

In last month's *Wild Times* we discussed a theme that you can expect to see, in one form or another, in any upcoming newsletter – society's increasing trend toward "natural disconnection."

Nature Discovery's mission statement, *dedicated to enhancing awareness of, and sensitivity toward Michigan's living resources through natural science education*, may require an addendum to fit the 21st century. Something like *...and also dedicated to urging citizens to take time to step away from the virtual world and toward the natural world to which we, as biological beings, belong. More bluntly, Get off the screens, unplug your buds and pay attention to the real world!*



Capital Area Audubon's 2009 field trip to the Muskegon area. Check out Saturday's Muskegon trip on the next page.

Here's our latest iron in the fire. We approached Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, located in Bath, with the proposal of co-hosting a late winter wildlife festival, the purpose of which is to give participants an impetus to spend more time outdoors by discovering and appreciating the wild world around us. Its title is *Get Out – Go Wild Weekend*. It is scheduled for March 6 & 7 and will take place at MWC's Bengel Wildlife Center. To learn more about MWC, go to www.miwildlife.org.

All presentations, exhibits, booths and interpretive walks at the event will have a sound connection to the theme of the weekend. Each will generate interest in, and understanding of the topic at hand, whereby those in attendance may become motivated to "get out" on their own time. Stay tuned for more details in the coming weeks.

The wintry conditions may keep some of us from "getting out there" any time soon. The bird-feeding station situated only a few feet outside our dining room window is our simple way to connect with the natural world while remaining toasty inside. This has been such a long-running and enriching aspect of our daily household existence, we can't imagine life without it. With all the components in place – seed of several varieties in the appropriate dispensers, suet, water, and nearby cover - the birds come flocking in.

We'll help get you started with the ABCs at our next Second Sunday presentation, this Sunday, the 10th entitled *Power Bird-feeding for Maximum Birds and Enjoyment*. Get the details on the next page. Heck, we'll even set it up for you if you supply the feeders and seed!

-Jim & Carol McGrath

CAPITAL AREA AUDUBON MUSKEGON FIELD TRIP January 9

This Saturday, January 9, Jim will be leading a Capital Area Audubon-sponsored field trip to the Muskegon area. Many people are surprised to learn that, yes, there are fewer birds to be seen in Michigan in the winter than in the spring and summer, but there are a whole slew of species – mostly migrants from Canada and the Arctic – that call Michigan home through the winter. The Muskegon area and the Lake Michigan shoreline are some of the best places to go. The full-day trip (7am to 5pm) is free of charge. A few of us will be volunteer car pool drivers for the rest of the participants. Contact us by Friday night for details if you are interested in attending.

SECOND SUNDAY

January 10 at Nature Discovery

Our home-based nature center is open from 1 to 5pm. A \$3 donation is requested. Our knowledgeable staff can answer questions about any of the many frogs, salamanders, turtles, snakes and lizards on hand, take one out to hold, or feed them, too. Walk the trail in the natural area out back. On request, we'd be happy to supply an engaging personal guide.

At 2pm, ***Power Bird-feeding for Maximum Birds and Enjoyment*** will be presented. By way of Powerpoint images and a walk through our two active feeding stations, participants will learn why treating your feeding station as if it is your own upscale restaurant is sure to bring in the maximum abundance and variety of birds. Learn about the best variety of seed, the best mix of feeders, and how to easily enhance the “ambiance” to suit the taste and comfort of the pickiest patrons.



This female Evening Grosbeak, a rarity in Lower Michigan, made a brief appearance one day in November, 2007. Over 21 years, it is the sole sighting of this species on our property. Surprises like this are a possibility on any day when you maintain a “bird restaurant” that’s open 24/7.



OWLING NIGHT ENCORE Friday, January 15, 7-9pm

By demand, we’re scheduling yet another night with the owls. Join us for a Powerpoint presentation over hot beverages and cookies. ***Michigan Owls*** features all ten species found in the state, and one more that’s now considered extinct here. We’ll discuss some of the physical adaptations that make an owl such an efficient nocturnal predator, as well as share some insights into the identification, vocalizations, behavior and ecology of each species. At the presentation’s conclusion, we will go into the night and attempt to “call one in” with audio recordings for a close encounter. Dress warmly and don’t forget your binoculars and camera!

Not recommended for preschool children. Limited to 10 participants. Enroll in advance by email or phone.

COST: \$10/person.

A Screech-owl is spot-lighted after responding to our recording.

MLK DAY CAMP Monday, January 18

For children, K thru 5th grade. 9am to 3pm.

Join us for a full day of in-your-face nature. Indoor activities include lots of interaction with our snakes, turtles, frogs, salamanders and lizards, as we handle, feed, and learn about them along the way. We'll also spend time outdoors on the trails and engage in an outdoor *Winter Game*. A hot lunch and plenty of hot chocolate is provided. Enroll in advance by email or phone.

COST: \$50/student.



MLK DAY WINTER BIRD-A-THON

Monday, January 18

For upper elem, MS & HS students. 9am to 3pm. We'll take a whirlwind trip north to Maple River State Game Area, back south through Lansing's Potter Park, along the Grand River at the BWL power plant, then on through MSU's south campus farm fields. We'll keep checklists of the number of bird species we can spot, with special emphasis on birds you can't see every day, like Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, and Pileated Woodpecker, to name a few. Bring binoculars and pack a bag lunch. Enroll in advance by email or phone. COST: \$50/student.

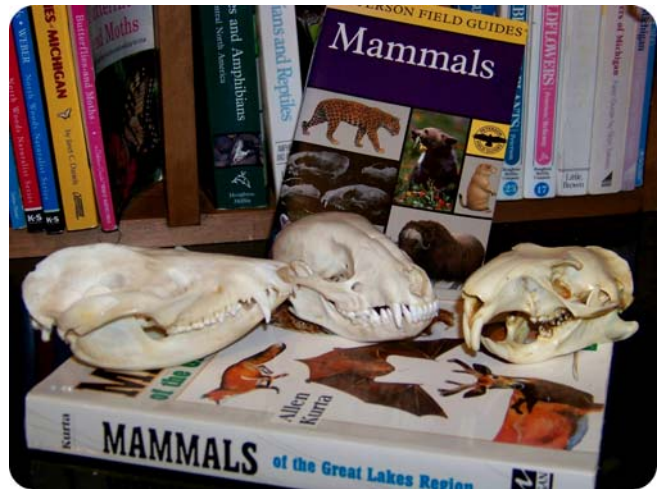


AFTER-SCHOOL SKULL PRESERVATION

Meets 3 Wednesdays, Jan 27, Feb 3, Feb 10, 4-6pm.

Not for the squeamish! We will first boil the heads of a number of misfortunate mammals. Then, each student will clean the flesh from his or her personal skull. It is completed with bleach and polyurethane treatment. The museum-worthy specimen can be taken home to display on bureau or hearth! Enroll in advance by email or phone.

FEE: \$60/student, includes a healthy snack.



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