follow.

Land protection, in particular, will become increasingly critical in southeast Michigan. We face growing development pressure on natural, undisturbed forests and wetlands throughout exurban areas. The good news is that protecting land can be done effectively at a local scale.

The IPCC made it clear that restoring forests and planting new trees isn't enough and recommends



Whitmore Lake Preserve



Avoiding Climate Action Traps cont.

protecting 30% to 50% of all ecosystem types. That means for every acre developed, an acre nearby should be protected. What's more, the IPCC determined that land protection is a category of action where we can make the most progress rapidly. Protecting pristine natural areas therefore must be central to climate action both globally and locally for the foreseeable future. In the upcoming elections, ballot initiatives in Northfield, Scio and Dexter townships will change how land protection is approached. However, far more action needs to be taken to preserve our local ecology.

Talk About It. Build Teams. Protect Land. Vote.

By talking about climate change with others, by reminding our neighbors and elected officials of

the overwhelming evidence for climate change and the scientific consensus, we can mobilize people to vote and hold decision makers accountable. By taking collective action on key priorities and by avoiding divisive traps, we have the opportunity to make significant local progress on climate action over the coming years.

Upcoming Opportunities for Action

Thankfully, there are several opportunities in the Huron River watershed to do that right now.

- Resilient Washtenaw is working with county residents to create a collaborative vision for carbon neutrality by 2035. You help by [providing feedback at resilient-washtenaw.org](#).

- Educate yourself on upcoming ballot proposals, including [Ann Arbor's A2Zero plan](#) to cut carbon emissions.
- On upcoming ballots, learn and decide about land preservation initiatives in places such as Northfield Township, Dexter Township, and Scio Township.

*Daniel Brown is a watershed planner with the Huron River Watershed Council. He has worked on climate change and environmental issues across North America, previously as a climate scientist with the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute, as Mass Audubon's climate change program coordinator, and as a climatologist based at the University of Michigan.*

# Voter Resources From SoS

## General Voter Information

Use this link to find your voter information, how to apply for an absentee ballot and where to return it, how to register to vote, where to vote in person, and how to get an accessible ballot.

## Your Voter Information

Use this link to find helpful information about where to find your clerk, polling place and sample ballots.

## Vote at Home (absentee)

All registered voters in Michigan can now vote using an absentee ballot. You can vote by absentee ballot through the mail, or at your clerk's office

# Exercise Guide: Whitmore Lake Preserve

John Metzler

Whitmore Lake Preserve, in Whitmore Lake, MI, is another of Washtenaw County's excellent preserves. It has a beautiful meadow with a beautiful old pasture oak, wetlands, and a mixed hardwood forest. It also has a neat "self-guided tree hike."

The preserve parking lot is at 1551 7-Mile Road, Whitmore Lake. It is on the north side of 7-Mile Road, just west of Nollar Road. Our PDF map of the preserve is [here](#).

From the parking lot, follow an old gravel road into the Preserve. There are wetlands on both sides of the road. Shortly after the road turns to the east, there are some nice cottonwood trees on the north side of the trail with a marker – scan the QR code on the marker to connect to the County's Tree Guide (more about the tree guide below).



Calico aster *Symphyotrichum lateriflorum*



Swamp milkweed *Asclepias incarnata*

My preferred route through the Preserve is clockwise, taking the left fork at guide post #2. This takes you through the meadow, which will be in full bloom from July through September – black-eyed susan and common milkweed in early July, then coneflowers, asters, and more as summer progresses. Butterflies and other pollinators abound.

Continue straight at post #12 (not on the County map), left at the next, unnumbered, post, proceeding along to #5. Go left at #5, left at #4, left at #8, left at #11. At post #10 the trail turns south; proceed straight past #9, following the trail along the field until it turn west into the woods. Go left at #8, left again at the unmarked intersection 50' south of #8. Continue to #3, then #2 and out, although you might want to stop to read a bit at the little library between #3 and #2.

The County's Self-guided Tree Hike has detailed information and helpful pictures for 8 species of tree found in the Preserve. You can access the web page by scanning the QR code at any of the tree-hike signs in the Preserve. We recommend scanning it at the first tree-hike marker, as our cell service was spotty farther into the preserve. And be sure to (at least) check out #5, the Big-toothed aspen, a bit before guide post #12, on the right side of the trail.

# Why I Lead National Sierra Club Outings

Janet Kahan

Last month I had a rare experience. I was the leader on a Sierra Club National Outings service trip to Sevilleta National Wildlife refuge in New Mexico. 7 of our participants and I got to assist a team at the [Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility](#). There was a wild female wolf who had been brought into the Refuge from somewhere else (I think because she had become a “nuisance” animal.). She was in an enclosure that was larger than my house lot in Ann Arbor. The National Wildlife Refuge staff who work with the wolves wanted to vaccinate her and draw blood.

Here’s the story:

At 6:30 AM, my band of 8 women squeezed into a van and I drove us to join a small convoy of vehicles to a different portion of the Refuge. We passed through 2 gates, and saw a large group of pronghorn antelopes run across the road and away from us. They are amazingly fast!

We arrived at the wolf area, where we met the NWR team and a pair of National Geographic photographers. We all were asked to step into a pan of bleach to decontaminate our boots. After one more gate, we started up one of the more terrible roads I have driven on. We arrived at the wolf enclosures. Because they do not want to acclimate the wolves to humans, nor stress them unduly, we were asked to minimize noise. We again had to bleach our shoes. We each were given a tool to carry and some instructions.

I carried a light board that was about 2’ x 3’, as did some of the others. Yet others carried poles



Female wolf at Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility (Photo courtesy of Janet Kahan)

with other equipment. We were all silent as we approached the enclosure. The enclosure had 2 sections. Once we were all in the first enclosure, that gate was closed, and we entered the part where the wolf was.

We were arranged to make a line that stretched across the enclosure. We all walked slowly towards the opposite side, where there was a large wooden box with an open door that faced away

from us. We stopped about 6 feet in, and the wolf ran back and forth in front of us, looking for an opening in our line. She turned and ran farther down the hill. We followed, then stopped. She ran back and forth again, then ran out of sight. Our leader, Melissa, saw that she had gone into the box. Melissa had us stay put while she ran down to close the box.

Melissa had hoped that this would be the outcome, but had

### Why I Lead National Sierra Club Outtings con't

also explained that if the wolf ran towards us we were to use our tools to look bigger, but not to try to touch or catch the wolf. On Sunday night, serendipitously, we had gotten a talk from a wolf tech who had explained that wolves will not attack humans, but almost always will run away. So I was not frightened to be in the enclosure with our wolf.

Once the wolf was in the box, Melissa gave instructions to her staff about how to hold the wolf, 1 outside the box with a 2 pronged pole by her neck, and the other to hold the wolf's butt. Melissa and another staff member got into the box.

The staff was close to the box, as were the NG photographers and a professor with recording equipment. I got to be close because I was the recorder, though it was hard to see anything but the staff's behinds. Another Sierra Club volunteer was the "table", holding the zipped bag containing

the vaccines, antibiotics, syringes, blood vials, etc. The rest of the SC volunteers started out at a small distance away from the action but edged closer when they could to take pictures.

The staff took the wolf's temperature, then gave 2 vaccines and a wide-spectrum antibiotic. They took her temp again and tried to take blood. The wolf was not sedated and struggled some. Melissa took over the blood draw from her (new, young) staff and got it. They took the temp again and left the box. We had started extra-early to work in the coolest part of the day, so as to minimize the stress on the wolf. Her temperature is one indicator of stress level. It only rose 0.4 degrees during the action.

Melissa and staff packed up the equipment, opened the box and led us out of the enclosure. We bleached our footwear again. Some staff stayed to leave food for the wolf. The wolf stayed

in the box. Evidently many wolves wait until the humans are gone to come out.

Until the health of this wolf is determined, it is not clear what will happen next to her. She could remain as a captive wolf and participate in the captive breeding program. She could be released into a different area. Evidently the Sevilleta area is not a good habitat for wolves, so their wolves are released somewhere else.

I thought I was being really calm during our experience, but once we left the enclosure I released I was shaking a little from the adrenaline. We gathered ourselves into the van, and drove back to our housing area. We kept marveling at the rare adventure we just had.

*Janet Kahan is a national outings leader with the Sierra Club.*

## Find us on Social Media!



*Icons will take you to the respective pages.*

# The Antidote to Paralysis and Depression Is Action and Outreach

Dan Ezekiel

HVG is writing letters to increase voter turnout by encouraging residents to vote, using [VoteForward.org](https://www.voteforward.org). Want to join us? This is a fun opportunity to enjoy the company of other environmentalists and make change!

The letters are stored until shortly before the election and sent at a time which data show is most effective at persuading the recipients to vote. VoteForward focuses on voters who are part of historically-underrepresented populations. Many people don't know that their voter registration and whether they vote in an election is part of the public record. Low-inclination voters are those who are registered to vote but don't always vote.

Since March of this year, HVG members have once again risked writer's cramp to write hundreds of letters to low-inclination voters, urging them to vote in November. Thanks to the generosity of its owners, Argus Farm Stop (1200 Packard, Ann Arbor 48104) has been our letter-writing venue. Thank you, Kathy Sample and Bill Brinkerhoff! We spend two hours filling out the provided forms, from 6-8 pm on the fourth Tuesday of each month, enjoying comradeship and the occasional tasty food or drink item at Argus (you have to pay for them). You can find our letter-writing activities on our [Meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com) page.

We ask that you bring 20 envelopes and 20 stamps, but don't let your inability to do so stop you from coming. HVG will happily

foot the postage; what we need most is your heartfelt, hand-written letter telling why you find voting important! We have templates you can choose from as well.

In 2020, HVG members hand-wrote over 1500 letters and mailed them before the election that evicted the most anti-environmental president in history from the White House (and also elected an environmentalist governor and attorney general in Michigan). We don't want to claim total responsibility for the outcome of the election, but every little bit helps, right?

Many of us can feel overwhelmed and depressed by the political scene in the US today. How can it be that polls show insurrectionists and anti-environmentalists are likely to win elections in Michigan and across the nation? Is there any point in continuing to advocate for environmentalist, democratic (small D) values anymore?

My father taught me long ago: "When you feel depressed, get out and do something!" My lived experience has proved to me again and again that he was right. Becoming active, doing something, releases brain chemicals that help restore the optimism we need to survive and thrive.



Volunteers writing letters at Argus (Photo courtesy of Dan Ezekiel)

Many experts agree that the most important action we can take to fight climate change and other environmental threats is to vote and encourage others to do so as well. Polls and surveys usually find large majorities of voters support environmental positions, but when it comes to elections, anti-environmentalist candidates often win. This is in part because voters who support environmentalist and other progressive causes often vote less frequently than those who support anti-environmentalist candidates. As voter turnout increases, environmentalists (like Michigan's governor and attorney general) have a better chance of being elected or re-elected.

Of course, you can also write these letters on your own. Become a volunteer at [VoteForward.org](https://www.voteforward.org), but many of us find it's easier and more fun to write them

### Antidote to Paralysis cont.

in company.

As of this writing, many of us find the 2022 election outlook bleak, with issues like inflation hurting the chances of environmentalists like our governor and attorney general. But here's the thing: in politics, a week is a lifetime. If things change, and the election outcome is close in November, your letter to a low-inclination voter could be the one that puts a Sierra-Club-friendly candidate over the top!

## 2022 Ballot Proposals

Only one out of 10 petition drives seeking to change the state law met the signature submission deadline of June 1 to qualify for the November ballot.

Proposals aiming to amend the state's Constitution, on the other hand, have until July 11 to turn in enough valid signatures to appear on the ballot. One initiative circumvented the signature gathering requirements by persuading the state Legislature to directly place the initiative on the ballot.

Bridge Michigan has compiled a primer of ballot proposals explaining what they would change, where they stand in the process, major funders and arguments surrounding them.

[Read More](#)

## It's Blooming Season for Spanish Dagger (aka Yucca Plants)



Yucca filamentosa (Photo courtesy of Nature Hills Nursery)

Peggy Lubhan

It seems like I see more and more of these plants every year! That might sound strange, since they're a kind of cactus called "succulents". But we also have Prickly Pear Cactus in Michigan, so maybe plants are a lot tougher than we think they are!

Yucca just might win the prize for having the most common names: Spanish Dagger, Adam's Needle, Glorious Yucca, Lord's Candlestick, Palm Lily, Roman Candle, and Spanish Bayonet are just a few of the nicknames I found on the Internet. They're related to Joshua Trees, Aloe, Agave (Century Plants), Dracaena, Sansevieria (Snake Plants), and Asparagus (distantly).

These are big, bold plants with long, narrow, leaves. Each leaf has a sharp spine at the tip that can cut right through your clothes. (Some people grow Yucca as a living security fence.) The fragrant, creamy-white bell-shaped flowers that form in June and July can grow up to six feet tall, and butterflies love them.

For me, the most interesting aspect of these plants is that people have been making cordage from the incredibly tough fibers of the leaves for thousands of years. I've made a simple braided cord myself, and it's a fun and useful skill to learn. If you want to try this, I hope you'll wear gloves since you might end up with skin irritation from handling the leaves. Be careful when handling this plant.

# *HVG Spring Report*

## **Programs**

The Program Committee has continued offering hybrid virtual and in-person monthly programs: in [April with Dr. Jacqueline Courteau](#) discussing her research on the impact of excess deer populations in SE Michigan preserves, in [May with Bob Sutherland](#), founder of Cherry Republic, and in June with Lara Treemore-Spears speaking on the latest research on micro-plastics.

## **Book Club**

The Book Club read the new edition of Kimberly Nicholas's *Under the Sky We Make* (April) and Henry Gee's *A (very) Short History of Life on Earth* (May). Book Club will resume in September.

## **Political Committee**

The Political Committee has continued holding monthly Get Out The Vote letter-writing events (See the [article](#) in this newsletter)

## **Outings**

The Outings Committee held 12 outings in April through June, five of which were workdays at various local preserves.

## **Conservation Committee**

The Conservation Committee assisted [Sharon Twp Preservation](#) group to demand proper review of 2 proposed aggregate mines in the township.

## When do we meet?

*HVG Programs are held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm.*

*Book club meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:30pm.*

*HVG Executive Committee meetings are held on the 1st Thursday of the month at 7:00pm.*

*Outing times and dates vary. Check the [MeetUp](#) page for more information. All events, including meetings, are posted there.*

*Questions?*

*Email [hvgsierraclub@gmail.com](mailto:hvgsierraclub@gmail.com) for more info*

# Michigan's Ground-Dwelling Squirrels

Peggy Lubhan

Nine different kinds of squirrels call Michigan home: Eastern Fox, Eastern Gray, Red, Flying (Northern and Southern), Groundhogs, Chipmunks (Eastern and Least), and Thirteen-Lined Ground Squirrels.

I'm going to leave out groundhogs today since they have their own article. The other eight species share slim, streamlined bodies, sassy attitudes, cuteness, ingenious minds, and almost endless supplies of energy. Five of them are Tree Squirrels; but Chipmunks and Thirteen-lined Ground Squirrels (TLGS) spend most of their lives on – and under – the ground.



**Eastern Chipmunk**  
*Tamias striatus*

**DESCRIPTION:** Rich-colored fur with five dark stripes broken up by narrow light streaks, with a reddish patch on their rumps. They grow 8 to 10 inches long.

**HOME:** Open forests (oak, maple, hickory) with lots of cover like stumps, logs and rocky outcrops. They don't mind living in our yards, especially when bird feeders are provided!

**FOOD:** Mostly seeds, fruits, bulbs, grain, mushrooms, and berries. Also insects, worms, bird eggs and small reptiles from time to time.

**WINTER:** Chipmunks spend the cold months curled up in their cozy burrows, and get up every couple days to stretch, poop, and have a snack.

Above: photo courtesy of Missouri Dept. of Conservation



**Least Chipmunk**  
*Neotamias minimus*

**DESCRIPTION:** The smallest Chipmunk at 7 to 9 inches, with three dark and two light stripes on the face and five dark and four light stripes along their sides. The middle stripe runs to the end of the tail, which is proportionately longer than the Eastern's.

**HOME:** Forest openings and edges. They're good climbers, and might build their nests in trees.

**FOOD:** Like Eastern Chipmunks and TLGS.

**WINTER:** Same as Eastern.

Above: photo courtesy of National Park Service

Right: photo courtesy of Carnegie Museum of Natural History



**Thirteen Lined Ground Squirrels**  
*Spermophilus tridecemlineatus*

**DESCRIPTION:** Overall sandy/gray colors. Thirteen lines or stripes, seven dark and six light, with some broken into dots. They can grow to about 12 inches long.

**HOME:** TLGS like short grass and sandy or loamy soils. Unlike chipmunks, they avoid wooded areas. Mowed lawns, golf courses, cemeteries, parks and roadsides are common habitats now that they've spread so far beyond their native prairies. They also don't mind living alongside humans.

**FOOD:** TLGS and chipmunks eat similar plant foods. But, people who study them say they eat meat more often than chipmunks, in the form of grasshoppers and baby birds and rabbits.

**WINTER:** TLGS also spend the winter in their burrow, but they fall into a deeper sleep state called torpor. That means their heartbeat, temperature and breathing rate are much lower. They wake up when the weather begins to warm.



## Help Wanted: Join Our Team (...please)

Sierra Club Huron Valley Group is currently seeking volunteers for the following positions. Each job comes with zero income tax impact, a great group of coworkers, and a feeling of accomplishment and reward!

Please e-mail [hvgsierraclub@gmail.com](mailto:hvgsierraclub@gmail.com)

### **Legal Assistance, Political Researchers**

We are looking for people experienced with writing and passing local ordinances. HVG is working to create a team to develop model local ordinances to help local governments - city, township, county - regulate gravel mining. We need people to help design the model ordinances and researchers to help identify members of the various local government bodies who we might engage to get protective ordinances passed.

### **Digital media opportunities**

Are you a social media master? The Huron Valley Group is interested in enthusiastic environmentalists and social justice advocates with digital media skills and savvy. We would like to recruit several people to liven-up our Facebook and Instagram presence.

### **Newsletter Production**

*The Lookout* is looking for people interested in writing copy, layout, or editing to help produce our newsletter. Passion for the environment and social justice are requirements, skillful use of language and a sense for interesting content are big pluses. Past experience is not necessary.

# Shopping for the Earth

*You can help the earth (and HVG!) at no cost to you — through your regular shopping!*



Over the past 15 years, the Sierra Club Huron Valley Group’s Shopping for the Earth has been a very successful program for supporting our efforts to protect parks, natural areas, and local farmland, and to address local and regional environmental problems.

When you purchase gift cards from participating locations like Kroger and Busch’s, you can earn up to 23% of your purchase for the Huron Valley Group Sierra Club (with no additional cost).

Purchased gift cards are great to be used for:

- Regular purchases like grocery shopping
- Giving as gifts
- Planned purchases like appliances

...and more! Visit our website for more information: <https://www.sierraclub.org/michigan/huronvalley/shopping-for-earth>

## HVG Executive Committee

**Jason Frenzel**  
*Chair*

**Anne Brown**  
*Vice Chair*

**Tajalli Hodge**  
*Secretary*

**Dan Ezekiel**  
*Programs Committee Chair*

**Erica Ackerman**  
*Political Committee Chair*

**Jessica Anckley**  
*Fundraising Committee*

**Alyshia Dyer**  
*Equity, Inclusion and Justice*

## Communications and Newsletter Team

**John Metzler**  
*Content editor and photos*

**Tajalli Hodge**  
*Design and layout*

**Erica Ackerman**  
*Distribution specialist*

**HVG and Community Members**  
*Content*

Cover Photo: Great spangled fritillary (*Speyeria cybele*) on wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)