Nature Discovery **WILD TIMES**

NUMBER 204 **NOVEMBER 2026**

THIS ISSUE

Visit Us by Appointment
Thanksgiving Eve Day Camp, Nov 25
Thank You Donors!
Climate Change a 'Non-Issue'

Michigan Snakes 'Alive' at the Library



A 'ball' of live garter snakes is carefully cradled and passed among library patrons of all ages.

Among a range of other nature/wildlife subjects and topics, the cold-blooded elements that comprise our extensive zoo of Michigan-native reptiles and amphibians draw outsized attention from prospective clients. The most common formats include either presentations for captive audiences or exhibits for events with ambulant visitors.

Presentations allow for delivery of a wealth of content compared to the exhibit format. In keeping with our hallmark for up-close encounters we walk among the seated audience to provide personal looks and touches simultaneous with the oral content. However, the standard one-hour format requires that we keep things moving, so an attending individual has mere seconds to enjoy close proximity to a passing frog, snake, turtle or salamander.

Additionally, most presentations delivered outside of school classrooms involve general audiences comprised of a gamut of age ranges… and attention spans. In this respect the one-size-fits-all presentation format, while convenient and incredibly informative, has its drawbacks; for instance, antsy young audience members who can't sit still for that long.

Exhibits may not deliver the degree of educational content that the captive audience would receive *en masse*, but they allow tremendous flexibility for each visiting individual or family, no matter the age or attention span. Interpretive information is affixed in front of each tank or pool, yet we still try to personally engage with every visiting individual or family.

Some folks breeze quickly past the tanks barely taking the time to explore their contents. Within a few minutes they are out the door. However, far more spend more time – some *way much* more.

For those who show heightened enthusiasm toward the unprecedented, combined dozens of state-native frog, salamander, turtle or snake species at their disposal, we point out that we have a wealth of

information to personally share about each and every one. How long they choose to stay, ergo, how much they choose to learn and engage is totally up to them.

Prolonged engagement often leads not only to opportunities to observe various animals being fed, but to even personally hand-feed, say, a live cricket to a frog or salamander or some food sticks to aquatic turtles that swim at your feet. The snakes at our exhibit allow a still *higher* plane of interaction…

You can read about specific opportunities with snakes within the larger 'exhibit experience' as described in our February 2020 newsletter within a column entitled *Exhibit 'A': Our Michigan-native Reptiles & Amphibians*: http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Feb20.pdf

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Unquestionably, for all the popularity of our diverse MI R&As exhibit, the snake portion generates an outsized response.

Regular readers of this newsletter are aware that over fifteen years and counting - once in October and again in March - I have conducted popular *Michigan Snakes Alive* presentations mostly to fifth grade audiences in schools within many Northern Michigan communities. On occasion, a few area libraries have scheduled an evening presentation, as well.

Most recently, though, a new format has taken hold at these and other libraries – *Michigan Snakes Alive* as an interactive exhibit, *sans* the amphibians and turtles. Over twenty snakes of up to nine or ten state-native species are displayed.

In case you missed it, here is a link to last November's newsletter with an opening column entitled *Nothin' but Snakes* that highlights the exhibit: http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Nov25.pdf

In the column I introduce Megan Goedge, Children's Librarian at Petoskey District Library, who took us up on scheduling a late-afternoon *MI Snakes Alive* exhibit, which was set up in the lobby. She was blown away by the response – over one hundred visitors within just a one-hour designated time slot engulfed the floor space just inside the library doors; quite a surprise (and perhaps, shock) for any library patron who for another reason may have entered to suddenly find themselves among a roiling mass of hominids free-handling serpents!



This October she decided to contract us for an encore exhibit over a ninety-minute span, wisely, in a room *beyond* the front door. Before the event began Megan confided to me that she purposely did not promote the event as thoroughly as she could have. After last year's response she was concerned about the potential throng of attendees exceeding the room's fire code-designated fifty-person capacity.

She remained on hand throughout the event in order to monitor the number of people in the room at any moment. This gave her opportunity to experience the exhibit in action; picking up snippets of information that my assistant Eowyn or I shared with adults and children alike, then observing a gamut of reactions amid the copious touching and handling that transpired. She was also privy to various levels of visitor feedback, including personal conversations with a few of them.

In a follow-up email Megan shared some of her impressions:

You really do a great job at reassuring folks that the snakes won't lash out and bite. I loved the explanation you gave about how, by far, most snakes are incapable of killing prey with their teeth. They have to swallow it alive. So, if a snake happened to bite you, the result is no big deal - a minor skin wound.



I noticed a lone adult woman who was there the entire ninety minutes. She was apprehensive at the start, but by the end was in the handling fray. Maybe she talked to you and Eowyn about it. She said that her older siblings had scared her with snakes when she was a child, so she was trying to move past that during the event - and succeeded!

I talked with a mom who brought her son who clearly loves snakes even though she was very apprehensive. She told me she was fake-smiling and forcing herself to be around the snakes, but she did it! I don't think she held or touched one, but she made it through. They stayed until the very end.

I was also very impressed by the two adults (probably a mom and dad) who brought a little girl who looked around two years old. They treated the snakes with reverence and the child was not scared at all. She touched the snakes and seemed fascinated by them. It does wonders to talk about snakes in an educational manner rather than fearful one!



I also overheard another woman mention to others that because of your presentations at school (Maybe she's a teacher?) she was no longer afraid of snakes.

It's clear people in Petoskey look forward to you and the snakes. Both, the 2025 and 2026 visits brought one hundred people to the library!

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Thank you to Megan Goedge for inviting our programs to the library and for sharing her experience at this event. We also wish to thank Wayne and Cheri Beasley for once again hosting the snakes and me during our week of programs in the area.

Librarians: Would you like to schedule a *Michigan Snakes Alive* program in either presentation or exhibit format?

Teachers/educators: The presentation can be tailored to any grade level complete with up-close, hands-on opportunities. The exhibit format is wildly popular at school science nights.

Adults (with or without kids): Arrange an appointment at our nature center almost any day or evening for an intimate and informative experience with an array of live, incredibly docile state-native specimens. You'd be hard-pressed to find a more benign setting to overcome any level of unease.

Simply contact us with any questions or suggestions, or to make an appointment.

–Jim McGrath

Nature Discovery

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Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment



Suggested Minimum Donation: $5/person/hr

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.



E. Spiny-Softshell and Musk Turtle.

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 our ten species of Michigan-native snakes on hand here while learning how to identify them, then watch them gobble up worms, minnows or maybe even a frog or mouse. Hold or "wear" a gentle 6-foot Black Ratsnake – the largest in the state!

Many more Michigan creatures to learn about 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.**
- **… guided birding outings for individuals, couples and small groups.**

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Thanksgiving Eve Michigan Wildlife Day Camp



Wednesday, November 25
9am-3pm

For kids, K thru middle school

Enroll your child for an intimate day of in-your-face Michigan wildlife experiences!

All students will spend time learning about, holding and feeding the cold-blooded occupants of our huge interactive zoo of Michigan snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders. Our popular, big Red-footed Tortoise, Milberta, is always looking for leafy or fruity handouts and campers oblige.



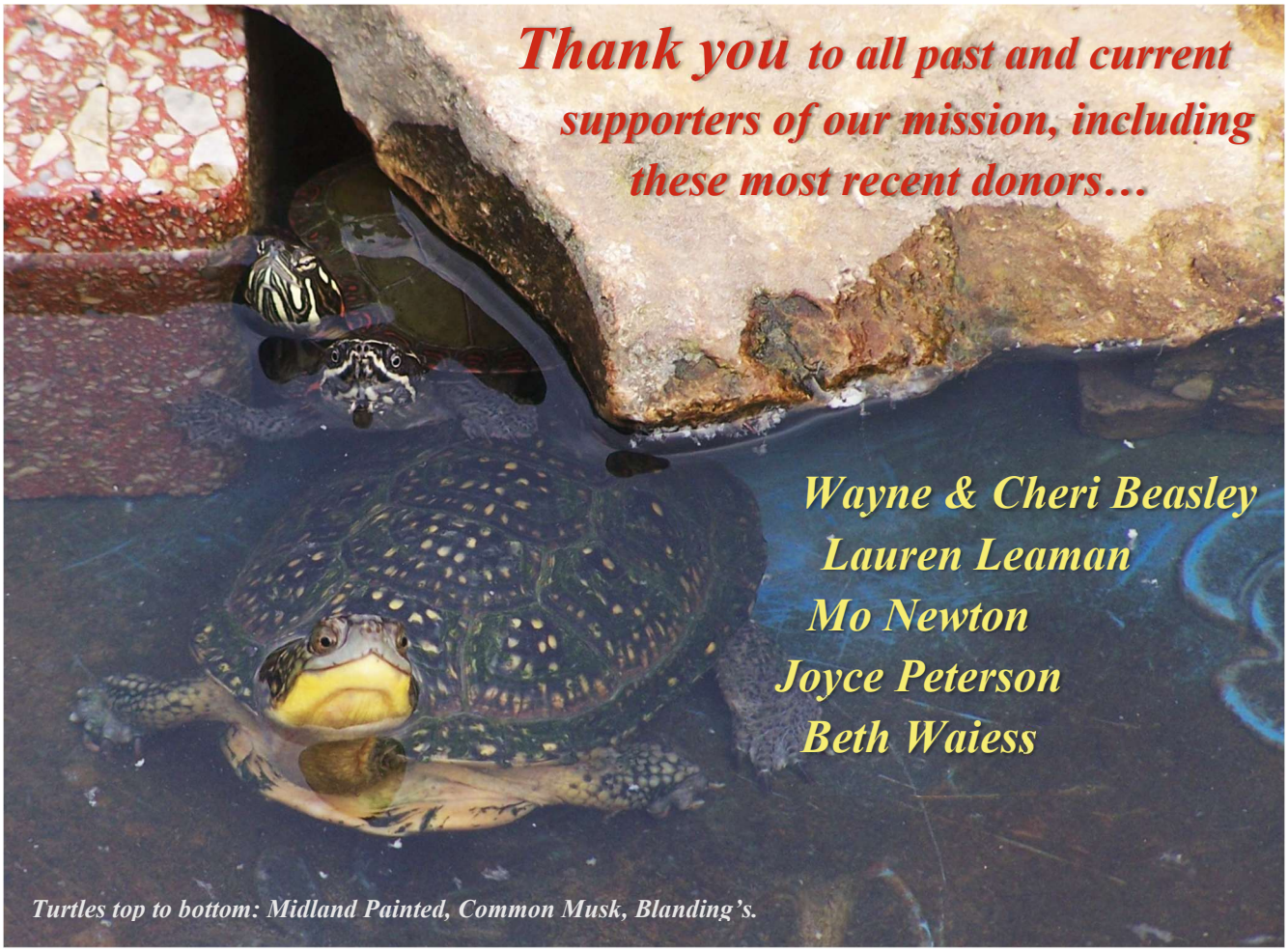
Kids love handling an array of our gentle Michigan-native snakes including our huge 6-foot Black Ratsnakes.

Campers also spend time observing the perpetual motion of birds coming and going from birdfeeders right outside the window, identifying then keeping track of species observed on their own personal Michigan Birds checklists.

Outside activities include identifying and helping remove invasive shrubs and vines that are known to erode local woodland ecology on trail sides out back.

Participants should pack a bag lunch and dress for the day's weather forecast.

COST: $90/student. The roster size is limited so contact us soon to enroll.



As the World Warms…
This Election Cycle, Climate Change a 'Non-Issue'

Are 'Climate Hushers' Lurking in the Democratic Party?
https://insideclimatenews.org/news/01032026/climate-hushing-in-the-democratic-party/

Yes. Democrats Should Talk About Climate
https://electricnotes.news/p/yes-democrats-should-talk-about-climate?campaign_id=54&emc=edit_clim_20261103&instance_id=184584&nl=climate-forward&regi_id=97652655&segment_id=229143&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

Global Talks on Nature End With Persistent Gaps on Action and Funding
https://www.nytimes.com/2026/10/31/climate/cop17-biodiversity-yerevan-conclusion.html?campaign_id=54&emc=edit_clim_20261103&instance_id=184584&nl=climate-forward&regi_id=97652655&segment_id=229143&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

Big Tech Architects Have a Terrible Plan for Humanity
https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/2026/10/ai-regulation-transhumanism-oligarchs/689013/?utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20261016&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&lctg=6050e55c4953a53f1483d5b5&utm_term=The%20Atlantic%20Daily

These Inventions Were Built to Trick Us
https://www.nytimes.com/2026/11/05/opinion/ultraprocessed-unplug-humans-culture.html?campaign_id=39&emc=edit_ty_20261106&instance_id=184764&nl=opinion-today&regi_id=97652655&segment_id=229316&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

Heather Cox Richardson*: Letters from an American*, November 7
https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/november-7-2026?r=dpj5a&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email

-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

SWIM
STATE WIDE INDIVISIBLE MICHIGAN

Statewideindivisiblemi.com

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

IND 7
MICHIGAN DISTRICT 7
UNITED WE RESIST

PLEDGE TO FLY LESS & SAVE MORE
Flightfree.org

Earth911
Earth911.com

ICN
insideclimatenews.org

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