

THIS ISSUE

Honeysuckle Removal Tutorials

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A Special Thank You

Thank You, Cedar Creek Vets

Fool Us Twice...



Invasive Amur Honeysuckle is at its most evident after the rest of the foliage has fallen in November.

**The Green
of November**

In Michigan, we marvel in passing at the bright colors of October. The foliage of a host of native trees turns from green to emblazoned hues of yellow, orange, red and gold. Over these few fleeting weeks year after year we may come to take the rise and fall of these colors for granted.

As October turns to November deciduous branches increasingly turn ‘skeletal’ in woodlands, yards, parks, and along roadsides. Leaves fallen, we expect the muted browns and grays of pending winter to take the stage... Well, that’s how it used to be.

Now, in November, an aerial view of many of these landscapes reveals not the post-autumn drabness that anyone born before the 1990s remembers as normal. Instead the fall of the leaves reveals a bright green metastasis in the understory, heretofore shrouded by the leafy canopy.



The strip of woods on the north border of our property is infested with honeysuckle.

When we moved onto our rural property north of Williamston in 1989, there was not a single Amur Honeysuckle - an alien berry-producing shrub native to northern China - to be found across our six-plus acres. Ten years later, however, I began finding a number of them, not just on our property, but along local roadsides and in other neighborhood woodlots. Little did I know then that I was witnessing the early stages of an exponential rise.

As I write this today, I peer through a north-facing window to view the green understory of an infected patch of woods between us and our neighbors. The last remnant of Spring Beauties that used to carpet the ground here died out a few years ago.

Over much of the Eastern Deciduous Forest Biome and around our own rural neighborhoods, Amur Honeysuckle has, indeed, become the dominant greenery of the month. The view of a typical roadside sub-climax woodlot in this season consists of scattered tree trunks of various girths rising from within and behind a dense, leafy, green wall of understory honeysuckle. Since these shrubs can attain heights of up to fifteen feet, the view into the woods at eye level is often almost completely hampered. So is your ability to walk through it.

Honeysuckle spreads through the mass production of small, round, bright red berries, seen clinging now in clusters of two to four along the shrub's outermost branches. Many thousands of them may cling to just a single large honeysuckle that grows along a well-lit woodland edge or roadside. Each berry's sweet meat envelopes a handful of seeds. I've written in past newsletter columns about the oblivious role native and alien frugivorous birds play in dispersing the seeds of this and other berry-bearing invasives through their droppings (<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Dec17.pdf>).



An online search reveals a gamut of troubles that Amur Honeysuckle's prevalence wreaks on woodland ecosystems. Virtually no herbivorous mammal or insect will eat it. The sheer density of the expanding shrubs severely limits the amount of light that can reach the ground beneath them, thus, stifling the ability of native woodland wildflowers as well as the seedlings of native trees to grow. Additionally, the dropped leaves and fruits contain chemicals that leach into the soil, the effects of which further inhibit the growth and germination of native plant life.

Studies indicate that the negative effect of invasive honeysuckle also extends to songbird, mammal, amphibian and insect populations. We've witnessed around a ninety percent reduction in frog and salamander sightings on our property over the past two decades, despite the presence of two vernal ponds within which most of them used to breed prolifically, and still try to do with much less success.

Chemical leachates from honeysuckle are known to enter adjacent wetlands. Their presence in the water depresses growth of algae and other aquatic plants, as well as the usually abundant and diverse aquatic invertebrate populations known to be a hallmark of healthy wetland ecosystems (<https://woodyinvasives.org/woody-invasive-species/amur-honeysuckle/>).



Honeysuckle leaves will fall quite abruptly with the onset of the first hard freeze or significant snow, but they stubbornly cling sometimes weeks longer than leaves of most other woody, deciduous growth, so this is surely the easiest time of year to take note of its presence where ever you are inclined to look. You can quickly assess to what degree it has become established in a given area, then work to remove it.

Eradication efforts can be employed any time of year, but the job is significantly less cumbersome when the branches and stumps you're cutting are devoid of leaves

– roughly from late November through early April. Small honeysuckles are weak-rooted and can be torn directly from the soil with gloved hands.

Start on your own property.

Educate neighbors and friends.

Volunteer to clear it from the grounds of your favorite natural area. Then reintroduce wildflowers that may have once occupied the space.

What an impactful goal-oriented outdoor activity for middle school and high school students who don't get outdoors enough. Often, a site can be targeted right among the natural growth on or adjacent to school property.

Consider a classroom field trip for students to battle honeysuckle on Nature Discovery's acreage.

Volunteer here on your own.

Check out this link to peruse techniques and tools for removal of various-sized shrubs with little to no pesticide application:
https://www.warrenswcd.com/uploads/7/2/5/9/72597023/thirty-two_ways_to_remove_honeysuckle_2_.pdf



Years ago, I purchased a long-handled, wrought iron wrenching device called the 'Puller Bear' specifically to uproot Amur honeysuckles on our acreage. Would you like a demonstration? Make an appointment almost any day. We'd even be happy to lend it to you for use on your own property.

—Jim McGrath

Honeysuckle Removal Tutorial



Individuals, couples or small groups can make an appointment for an hour or two almost any day to be led in identifying Amur Honeysuckle (and other woody invasives) here at Nature Discovery, on your property, or at another location of your choosing, then use various tools and techniques to permanently remove shrubs of all sizes. We'll use the Puller Bear shrub extractor and apply limited herbicide treatment to freshly-cut stumps, as well.

Reasonable fees are based on number of participants, duration, and location. Contact us for more information!

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*Visit Our
Nature Center
by Appointment*

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



The Black Rat Snake is our signature interactive inhabitant. Michigan's largest snake, it has a gentle demeanor and appears to genuinely like being held.

The sky's the limit for natural learning here – with a Michigan twist! Adults, couples and families are welcome to schedule an intimate indoor and/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.” We will bring snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders out of tanks to interact with adults or kids of any age. A terrific option for visiting families over the extended Thanksgiving weekend.



Identify and help feed our many turtles.

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 minnows. Hold or “wear” a gentle 6-foot Black Ratsnake – the largest in the state!

Many more snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders to identify and feed. Take a guided walk on our trails to identify birds, bugs, trees, vines, and invasive plants.

Ask us about...

- ... field trips for academic classes, pre-K thru college.
- ... volunteer opportunities for high school students and adults.
- ... arranging a guided outdoor interpretive experience here, at a local natural area of your or our choosing for your small group of students, adults or families.



Thank you to all past and current supporters of our mission, including these most recent donors...

*Wayne & Cheri Beasley * Matt Burke * Cedar Swamp Sporting Goods * Jan Heminger * Life in Christ Church Donor Soaring High Christian Homeschool * Lyric Stock * Mary Lou Turnbull*

A Special Thank You

to **Bob & Lee Ann Brunetz** and to **Gene & Ann Wasserman**. Nature Discovery's 15-year liaison with Straits Area Audubon Society to bring our Michigan Snakes Alive program to northern Michigan schools has come to an end. However, the demand for the program in these schools is as strong as ever. Donations made by the Brunetzes and Wassermans to Nature Discovery targeting travel and lodging expenses previously donated by SAAS has ensured that these impactful programs will continue into next school year.



Thank you, Cedar Creek Vets!

Photo: Vet tech, Megan, cradles our young Northern Map Turtle.

We're grateful that Cedar Creek Veterinary Clinic supports Nature Discovery's educational mission, so much as to offer pro bono access to health care for some 80 animals in our educational menagerie!

Did you know that Cedar Creek Vet is known throughout the state and beyond for their specialty in reptile and bird care?

Visit <https://cedarcreekvet.com/> for more information.

... Fool Us Twice, ...

Since the election results my mind keeps circling back to the mantra of carnival hucksters regarding the abundance of their target 'clientele.'

Of course, climate change got shoved to the back of the table again by voters focused on strategically manufactured 'issues.'

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/05112024/climate-change-barely-mentioned-during-presidential-campaign/>

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/06112024/trump-win-casts-shadow-over-climate-progress/>

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/experts-what-does-a-trump-presidency-mean-for-climate-action/>

-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



Less Beef = Less CO₂
Cowspiracy.com

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



Flightfree.org



RSPO.org



insideclimatenews.org

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