



Michigan Field Birding camp participants tallied 75 species the week of June 21. From left to right, Jim, Bobby Slater, Anand Chivukula, Brock Monette, Sarah Garrod, Steven Crouch and Donna Posont.

Every year, the first day camp of the summer is Michigan field birding for upper elementary and older students. We identify as many species as we can by visiting a variety of locations and habitats throughout the week. This year's camp developed a unique twist and an unexpected life experience for most of the participants, including myself. Two of the students are legally blind.

I met Donna Posont last spring when she contacted me to find out if I was available and up to the challenge of presenting about Michigan wildlife to two separate visually impaired audiences. The first was comprised of children at a large conference held at Detroit's Renaissance Center. The second was at Camp Tuhsmeheeta, near Greenville – a facility for, and run by the visually-impaired.

I relished the challenge of “showing” various Michigan reptiles and amphibians to the audience giving careful consideration to which species could be experienced most richly through other senses. I played recordings from our CD, *Frogs of the Great Lakes Region*, and from my “birdpod.” They thrilled at opportunities to handle a variety of snakes and check out the shapes and textures of live turtles' shells. I even made an exception to our “hands-off amphibians” rule, and let them experience the ultra-slippery the skin of a mudpuppy. The next morning I conducted a “birding by ear” hike through the surrounding forest and lakeside. Participants had little trouble remaining on the winding trails with their canes.

Donna was so impressed with the auditory birding, she has made it a goal to learn the birds well enough so that she can teach and lead birding for the blind on her own. She signed up for this summer's camp along with a visually impaired 13-year-old boy she knows, Steven Crouch, who has an exceptionally strong interest in birds, too.

Our bird camps have always had a strong auditory element. In fact, learning to “bird by ear” takes anyone to a level of awareness that blows away visual identification alone.

Our excursions may have been slowed a bit by Donna's and Steven's inclusion, but we checked nearly as many birds as any other year. For anyone who has minimal experience in the presence of the visually impaired, especially over extended periods “on the move,” you'll be impressed at the dexterity with which they navigate through society.

The other students were not only tolerant of Donna and Steven, but quickly picked up on when to guide them and when to let them find their way on a boardwalk, at the shore of a lake, or in a gas station parking lot. Their amiable participation gave every other participant some life experience that went way beyond birding. Donna and Steven are already talking about doing it next year.

- Jim McGrath

Bugging Naturalists July 19-22 Camp Still Has Openings

Our half-day camp for 5-6 year-olds is totally hands-on-bugs! Budding naturalists will catch, inspect, and learn about insects of at least eight different orders, including butterflies and moths, dragonflies and damselflies, bees and beetles, horse flies and hover flies, grasshoppers and leafhoppers, spittle bugs, antlions and more. They'll help collect even more insects to feed to Nature Discovery's complete and ever-hungry collection of live Michigan frogs. We'll also make time to visit with our snakes, turtles and salamanders. Participants also get to take home their very own easy-to-maintain "bug pet!"



9am to 12pm. Cost: 85.

Call or email us to reserve a spot. There are still a few openings left in other weeks, too! Check our summer schedule on the website and contact us to inquire about availability.

Look for Us at These Locations Around Michigan in July...

If you're in the neighborhood, catch us at one of these locations on the dates below.

Sunday, July 4, **Mitchell State Park (Cadillac)** Fiesta Celebration, 3pm & 6pm – Michigan Reptiles & Amphibians.

Monday, July 12, **Delta Twp Library (Lansing)**, 2pm – Michigan's Wetland Wildlife.

Monday, July 12, **Independence Twp Library (Clarkston)** 6pm – Wetland Reptiles & Amphibians.

Wednesday, July 14, **Plymouth Dist Library** 3pm – Wetland Reptiles & Amphibians.

Saturday, July 17, **Dearborn Hts Library** 11am & 2pm – Michigan's Wetland Wildlife.

Saturday, July 17, **Huron County Nature Center** 2pm – Michigan Wildlife.

Wednesday, July 21, **Warmbier Farms (Auburn)** 3-8pm – Michigan Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit.

Contact us or the host of the event for more details.

LCC Summer Kids Classes Start this Month

During the week of **July 19-22**, Jim will be teaching a Neighborhood Wildlife class for 2nd-3rd grade students from 9am to Noon. From 1pm to 4pm the same week he will be teaching a Michigan Reptiles & Amphibians class for 4th-5th grade students.

During the week of **July 26-30**, Carol will be teaching Mystery Festival for 4th-5th grade students from 9am to Noon. From 1 to 4pm the same week she will be teaching Robotic & Rocketry for 6th-8th grade students.

During the week of **August 2-5**, Carol will be teaching Detective's Casebook for 6th-8th grade students from 9am to Noon. From 1 to 4pm the same week she will be teaching Science Experiments for 2nd-3rd grade students.

Contact Lansing Community College Extension & Community Education at 517.483.1860 for information on fees and enrollment.

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