



*Stepping Stones Montessori student, Marie Adele Grosso, pinches a live yellowjacket hornet with confidence. Grabbing a yellowjacket is not recommended unless, like Marie Adele, you can be sure it's a drone.*

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# ***The “Especially Interested” Merit Special Attention***

With a Michigan slant, we’ve been opening eyes to natural diversity for over 26 years now. The audiences and venues are highly varied, to say the least. One day this summer, Carol and I led a day camp at our place in the morning, drove two hours north to Roscommon, then presented that afternoon at a DNR conference for state wildlife biologists.

On any weekend we may be presenting to mixed audiences of adults and kids at any of a number of parks or nature centers around the state. We present to adult audiences at garden club meetings, Audubon and Sierra Club meetings, and environment-related conferences. Other weekends we are exhibiting our Michigan reptiles and amphibians at an expo or festival somewhere in the state. The last outdoor exhibit of the year happened just a few weeks ago at Michigan Audubon Society’s Cranefest at Baker Sanctuary in Bellevue. Our tent was packed with visitors. Then one Sunday each month we have open hours here. The day includes a presentation on a specific, often seasonal, Michigan wildlife topic.

Adults are fairly set in their life work and lifestyles (although it’s never too late to change the mindset of a snake-killer). But for kids with a clean slate in front of them, we are keenly aware of the potential for creating impressions that may focus their direction for life. In addition to offering unique summer day camps, presentations to youth groups, nature-oriented birthday party entertainment, and visits to schools throughout mid-Michigan and beyond, we teach weekly at Montessori Children’s House in Lansing, Stepping Stones Montessori in East Lansing, Okemos Nursery School and Fairview Elementary in Lansing. Parents often mention that the day of our lesson is their child’s favorite day of the school week.

While not all kids are wired to become scientists all should be given a chance to develop a strong awareness of, and appreciation for natural diversity, and, more broadly, for the health of the environment they share with all living things. However, one or two in almost any classroom are exceptionally enthusiastic about the subject matter. It’s not hard to see tomorrow’s scientists in their eyes. These kids are dying for more than a thirty or sixty minute lesson. They’re ready to live it, so, we say, “Let’s give them more!” A couple of cases in point...



*Zachary hand-feeds a Wood Turtle.*

In September of 2011 we hosted a group of cub scouts at Nature Discovery. Joy Gietzel, a parent who arranged the visit, was so impressed with the content, she booked them to visit again in September of 2012. As scouts and parents were departing at the end of the visit Joy approached to inform me that her 11-year-old son, Zachary, lives for this stuff. Then she inquired whether there was any way we could arrange for him to have his own special time with us at the center. We scheduled a Saturday afternoon a couple of weeks later. She dropped him for a four-hour visit. Zachary was in heaven as he learned and helped us with the feeding and maintenance of over one hundred animals on hand. Since then, he has been visiting about

one Saturday a month and has turned into quite a capable volunteer while pursuing his personal passion. He also helps us with clearing invasive plants on the property and has assisted and interacted with the public at some of our exhibits, too.

Here's what Zachary has to say about his time with us: "I volunteer at Nature Discovery. I love taking care of snakes and frogs. That includes feeding, cleaning and holding. I love working at the nature center. I loved teaching everyone about the animals when we went to the crane festival. I have learned a lot while working at the nature center like how to tell if an animal is male or female. I have learned about all the Michigan turtles and snake species. I wish I could be there every day."

After enrolling her 7-year-old daughter, Hope, for several camps here, homeschooling mom, Sally Hoedel, relayed Hope's unbridled enthusiasm for her time spent here. I proposed a similar opportunity. For the past six weeks, Hope has visited every Tuesday morning. She says, "I think that spending time at Nature Discovery is so much fun. I really love the snakes and frogs and feeding them is so cool."



*Hope has a front row seat as our adult female Black Ratsnake finishes a mouse.*

Here's what Sally had to share: "As a homeschooling mom, I've been so thankful for Hope's experiences at Nature Discovery! It's my job to find out what she's passionate about and then give her plenty of opportunities in whatever that ends up being. Hope's brain was just on fire the entire session each time she was there and for long after she left. She now has such a thorough understanding of so many nature-based topics because of her time at Nature Discovery. Again as homeschooler, I know that how well a child does on a test has nothing to do with how much the child enjoys learning or what they'll retain going forward. I'm confident that Hope will never forget the knowledge she's gained there and I'm also certain that it's ignited and directed her towards a topic she'll always love. The reason for this is simple...she's been at Nature Discovery in a hands-on learning environment and mentored by the entire McGrath family that is so passionate about all things nature."

The Hoedel family is moving from Williamston to Traverse City this week. While we'll miss having Hope around we know the staff at Grand Traverse Conservation District's Boardman River Nature Center, not far from her new home, will be getting to know her quite well!

Have a child or teen with an unfulfilled passion in natural science? Contact us to make arrangements for a visit. Hey, this isn't just kid stuff. We welcome any adult volunteers, too!

*-Jim McGrath*



***Catch Nature Discovery on WLNZ  
Radio's Coffee Break on  
Thursday, November 7***

Jim is scheduled to appear on Thursday, November 7 at 9:45am, discussing the invasive shrub, Amur Honeysuckle, and more. The show airs weekdays from 9 to 10am on 89.7 FM. Listen live online at [lcc.edu/radio/onair/](http://lcc.edu/radio/onair/) or watch it live (or later in the day at 6pm) online at [lcc.edu/tv/watch](http://lcc.edu/tv/watch). We'll post a reminder on our Facebook fan page.

***Making the Ultimate  
Winter  
Bird Feeding  
Station  
for Maximum Birds  
& Enjoyment  
Sunday, November 10  
1 to 5pm; \$5/person***



*The Northern Flicker is less common in winter than other woodpeckers, but, by keeping suet constantly available this large, impressive woodpecker can become a daily visitor outside your window.*

What's the secret to attracting the greatest abundance and variety of birds to the feeders outside your winter window? Think of them as customers at a "bird restaurant" – with you as the manager! When you consider the preferred menu of your potential guests in addition to the most comfortable "seating" and overall ambiance, you'll turn your feeding station into the squawk of the town.

At 2pm sit-in on this lively 90-minute Powerpoint presentation traversing all aspects of attracting winter birds through the correct management of your own upscale avian eatery. Does offering a mix of seeds attract the most birds? Not necessarily... How does hanging only one style of feeder limit the number of visiting birds? Participants will view beautiful color images while learning the preferences and behaviors of familiar year-round backyard residents as well as a host of songbirds from the far north that would like to adopt your yard as their winter getaway. Seeds, feeders and other considerations discussed in the presentation will be available for inspection during and after the program.

Come early or stay late to visit, and interact with our huge zoo of Michigan reptiles & amphibians. Take a personalized guided walk on the trails, too. Knowledgeable staff is on hand throughout the day to help visitors of all ages make the most of their visit.

# Muskegon Area Birding Day

**Saturday, November 16**

**6:30am to 4:30pm**



*Northern Shovelers visit the Muskegon wastewater holding ponds by the thousands in the fall. Photo © Steve Sage.*

On Saturday, November 16, from 6:30am to about 4:30pm, join us on a guided trip to the Muskegon area for some great, late-fall birding. Jim will lead and drive a maximum of five participants on this full-day odyssey to tally as many species as possible through habitats that harbor thousands of birds.

Wastewater treatment facilities are typically hot birding locales. Holding ponds of various depths are magnets to waterfowl and shorebirds. Density of water birds in turn, attracts predatory hawks and eagles. Unfortunately, most of these facilities are off-limits to the public. However, the expansive Muskegon Wastewater Facility, several miles from Lake Michigan, allows birders to acquire a special permit to access their facility. Jim has one!

Miles of dikes surround vast holding ponds crammed with thousands of ducks of over a dozen species, plus geese, swans, grebes and other surprises. Miles of open area north and south of the ponds offer a slew of other species, including Bald, and sometimes, Golden Eagles, Rough-legged Hawks, kestrels, shrikes, Snow Buntings and lots more. Snow Geese and Cackling Geese make regular appearances, too. We'll stop for lunch then head to Lake Michigan to pick up more birds from the shore and on the breakwater. Diving ducks, loons, grebes and more, forage everywhere in the water. The uncommon Purple Sandpiper, migrates through Michigan and forages on rocky shorelines. We'll search the huge rocks that line both sides of the breakwater for their presence.



*You can't order a Purple Sandpiper on the rocks from a bartender, but, with a little bit of luck we may be able to accommodate you.*

Weather-permitting, we should tally over 50 species. Most of the birding will be in or near the vehicle. The only extended walking will be on the breakwater. Dress warmly, bring binoculars and plan to stop for lunch. Jim's spotting scope will be available for especially up-close viewing. Each participant will also receive a Michigan Birds checklist to keep track of the day's finds.

**COST:** Only \$60/person, includes all transportation. Meet at Nature Discovery. With notice, we can also arrange to pick you up at a more convenient location for you. Contact us to make a reservation.

# Climate Change Realist

California: The *Los Angeles Times* has had enough. They will publish no more opinions or letters to the editor that deny the science pointing to man-made climate change:

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/opinion-la/la-ol-climate-change-letters-20131008,0,871615.story#axzz2iOuuq0RmO>

The Sierra Club has formulated a petition for concerned citizens to sign which urges newspapers around the country to stand up and follow the lead of the *L.A. Times*:

[https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/Advocacy;jsessionid=F1B37E4C769536C62985967F28CD6189.app207a?pagename=homepage&page=UserAction&id=12213&autologin=true&s\\_src=413KSREGA1\\_NSRC](https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/Advocacy;jsessionid=F1B37E4C769536C62985967F28CD6189.app207a?pagename=homepage&page=UserAction&id=12213&autologin=true&s_src=413KSREGA1_NSRC)

Iowa: Gene Takle, director of Iowa State University's climate science program, said too many Americans believe there is serious dispute among scientists about whether climate change is real and whether it is caused by people. "There are very, very, few scientists who are active in studying climate science who deny the existence of the role of heat-trapping gases in raising our global average temperatures, and the fact that these heat-trapping gases are produced by humans." Here's more:

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20131019/BUSINESS01/310190049/Weather-swings-like-those-of-2013-to-increase?Business>

Thank you to Fred Swartz for sending us these links. Have you come across any climate change-related news you'd like us to consider sharing? Please forward it!



Participants in our early morning field trip to Haehnle Bird Sanctuary marveled at a beautiful and ever-changing natural landscape as the sun penetrated the fog. Top: Autumn trees emerge from the fog over the native prairie. Right: A "fogbow" forms behind a hilltop bench.



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