



The existence and location (our yard) of these Eastern Garters was submitted to the Michigan Herp Atlas.

THIS ISSUE

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***Enjoy & Help
Natural Michigan
Simultaneously***

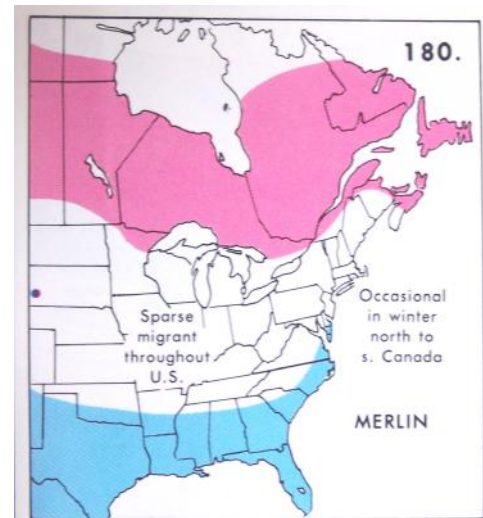
Given the instantaneous ease with which technology now allows us to communicate, benefits that were unimaginable a few decades ago are continuously being realized and ingrained in our daily lives. Much within this sea of free-flowing information can be frivolous, if not a downright waste of time, however, many aspects and usages are proving to be invaluable.

Pick up any printed field guide to birds, bugs, wildflowers or other natural life to find range maps depicting where to find them. These delineations are the result of years of painstaking travel, observation, and data-submission – the surveyors often finding themselves immersed in mud, mosquitoes, sweat and setbacks.

However, nothing is static in our ever changing environment - now, more than ever. As the human population continues to grow, alterations to the natural landscape and associated consequences to naturally-occurring populations are in an increasing state of flux. Now, even in areas supposedly dedicated as sanctuaries, the effects of invasive species and climate change due to our fossil-fuel addiction, are rendering populations of native species less stable than we used to assume them to be. The older the field guide depicting a range map for a given species, the more likely the boundaries have since shifted.

A lack of the professional manpower required to continuously survey myriad populations is a daunting drawback in itself. For instance, here in Michigan, the DNR lacks the funding and manpower to send biologists into the field for such large-scale endeavors, so...

Here's where you come in. If you are an amateur enthusiast of reptiles and amphibians (often shortened to "herptiles")



This range map for the Merlin, a small falcon, from the Peterson Guide to Eastern Birds (1980), shows no breeding in Michigan, yet, nests are found commonly today in the U.P. and northern L.P.



To aid in finding snakes, salamanders and other small wildlife on your property, convert any old board or door to a "hide board" laid in the overgrowth that's convenient and easy to check. Garter snakes are regularly found under this one.

(Herpetology: the study of reptiles and amphibians), and shortened further by those in the field to "herps.") you may have fun participating in the Michigan Herp Atlas. The project was devised through collaboration of the Michigan DNR, Michigan Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Michigan Society of Herpetologists, and Herpetological Resource and Management.

Here's how it works. If you have an i-phone, visit www.miherpatlas.org. Here you can find instructions on how to load a free atlas project app, complete with GPS coordinates of your exact location. Whether gardening in your yard, hiking a trail, taking the kids to the park, or driving down a country road, the data for any "herp" encountered can be added to the state database with a few clicks. If possible, take a photo with your i-phone of the

located herp. Then the app will guide you to enter any other information, i.e., number of individuals, age, sex, etc., that you may be able to determine. Submission of the photo allows for a qualified reviewer to verify correct identification of the species. Once you become familiar with the process, each entry takes a few minutes or less.

This is a terrific activity to enhance your time outside in an environmentally-worthy fashion. Plus, it's not just for adults. All members on any outdoor family outing can have fun searching, then locating and submitting data on any frog, turtle, snake, salamander or lizard.

Apps exist for amateurs to participate in other natural science surveys. Bird enthusiasts can visit www.ebird.org to learn how to submit bird sightings via a similar i-phone app to a national database. With a little research, you may find surveys employing easy i-phone entries for wildflowers, butterflies, other insects, mammals, and more.

Attend this Sunday's Biodiversity Day. I'll show you the herp atlas app in action when we locate a garter snake, frog or turtle on our acreage.



This small Eastern Garter shows its displeasure after being exposed from under the hide board. Note the flattened posture exhibited by most upset snakes.

-Jim McGrath



Catch Us on LCC Radio's Coffee Break, Thursday, May 21

Jim is scheduled to appear on Thursday, May 21 at 9:30am, discussing a seasonal Michigan wildlife topic. 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.



*Third Annual
Biodiversity Day
Sunday, May 3
Featuring
Frogging “By Ear”*

Doors open from 1 to 5pm; Admission: \$5/person

Get ready to identify, experience, and check-off over 100 species of Michigan wildlife and plant life in a single afternoon! At 2pm, *Frogging “By Ear”* will be presented. No Michigan frogs say “ribbit.” In fact, every frog species in Michigan and in the world can be identified by its own unique breeding call. Beautiful Powerpoint images are supplemented with audio recordings from Nature Discovery’s original CD, *Frogs of the Great Lakes Region*, as well as live specimens of all thirteen species native to the state, available for up-close inspection. The CD can also be purchased at a special discount to participants on this day only.

Knowledgeable staff will be on hand all day to assist in a range of highly-interactive, indoor and outdoor biologically-diverse encounters for all ages.

Stations and activities include:

- ✓ Taking Michigan Frogs Quiz.
- ✓ Identifying “The Grand Slam of Michigan Turtles” in outside pools, featuring all 10 species found in the state. Help feed them, too!
- ✓ Meeting 11 of our state’s 17 species of snakes. Lots of handling and feeding opportunities, too.
- ✓ Identifying over 20 species of birds by sight and by sound.
- ✓ Identifying a long list of wildflowers, shrubs, vines and trees.
- ✓ Identifying insects encountered around the yard and trails.
- ✓ Identifying and inspecting pans teeming with diverse invertebrate life from the vernal pond.
- ✓ Identifying a host of invasive species that are eroding natural diversity in our natural areas.
- ✓ Planting a milkweed seedling to take in a home-made, folded newspaper mini-planter.
- ✓ More!



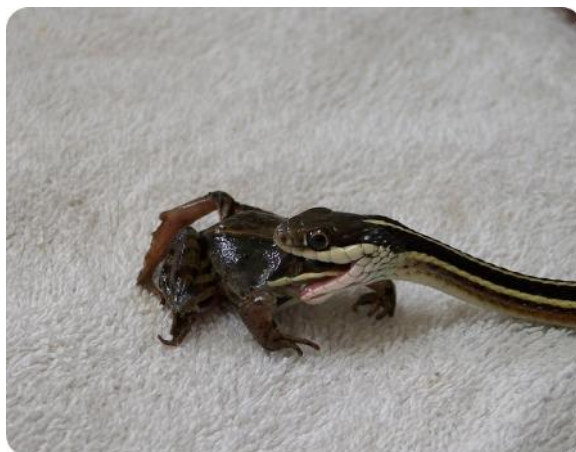
Our 2015 Summer Day Camp Rosters

are filling up! Click this link for camp details:

<http://www.naturediscovery.net/pdf/summercamps.pdf>

Around the State in May

- ❖ Saturday, May 2: 12:30-4:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Seven Ponds Nature Center, Dryden.
- ❖ Thursday, May 7: 6-7:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Lansing Charter Academy Science Fair, Lansing.
- ❖ Tuesday, May 12: 11am. MI Moths Presentation; Perry Garden Club, Perry.
- ❖ Wednesday, May 13: 7pm. MI Turtles Presentation; Chippewa Valley Audubon, Mt. Pleasant.
- ❖ Friday, May 15: 9am-2:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Isabella Conservation District Environmental Ed Day, Chipp-A-Waters Park, Mt. Pleasant.
- ❖ Saturday, May 16: 10am to 4pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Hemlock Crossing Nature Center, West Olive.
- ❖ Wednesday, May 20: 6-8pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Red Mill Farmers Market, Portland.
- ❖ Saturday, May 30: 12pm. Garden Critters; Leila Arboretum Children's Garden, Battle Creek. 2pm. MI Snakes Presentation; DeGraaf Nature Center, Holland.



Volunteers Needed for Outside Work

If you have some time to spare AND you like working outside AND you like working in the soil AND you would like to do something that's good for the environment AND you'd like to do something to help our overworked and understaffed business, please contact us! During the growing season it is difficult for us to keep up all our appointments, plus all the animal care, in addition to rampant plant growth. Can you help us clear invasives out of our woods, help with our organic vegetable gardens or help to beautify our flower beds? Choose any days or hours that are convenient for you. Contact us!

FREE! Solar Clothes Dryers

We've lived clothes-dryer-free for nearly fifteen years now. I remember a visit from my parents on a summer day early in this endeavor. My mother, upon seeing multiple lines filled with clothes of all family sizes, asked, "Is your dryer broken?"

Do we miss the convenience? Not in the least. In fact, we find the prospect of varied forms and colors of linens and apparel draped from a clothesline, bathed in sunshine, gently flapping in the breeze, to be far-from-unsightly. Rather, it instills in us a sense that we're living an existence that's more in step with the real-time world and its life-nurturing atmospheric phenomena (Seeing clotheslines in use in other yards elicits a similar sense of "rightness."). This, as opposed to the forcibly-tumbled, hot-blown, kilowatt-hungry, rush-to-dryness that nearly everyone else today accepts as "normal."



We do not shy away from letting visitors who are here during open Sundays or by appointment see our hanging laundry (Well, with the exception of the intimate apparel.). We've received numerous comments from adults claiming they'd like to get a clothesline, but their subdivision ordinances don't allow it. A poll of neighbors in their subdivision might reveal that most other residents feel the same way they do. "Majority rules" is a pretty strong argument for change.

It's okay to accomplish things without the use of fossil fuels. With what we know today about carbon concentrations in the atmosphere, it's not only preferred, but, to us, truly feels scientifically and *morally* right.

Regarding man-made climate change, finally, a religious leader is speaking up on the moral obligations we have to the planet, the people and future generations. Take a wild guess whose feathers are ruffled... http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/28/world/europe/pope-francis-steps-up-campaign-on-climate-change-to-conservatives-alarm.html?_r=0

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