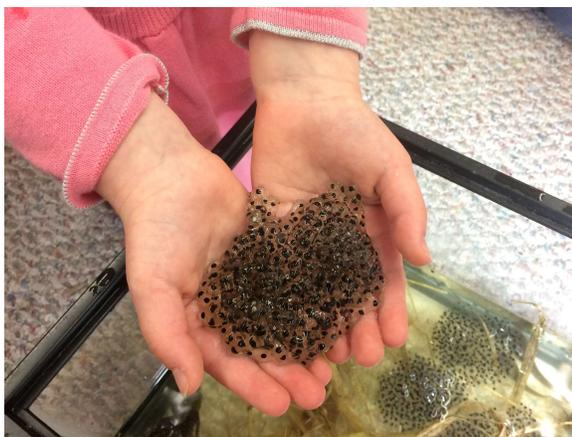


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100 Issues, 30 Years & Joy in Modest Living

As the years tick by in the pursuit of any endeavor, stamina and longevity are marked by increasingly impressive milestones. The 100th issue of our *Wild Times* newsletter arrives on the heels of our home-based business's 30th year of operation. Other nature centers may publish a seasonal newsletter, but ours has run monthly without interruption over more than eight years. Also without a hitch, each issue has kicked off with an original column (sometimes lengthy) focusing on some aspect of Michigan wildlife or wildlife education. As any writer could guess, the lion's share of the hours it takes to compile one issue is dedicated to this opening column. Hence, much of the last week of each month you'll know where to find me – hunched over the keyboard as I try to meet my self-imposed deadline. The regularity of the routine prompts Carol to refer to it as my “monthly period.”



Kindergarten hands cradle a slimy clump of wood frog eggs. Don't take for granted that kids in future generations will have such an opportunity.



This 5th grade student in a northern Michigan school was terrified of snakes. By presentation's end he was handling them with a new-found confidence that knowledge delivers.

She occasionally voices what we both already know: The many hours spent crafting this essay each month do not contribute a lick toward our hard-earned income. In a business where a paycheck is only generated when we are placed in front of an audience, any workplace efficiency expert would advise that projects not contributing directly or, at least, indirectly to income generation be quashed.

For me, here's the crux of what defies good, profit-driven business sense... The mission of Nature Discovery is actually *antecedent* to its status as a business. It is a way of life dedicated to “enhancing awareness and sensitivity toward” our living resources; more broadly, toward promoting an attitude that is imperative if we, as a society, are to hang onto some semblance of a biologically-diverse, sustainable environment. Attainment of income through



our educational menagerie, and, especially with the myriads more in the environment around us.

In this, our 100th issue, let the pursuit of “modest living” be the message. A planet that just a few generations ago seemed so limitless in its resources is showing us that it is, in fact, starkly finite and gravely vulnerable to excessive consumption and its byproducts. Resist the relentless, corporate-profit-driven drumbeat of “more.” Be content with “enough,” and take stock in the reality that the most truly valuable things in life don’t cost a dime. Make a conscious effort to appreciate, embrace and steward the natural world where you live. The result is good in every way imaginable.

We’d love to help. Read on to see how in March...

-Jim McGrath

the business keeps us modestly fed with a modest roof over our heads, thus, allowing us to continue to pursue the mission year after year. Enough remains for modest entertainment and, hopefully a modest retirement.

While the term “modest” may generate stuffy images of mundane living, we’re quick to acknowledge that our lives are anything but... Opportunity to interact with tens of thousands of citizens of all ages throughout a typical year with the above-described mission in mind, and then to witness transformative reactions, is both enthralling and rewarding. Simultaneously, we take pleasure and a special solace in interacting with the non-human life-forms within



Carol shows off a particularly productive hatch – over a dozen giant silk moths on an early June day.



Catch Nature Discovery on Coffee Break Friday, March 9

Jim is scheduled to appear on WLNZ’s *Coffee Break* show Friday, March 9 at 9:15am, discussing nesting boxes and other topics. 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.

Around the State in March

- ❖ Thursday, March 1: 6:30-8pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Cornell Elem, Okemos.*
- ❖ Friday, March 9: 1-2:30pm. *MI Wildlife Presentation; Mt. Pleasant Discovery Museum.*
- ❖ Wednesday, March 14: 6:30-8pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Hiawatha El, Okemos.*
- ❖ Wednesday, March 21: 6-7:30pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Ralya Elem, Haslett.*
- ❖ 6-8pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Resurrection School, Lansing.*
- ❖ Friday, March 23: 6-8pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Kinawa 5-6 School, Okemos*
- ❖ 6:30-8pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Beagle Elementary, Grand Ledge.*
- ❖ Wednesday, March 28: 10:30am. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Presentation; Oscoda Library.*
- ❖ 2pm. *MI Reptiles & Amphibians Presentation; Whittemore Branch Library.*



Photo © Steve Sage

Open Hours

*Sunday, March 11,
1 to 5 pm; \$5 Admission*

2pm Presentation

Providing

for Bluebirds

and other Cavity-nesting Songbirds

Bluebirds, chickadees, titmice and nuthatches begin searching for, and claiming nesting cavities throughout the month of March. Put a box up this month, and be amazed at how quickly birds begin to inspect it. At 2pm, we'll feature *Providing for Bluebirds & Other Cavity-nesters*, a Powerpoint presentation featuring the array of "secondary" cavity-nesters - birds which, unlike woodpeckers, cannot excavate their own cavity, but must find an existing one. We'll also cover the life histories of two alien cavity-nesting birds, the house sparrow and European starling, which routinely destroy eggs, nestlings, and even kill adult birds in their drive to reproduce. We'll cover the best ways to deter them, and in so doing, maximize the nesting success of your backyard bluebirds and others. After the presentation we'll spend time viewing boxes in the yard, walk the trail and identify birds by sight and sound. Don't forget binoculars!

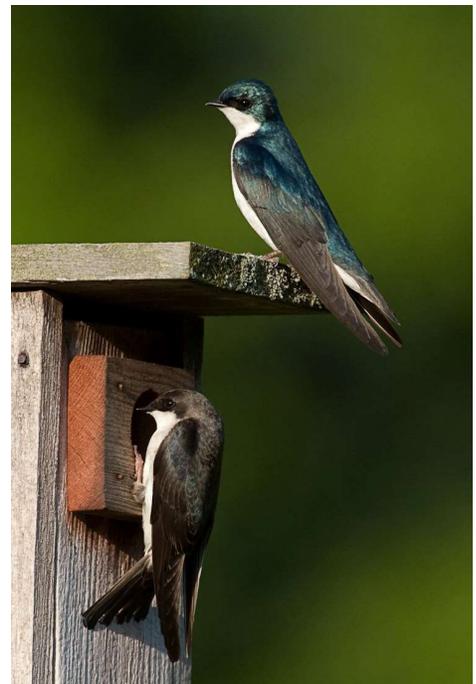
We'll have a limited number of bluebird nesting boxes for sale (\$25). We will also demonstrate a highly effective removable nest box trap accessory, available for sale (\$10). If you have a persistent house sparrow that has claimed a box in your yard, this will help you catch it. Feel free to contact us in advance to reserve a box or a trap.

With the aid of our staff, 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.

Need help erecting a box in your yard? One of our staff can dig a hole, sink a post and install one for a reasonable fee. Contact us!

If you place a box on in an open area and it hasn't been claimed by April, a pair of Tree Swallows may take up residence.

Photo © Steve Sage



“Welcome Spring”
Maple River
Birding Day
Tuesday, March 20
6am to 1pm



Blue-winged Teal

Photo © Steve Sage

Join a guided trip for adults to Maple River State Game Area north of St. Johns, followed by a stop at Park Lake to check out migrant waterfowl through our spotting scope. We will leave early enough to catch woodcocks performing aerial courtship displays at first light. Up to 20 species of waterfowl can be seen from dikes around the flooding. There is also a good chance to view active Great Horned Owl and Bald Eagle nests. We will stop on roadsides to view them up-close through our spotting scope. As many as 50 species are in store by day’s end. 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. Advance registration required. FEE: \$55, includes all transportation. Arrangements may also be made to pick up /drop off at your door or another convenient location.

Spring Break Day Camp and Field Trip...

Spring Break Wildlife Day Camp

Tuesday & Wednesday, April 3 & 4, 9am-3pm.

For K & older.

Students can sign-up for one or both days of nature and outdoor-oriented activities. Each day will encompass feeding, caring for, and handling our huge captive collection of Michigan snakes, turtles, frogs, salamanders and lizards. We will also offer a variety of engaging outside explorations and activities dependent on the weather, including bird-watching and exploration of our vernal pond now alive with breeding frogs and invertebrates galore.

Students who wish to wade into the pond can bring old shoes, socks and pants, a change of clothes, and a towel. Boots are NOT recommended for wading.

Cost: \$60/day. Hot lunch and snack are provided. Advance registration required.



Maple River Birding Field Trip

Thursday, April 5, 9am-3pm.

For 3rd grade & older.

Maple River State Game Area is peaking now with migratory ducks and a slew of other birds. See an active bald eagle nest, plus hawks and owls on nests, too. We’ll hike dikes that surround the massive flooding, too. Students will tally up to 50 birds on personal checklists. Bring binoculars if you have them.

COST: \$70. Pack a bag lunch and water bottle, and be sure to dress for weather conditions. Advance registration required.



Keeping Snakes Alive in Northern Michigan

For the eighth consecutive year Straits Area Audubon Society has raised the funds to promote Nature Discovery's *Michigan Snakes Alive!* programs to schools and organizations throughout the northern Lower Peninsula. Starting in 2011 as a two-day excursion for Jim and friends, the program expanded over ensuing years to three, then four, and, this year, five days-worth of presentations.

From February 5-9, a total of over 600 children and adults were exposed to up-close hands-on experiences with seven species of state-native snakes while absorbing copious information about identification, behavior, habitat, and human misperceptions and activities that threaten their survival. Participants included classrooms at Cheboygan, Wolverine, Mackinaw City, Onaway, Indian River, Pellston, Petoskey Co-operative Nursery School, Petoskey Childrens' Montessori House, Petoskey Sheridan School, Petoskey Concord Academy, and Petoskey Soaring High Home School. Shorter presentations and snake-handling options were presented to two branches each of sponsoring businesses, Awakon Federal Credit Union and Citizens National Bank.



Donations made by Citizens National Bank, Awakon Federal Credit Union, Straits Area Federal Credit Union, Coffman Hardware in Mackinaw City, Petoskey Plastics, Straits Area Audubon Youth Fund, Nancy Waldron, Herm & Darlene Boatin, Kathy Swanson, David & Carol Bricker, Jim & Kathy Bricker.

The following schools helped fund presentations given to their students: Inland Lakes School PTSO, Indian River; Soaring High Home School Group, Petoskey; Co-operative Nursery School, Petoskey; Montessori Childrens' House, Petoskey.

Thank you to the following volunteers who assisted with showing snakes and coaching/monitoring students as they handled the snakes: Eowyn Bates, Herm Boatin, Jim and Kathy Bricker, Dennis Mikus, Joan Moran, Rosanne Rynerson, Amanda Skiera, Thomas Tafoya.

Finally, special kudos to Kathy and Jim Bricker, gracious hosts again to the snakes and their handler for the week, and the straws that stir the *Snakes Alive* drink in Northern Michigan.

2018 Summer Day Camps Sneek-Peek

Not Your Typical Day Camp! Each week's roster will be limited to only **6 special participants** - specifically targeting **children who demonstrate a strong interest in the natural world.**

Full-day camp fees are \$270. Half-days are \$140. An additional field trip fee may apply to some full-days camps. A 50% deposit is required to confirm a reservation.

June 18-21: Michigan Birds & Birding (FD - 10 yrs & older)

July 16-19: Nature Discovery (FD - 7 to 9 yrs)

July 23-26: Budding Naturalists (HD - 5 to 6 yrs)

July 30-Aug 2: Nature Discovery (FD - 7 to 9 yrs)

Aug 13-16: Budding Naturalists (HD - 5 to 6 yrs)

Aug 20-23: MI Reptiles & Amphibians (FD - 10 & older)

Our 2018 schedule with full details will be posted on the website shortly: <http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/summercamps.pdf>



Trump, EPA Message: Science Doesn't Matter

That's according to Christine Todd Whitman, EPA administrator under George W. Bush. She charges that the EPA website has been overhauled to such an extreme degree that its credibility has been undermined.

Here is the full *Time Magazine* article:

Here's What the EPA's Website Looks Like After a Year of Climate Change Censorship

<http://time.com/5075265/epa-website-climate-change-censorship/>

-JM



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