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Go Green, Grow Right!

Are you familiar with the Michigan Green Schools Association? If not, here is an introduction straight from their website:

Michigan Green Schools is a non-profit 501(c)3 agency dedicated to assisting all Michigan schools – public and private – achieve environmental goals which include protecting the air, land, water and animals of our state along with world outreach through good ecological practices and the teaching of educational stewardship of students pre-kindergarten through senior high school.

In order to attain Michigan Green Schools certification a school must participate in a total of ten activities over four separate categories: Recycling, Energy, Environmental Protection, and Miscellaneous. A list of ideas is given for each category, or, with approval, a school can include their own unique activities in these areas. Participate in fifteen activities to attain “Emerald” certification. Twenty activities gets your school “Evergreen” status.

A growing number of schools are participating in the program, but, really, *every* school should. Heck, it should be mandatory! The days of treating our living planet as if it can provide us indefinitely with unlimited, cheap, and impact-free consumption are over. Look around! A glance into a trash can at almost any public or private gathering of people (even school cafeterias) tells it all. Too many individuals still live and act within the illusion that our natural resources are boundless, and, by example, are passing it on to our kids.

Nature Discovery has been teaching weekly Michigan-specific nature lessons at Okemos Nursery School for three years. The private school’s founder, Renae Slaton, may be the most enthusiastic leader of young children I’ve ever met. Renae has already applied for, and received “Green School” certification. Nature Discovery’s role spans aspects of the Environmental Protection and Miscellaneous categories. Under the latter category, Nature Discovery provides detailed, up-close, hands-on lessons meant to instill awareness and a sense of value toward the diversity of living things with which we share our environment.

Renae recently expanded the school’s “greenness” to attain Emerald-level certification. Here’s what she submitted to MGS regarding Nature Discovery’s role and impact:



Jim McGrath of Nature Discovery visits our school weekly (has been for years) to discuss Michigan's indigenous mammals, birds and plants with the children. The information he shares with us encourages the children to be compassionate, empathetic and conscientious with regard to all aspects of nature and our environment.

Instead of trying to enumerate all of the wonderful things that we learn from Jim using "teacher words" we thought we would ask the children to tell you what they love about his visits! Below you will find some of their comments.

These comments are from 4 and 5 year olds:

"He teaches us to learn birds by their calls—you don't have to see it to know it."

"If you know something lives there don't bother its habitat."

"He puts caterpillars in our trees."

"He tells us about plants that animals like."

"He tells us about animals that live in Michigan."

"He brings in bugs!"

"He brings in skulls!"

"We learn what animals eat."

"He brought in 13 Michigan frogs."

"Don't hurt things because we are afraid of them."

Just learn more about them."

"Most animals bite because they are afraid that we might hurt them".

"We don't need holes in bug jars."

"Don't cut tall grass. Things live in it."

"We learned about alien plants."

"He teaches us not to step on spiders or even ants."



These are just some of the comments. The addition of Jim's input to our program has been invaluable to the children's knowledge and appreciation of all things "nature." "Is today a Jim-day?" is often the question we hear from our children!

Instilling awareness, appreciation, concern, and a sense of personal responsibility for the health of one's environment *should* start at a young age. Actions, considerations and habits developed in these formative years will never be viewed into adulthood as "inconvenient" or a "nuisance." Instead, from their perspectives it will always be "the right thing to do!"

Thank you for all you do for Nature Discovery, for the up and coming generation, and for the environment, Renae!

-Jim McGrath

Coffee
Break

Catch Us on Coffee Break Thursday, April 17

Jim is scheduled to appear on Thursday, April 17 at 9:30am, discussing "frogging by ear". The show airs weekdays from 9 to 10am on 89.7 FM. Listen live online at lcc.edu/radio/onair/ or watch it live (or later in the day at 6pm) online at lcc.edu/tv/watch. We'll post a reminder on our Facebook fan page.

Waterfowl Migration Birding Day

*Friday, April 11
6am to 1pm*

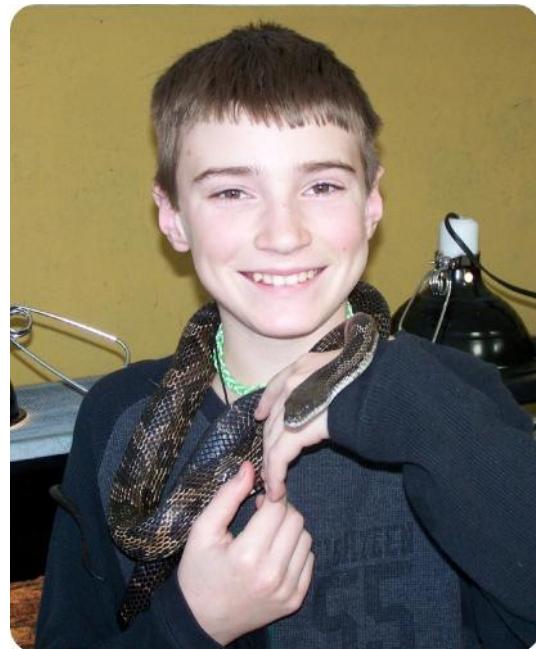


The Pintail is one of about 20 waterfowl species expected on our Waterfowl Migration Birding Day. Photo © Steve Sage.

Mid-April is the peak time for spring waterfowl migration through Mid-Michigan. Join an intimate guided trip in our minivan to Maple River State Game Area north of St. Johns, followed by a stop at Park Lake on the way back to check out up to twenty species of waterfowl through our spotting scope. We'll also encounter a slew of other species including Bald Eagle, Osprey, American Woodcock, Wilson's Snipe and more. We'll view two active Great Horned Owl nests, too. As many as 60 total species are in store through the day. Participants will be given bird checklists to keep track of the day's finds. Feel free to pack any food/drink you like to consume on the road through the morning. Enrollment is limited to five. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Advance registration required. FEE: \$45, includes all transportation to and from Nature Discovery. Arrangements may also be made to pick up /drop off at your door or another convenient location.

Around the State in April

- ❖ Saturday/Sunday, April 5/6: 10am-4pm/12-4pm. *Michigan Snakes Exhibit; MSU Science Festival, East Lansing.*
- ❖ Thursday, April 10: 1pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Presentation; Clinton-Macomb Public Library, Macomb.*
- ❖ Saturday, April 12: 10am-3pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Embrace Our Earth Festival, Bad Axe Middle School, Bad Axe.*
- ❖ 10am-3pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Earth Day Festival, UM-Flint, Flint.*
- ❖ Wednesday, April 16: 6-7:30pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Fairview Elem., Lansing.*
- ❖ Tuesday, April 22: 9am-2pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; MDEQ Earth Day Celebration, Constitution Hall, Lansing.*
- ❖ Wednesday, April 23: 5:30-7:30pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Okemos Public Montessori, Central School, Okemos.*
- ❖ Friday, April 25: 1-6pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Benzie Co. Water Fest, Benzonia*
- ❖ Sunday, April 27: 2pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Presentation; Gerald Eddy Interpretive Center, Waterloo.*



Frogging “by Ear”

Sunday, April 13

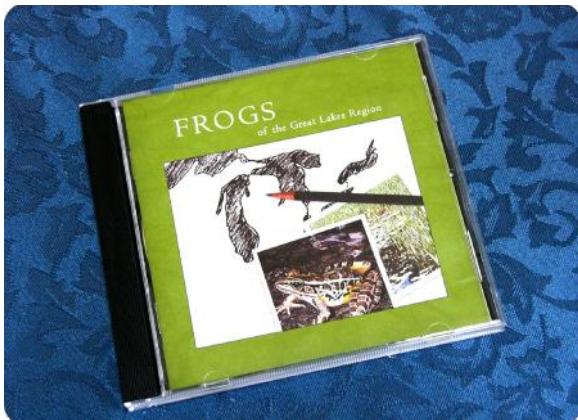
Doors open from 1 to 5pm

Admission: \$5/person



What frogs breed in your neighborhood? Through spring and early summer, you need not get your feet wet to find out. Michigan is home to 13 species of frogs and toads, eight of which can be found around the Greater Lansing area. Each can be identified by its specific breeding call, given only by the male. Each species also has its own breeding “window,” the period of time when it is egg-laying on a particular wetland from early spring to mid-summer.

At 2pm, sit-in on our presentation, *Frogging “by Ear.”* With the use of beautiful Powerpoint images, live specimens, and audio recordings from Nature Discovery’s original CD, *Frogs of the Great Lakes Region*, immerse yourself “knee-deep” into the world of Michigan frogs.

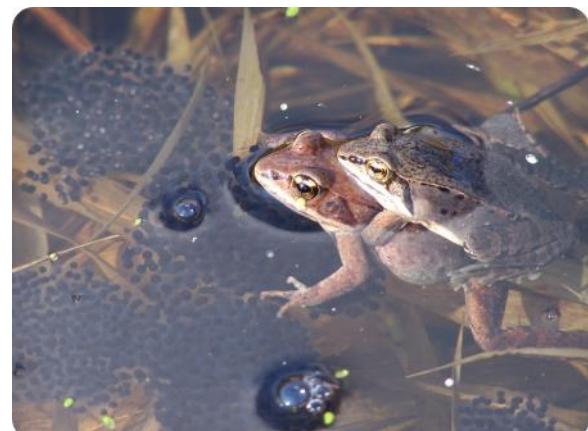


*** Our *Frogs of the Great Lakes Region* CDs are normally priced at \$14. Participants in this program are invited to purchase one for only \$12.

At the presentation’s conclusion, visitors can participate in a guided hike around our vernal pond, now burgeoning

with frogs and invertebrate life. See masses of wood frog eggs and listen to the unique calls of the wood frogs, spring peepers and leopard frogs. A staff person will wade into the pond to net some of the abundant and diverse invertebrate life that shares the biologically-rich vernal waters with the breeding frogs. If you’d like, you can even join us for a wade. (We recommend pants and old shoes – not boots. Bring a change of clothes.)

There is more! Visit our highly interactive Michigan reptiles & amphibians zoo. Hold a snake, feed some turtles, drop a cricket to a frog. Enjoy the action at our bird feeders or ask for your own personalized guided walk on the trail. Knowledgeable staff is on hand to help visitors of all ages make the most of their visit.



Want to see breeding wood frogs and their egg masses up-close in our vernal pond? Our staff will be wading into it to collect specimens for inspection. You can join us if you’d like!

“Breeding Birds of the U.P.” Tour, June 2-6, 2014



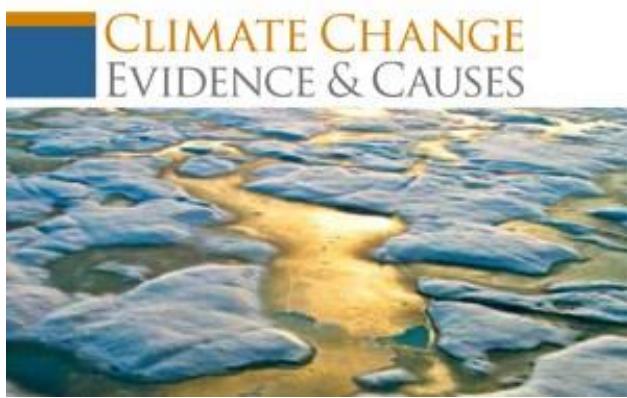
Upland Sandpiper.

Photo by Andrew Nowicki.

Join our economical 5-day guided tour in Michigan's Upper Peninsula within an intimate group of no more than 5 people. Our goal is to experience as many species as possible, emphasizing locations to tally specific U.P. gems, like Connecticut Warbler, LeConte's Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper. Destinations include Kirtland's Warbler habitat on our way north, Munuscong Marsh, Whitefish Point, Seney National Wildlife Refuge, and more. On the 2012 trip the group tallied 129 species! COST: \$650 (\$250 deposit), includes all transportation, lodging, 4 breakfasts and 4 road-lunches. Any child is welcome to attend accompanied by an adult. Contact us to enroll or for more information.

CCR – Follow the Science

In the face of fossil-fuel interests lobbying hard to keep our country indefinitely hooked on their bread-and-butter, every American needs to be capable of separating objective scientific conclusions from the incessant spin, then start acting on what needs to be done.



Here's some reading that's a terrific start, and you don't have to have an advanced science degree to assimilate it. *Climate Change: Evidence and Causes* has been published by a group of climate scientists on behalf of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society - the national scientific academy of the United Kingdom. This primer introduces twenty key questions and answers to help the average person understand the critical scientific conclusions. Know and understand these twenty aspects and you'll be well-armed to separate the facts from the fudge, and more intelligently discuss it, to boot!

Here are ten of the questions: 1. How do scientists know that recent climate change is largely caused by human activities? 2. CO₂ is already in the atmosphere naturally, so why are emissions from human activity significant? 3. What role has the sun played in climate change in recent decades? 4. Is there a point at which adding more CO₂ will not cause further warming? 5. Does the recent slowdown of warming mean that climate change is no longer happening? 6. If the world is warming, why are some winters and summers still very cold? 7. Why is Arctic sea ice decreasing while Antarctic sea ice is not? 8. How fast is sea level rising? 9. What is ocean acidification and why does it matter? 10. Are climate changes of a few degrees a cause for concern? Abbreviated answers to all these questions can be found in a February issue of *USA Today*: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/02/27/climate-change-q-and-a-guide/5861621/>.

You can read the 36-page booklet online, download it for free or arrange to purchase a hard copy by visiting the National Academies Press website. Here's a link to the page highlighting this publication: http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=18730&page=R2. We downloaded it!

2014 Summer Day Camp Schedule
is on our website now! Click this link:
<http://www.naturediscovery.net/pdf/summercamps.pdf>

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