



THIS ISSUE

LCC Summer Youth Camps

***Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment
Around the State in April***

Thank you, Donors

In Addition to 'The Fraud'...

The Most Benign

'Live Snakes'

Experience

Sit in on a 'Michigan Snakes Alive' presentation and you will agree... If you harbor any level of uncomfortability toward snakes, Nature Discovery offers the most benign venue you'll likely ever encounter to help you feel better about them.

Currently ten of the state's seventeen species are housed at the 'big, little' private nature center attached to our home north of Williamston. For a snake enthusiast, the interactive opportunities on a visit here will transform you into the proverbial 'kid in a candy store.' For those on the squeamish end of the spectrum, the snakes are at your disposal for as up-close and hands-on of an experience as you wish – and at *your* personal pace. If you live too far to feasibly make the drive, watch for a public venue near you (i.e., library, nature center) where this presentation has been scheduled, then make it a point to attend.

Among many other Michigan-specific wildlife presentation titles, we've offered a live Michigan Snakes program going all the way back to the 90s. However, a particularly fortuitous presentation on the topic, contracted by Michigan Audubon Society during their annual Spring Fling at Whitefish Point in 2008, resulted in a substantial surge of future audiences.

Kathy and Jim Bricker of Cheboygan-based Straits Area Audubon Society were in attendance. Afterward, they introduced themselves and agreed with my point that this content should be mainstream education in every Michigan public school. Then they got to work. The following year Kathy had arranged a week in which the presentation would not only be given at an SAAS meeting, but fundraised and scheduled fifth grade classrooms in a half dozen northern Michigan schools to receive the program. Kathy and Jim hosted the snakes and me in their home.

Prior to the start of a presentation many students express varying levels of negativity, including disgust and outright fear. Over the ensuing hour, though, live specimens of the very snake species they are likely to encounter around their yards and neighborhoods are presented for up-close, hands-on inspection. Misperceptions that stir widespread ambivalence are discussed, then debunked and replaced with sound information, delivered species-by-species, relating to the identification, behavior, habitat, and ecology of each.



Students handle Michigan-native snakes at Mackinaw City Schools in a March 2025 presentation.

The culmination of a 180-degree attitudinal transformation occurs when the students are given time to handle and pass the snakes among themselves in a relaxed, free-mingling format. Teachers often bustle about, taking photos of smiling faces with snakes cradled in arms or even draped around shoulders. At the conclusion the students express overwhelming *positivity*, even incredulosity and wonder not just over the snakes but over the abrupt about-face that has just taken place within themselves. They now *love* snakes and tell me so.

For more details on the onset, evolution and impact of ‘Michigan Snakes Alive’ across a huge swath of schools and libraries that continues to grow today check out these links to past newsletters.

To Kill a Hognose Snake
Snakes in ‘Straits’
SAAS Responds to SOS
The Pledge
Snakes at Work

<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Mar15.pdf>
<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Apr16.pdf>
<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Dec18.pdf>
<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Mar19.pdf>
<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Nov22.pdf>

The presentations are so popular in northern Michigan schools that the list keeps growing. What used to be a full week of presentations has blossomed into two – one in October, the second in March. Just a few weeks ago I delivered the presentation to fifth graders and middle school students in the communities of Boyne Falls, Alanson, Mackinaw City, Onaway, and Indian River, as well as to a general audience at Indian River Area Library. Some teachers shared feedback from their classes:

"We enjoyed Jim’s presentation so much that we wish he could come back to our classroom again. We learned a lot about snakes. We learned that snakes will not bite unless they feel threatened. We also learned that 70% of snakes eat their prey while it is alive. Combined, 30% of snakes secure their prey by constricting or envenomating. Now that we know more about snakes we don’t feel as nervous about them. We can now inform and teach about snakes to help prevent others from killing them."
- *Emily Jennings, Boyne Falls 5th grade teacher.*

“Snakes Alive provided an engaging and educational experience for our 6th graders, helping them overcome fears and misconceptions about Michigan’s native snakes. Students were surprised to learn that snakes are smooth, not slimy, and gained a better understanding of local species, including the fact that Michigan has only one venomous snake. Many students expressed feeling more comfortable around snakes after the presentation, with some even holding one for the first time. The program sparked curiosity, encouraged hands-on learning, and left students excited about the role of snakes in our ecosystem.” - *R Heckman, 6th grade teacher, Inland Lakes Middle School.*



An Inland Lakes 6th grader cradles our 6-foot Black Ratsnake.

More comments from individual students: "I was surprised at how smooth they were and that they were not slimy." "I learned that it is garter snake, not gardener." "I feel more comfortable around snakes now that I know they are usually pretty relaxed and that there is only one poisonous snake in Michigan." "I

am uncomfortable around snakes and I didn't want to be around them, but I learned to overcome that and I actually held one!" "I learned a lot and I thought it was really cool because Michigan has a lot of snakes that are not bad at all." "It was so fun and exciting to see all of them just crawling around and not being scary at all."

Beginning in April 2023, Julia Chambers, founder and executive director of A Few Friends for the Environment of the World (<https://www.affew.org/>), based in Ludington, has contracted us to give 'Michigan Snakes Alive' annually to fourth grade students in schools throughout Mason County (AFFEW: Good Snakes <http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20May23.pdf>). The snakes and I will be back for more next week.



Would you like 'Michigan Snakes Alive' in your school, library or other community setting? For schools, recommended grades are fourth through high school. However, a more simplified version of the program is available for younger grades (In fact, Michigan Snakes is the presentation theme for kindergarteners at Okemos Public Montessori later this month.). Individual classroom audience sizes (@ 25) are strongly recommended so as to ensure an abundance of personal contacts – a hallmark of the program.

Consider a Michigan Snakes **interactive exhibit** for venues with a walk-by audience (school science/STEM nights, libraries, nature centers, outdoor-oriented festivals, etc.), featuring up to ten state-native species to learn about amid copious touching/handling and photographic opportunities.

“What the hand does, the mind remembers.” – *Maria Montessori*.

–*Jim McGrath*

Thank you to **Gene & Ann Wasserman** and **Robert & Lee Ann Brunetz** for generous donations that fully cover the hefty expenses required to travel such distances for these programs. Thank you, as well, to **Wayne & Cheri Beasley**, the most recent Petoskey-area hosts to the snakes and me. The donation helps to further defray costs to northern schools for this impactful experience.

LCC Summer Youth Camps

Carol's summer youth camps/classes in 2025 through Lansing Community College at LCC's East Lansing campus are filling fast. Here are remaining offerings...

June 23-26: 9am-12pm, *WETLAND EXPLORERS*, Gr. 6-8.

July 14-17: 9am-12pm, *TOY SCIENCE*, Gr. 2-3.

1-4pm, *FOOD & FUN*, Gr. 4-5.

July 21-24: 9am-12pm, *MICHIGAN REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS*, Gr. 4-5.

July 28-31: 1-4pm, *FUN WITH PHYSICS*, Gr. 2-3.

Visit <https://www.lcc.edu/seriousfun> for details and enrollment procedures.





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Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment

*Suggested Minimum
Donation: \$5/person/hr*



The sky's the limit for natural science learning here – with a Michigan twist! Adults, couples and individual families are welcome to schedule an intimate indoor or outdoor visit to what we call “The Biggest Little Nature Center in Michigan,” and “Home to the Largest Zoo of Michigan-native Reptiles and Amphibians.” The unique, in-person, hands-on experiences here are unrivaled at any other nature center or zoo! We will bring snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders out of tanks to interact with adults or students of any age or grade-level.

Identify and feed “the grand slam of Michigan turtles” - all ten species native to our state! Meet, pet and feed “Milberta”, our always hungry Red-footed tortoise.

Handle any or all of Michigan’s three species of garter snakes while learning how to tell them apart, then watch them gobble up worms and frogs. Hold or “wear” a gentle 6-foot Black Ratsnake – the largest in the state!



Spotlight Spring Peepers on our vernal ponds.

Many more snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders to identify and feed. Identify birds at the feeders. Take a guided walk on our trails to identify spring birds by their songs. Explore the perimeters our awakening vernal ponds soon to be hopping with frogs.

Make a special evening appointment to check out our ponds, loud with breeding frogs, then search for glowworms (firefly larvae) on the trail sides after dark. Contact us for additional information or to schedule a day and time.

Around the State in April

- ❖ Wednesday, April 9: 2pm. MI Snakes Presentation; Kent Dist. Library (Alpine Twp Branch), Comstock Park.
- ❖ Wednesday, April 9: 4:30pm. MI Snakes Presentation; Kent Dist. Library (Grandville Branch), Grandville.
- ❖ Thursday, April 10: 4-6pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit, Laker Middle School, Pigeon.
- ❖ Thursday, April 10: 5:30-7:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Red Cedar Elementary STEAM Night, East Lansing.
- ❖ Monday, April 18: 6pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Hiawatha Elementary STEAM Night, Okemos.
- ❖ Thursday, April 24: 5:30-7:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Green Elementary School STEM Night, East Lansing.
- ❖ Saturday, April 26: 10am-2pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Earth Week Plus, Cheboygan.
- ❖ Sunday, April 27: 12-3pm. MI Amphibians Exhibit; Stony Creek Metropark, Shelby Twp.
- ❖ Sunday, April 27: 11am-4pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; AFFEW Earth Day, Ludington.



We're grateful to the many supporters of our mission over the years.

A special call-out to our most recent donors. Thank you!

*Wayne & Cheri Beasley
Elijah Braiman
Cedar Creek Vet Clinic
Feraro Family
Grand River Bait & Tackle
Jan Heminger
Barney Kimball
Tom Nyquist
Christian Scott
Lyric Stock
Gene Wasserman*

In Addition to ‘The Fraud’ Parasitizing Our Government ‘of the People’...

What Are Microplastics Doing to Our Bodies? This Lab is Racing to Find Out.

https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/08/well/microplastics-health.html?campaign_id=34&emc=edit_sc_20250408&instance_id=152129&nl=science-times®i_id=97652655&segment_id=195565&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

‘All Other Avenues Have Been Exhausted’: Is Legal Action the Only Way to Save the Planet?

https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/apr/08/legal-action-climate-crisis-monica-feria-tinta-law?campaign_id=54&emc=edit_clim_20250408&instance_id=152159&nl=climate-forward®i_id=97652655&segment_id=195596&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e&utm_campaign=Daily%20Briefing%2008%2004%202025&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cbnewsletter&utm_term=2025-04-08

One Bird Nest, 30 Years of Human Trash.

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/04/03/science/bird-nest-litter.html?campaign_id=34&emc=edit_sc_20250408&instance_id=152129&nl=science-times®i_id=97652655&segment_id=195565&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

–JM

The next generation would be justified in looking back at us and asking, “What were you thinking? Couldn’t you hear what the scientists were saying? Couldn’t you hear what Mother Nature was screaming at you?” – Al Gore

I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act like you would in a crisis. I want you to act like your house is on fire, because it is. – Greta Thunberg

The personal actions that cut climate pollution fast are to go flight-, car-, and meat-free. Start with the one that feels most feasible for you; if you can’t totally go without, aim to cut your consumption today at least in half. – Kimberly Nicholas, Under the Sky We Make

What if we had storytelling mechanisms that said it is important that you know about the well-being of wildlife in your neighborhood? – Robin Wall Kimmerer

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you. – Frank Lloyd Wright



**Union of
Concerned Scientists**
Science for a healthy planet and safer world

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