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Affirmation: What Went Around Has Come Around

Our brand of Michigan-specific nature/wildlife education takes it up-close and makes it personal. Know it. Love it. Respect it. Protect it.

This marks the 200th consecutive monthly issue of Nature Discovery's newsletter, *The Wild Times*, since its onset in December, 2009. Wow, that's a lot of content! Peruse a few issues in the archive on our website and it won't take long to get a sense of the values and motivations that make our Michigan-specific nature and wildlife education business go.

Each one begins with an original column on some Michigan nature/wildlife/education topic. I seldom look back on old issues unless, in most cases, I have reason to refer the reader of the latest column to previous content that may act as a precursor or supplement to what is currently being consumed. However, when I do, not only is it a trip into yesteryear, but a reminder that though the topic in that particular column may be original, the underlying message - to acknowledge, enjoy, appreciate, value and ultimately protect the tremendous natural diversity that exists where you live - always shines through.

It must be human nature. Milestones reached in any facet of a life induce reflection. I've done it within past newsletter issues a few times already. I invite you to take a short or longer walk down Nature Discovery's Memory Lane in



1993: Jim and son Glen at Wild Birds Unlimited in Okemos. Jim worked at the store part-time for supplemental income in Nature Discovery's infancy.

these past ‘milestone-marking’ issues...

The October 2012 issue’s opening column entitled ‘Y25ND’ acknowledges Nature Discovery’s 25th year of operation, then recounts the ‘maiden summer’ of 1987, on the heels of my graduation from MSU’s Fisheries & Wildlife program as I first dip my toes into the idea of ‘natural science education as an entrepreneurship’:

<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Oct12.pdf>

The very next issue offered impressions submitted by parents, teachers, former students, etc., over the first 25 years:

<http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Nov12.pdf>

I opened the January 2014 newsletter, our 50th, acknowledging ‘A Milestone Issue.’ The bulk of the column details the impetus behind the mission statement that I formulated as our business model just days after I got my degree. Reading it today – another twelve years hence amid inevitable bumps, windfalls, setbacks and surprises along the way (the pandemic, bypass heart surgery, to wit) - I’m taken by how unwaveringly Carol and I have managed to adapt on-the-fly when necessary and stick fast to it over decades: <http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Jan14.pdf>

The March 2018 issue, the 100th, opened with the column, ‘100 Issues, 30 Years of Joy in Modest Living’ – our personal testament that you *can* live an interesting, highly-fulfilled and impactful life without yearning and striving for ‘more,’ as encouraged by American consumerism. Btw, mindfully modest living happens to be softer on the planet, too: <http://naturediscovery.net/pdf/WILD%20TIMES%20Mar18.pdf>

For any person who has lived a life dedicated to teaching youth it’s a brand of affirmation that one can only experience with age...

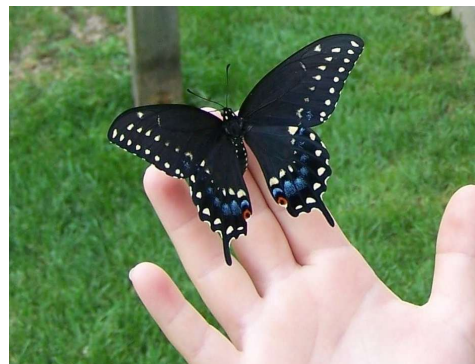
Out of the blue after many years of separation, a communication is received from a former student - perhaps taught a decade- or two- or three-ago - now an adult, who was moved to contact us in order to express how strongly we influenced their outlook of the world, their place in it, and their sense of responsibility to it; the resultant direction of their journey into adulthood, the fulfilling career and lifestyle into which they had settled; then ultimately, to thank us for kindling ‘the fire’ all those years ago.

How fitting that two communications of this nature should come our way from separate sources just prior to this milestone issue. I asked permission to share these accounts of their journeys.

Michael Puccioni (2010-2012)

I am an environmental engineering technician at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, working within its Bureau of Water Monitoring and Assessment with lake classification and inventory. My duties revolve around sampling lakes, reservoirs, and ponds for harmful chemicals, as well as assessing physical habitat characteristics.

I first became interested in environmental science through Jim’s weekly Nature Discovery program in my youth while attending Stepping Stones Montessori. I remember the amphibian and reptile presentations at school, the field trips we took to Nature Discovery’s nature center, and Jim’s lessons on the importance of environmental conservation.



A day camp child’s hand prepares to release a Black Swallowtail raised at ND through ‘caterpillarhood.’



A student at Stepping Stones Montessori cradles a mass of Wood Frog eggs. ‘What the hand does, the mind remembers.’ – Maria Montessori.

I specifically remember Jim's instructions on how to pick up a snapping turtle! I still use his method to this day to move them out of the road.

Perhaps the most important message in all the lessons was that we all play a part in preserving the incredible variety of organisms that we share the planet with. This sentiment inspired me to pursue a career in environmental conservation, now more than a decade after my connection to Nature Discovery.

I am fortunate enough to have realized my passion. I get to spend my days observing and protecting the same organisms that Jim first introduced me to. It hardly feels like work!

All in all, I am incredibly thankful for Jim's programs and the work he has done for the last thirty-plus years. I was able to reconnect with him over the phone and finally thank him for all his efforts. Once again, Jim, thank you for all that you do. You have inspired me, and your work continues to inspire the next generation.

Max Schultz (1992-1999)



Jim helps young students at Montessori Children's House interact with our garter snakes as they wend calmly through the grass.

My experience as a youth with Jim McGrath and Nature Discovery extended over eight years, first through lessons at Montessori Children's House then through ND day camps every summer to the age of fourteen. I recognized immediately how Jim's experiential education enhanced my ability to appreciate the natural world around me, whether in countryside or cityscape. I wrote an essay at age nine about my ideal future job. Specifically citing 'Jim McGrath, my naturalist friend,' I said that I wanted to grow up and become a park ranger. That's exactly what I did.

It was not until I re-discovered that essay recently that it hit me: Nature Discovery was almost inarguably the most formative, positive, singular influence on my life and career path.

Since writing that page, I have worked for two of the three 'big, western' federal land management agencies - the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. I have lived and worked in many exquisite national parks, awoken to bull moose four feet outside the window of my isolated high-elevation duty station cabin. I've worked extremely remote Backcountry Patrol Ranger for the NPS and BLM, as well as policy-heavy, regulatory duties at the USFWS Southwest Regional Office in Albuquerque. I became an exploration geologist when I recognized the important controls that bedrock exerts on ecology. I've also rafted Grand Canyon's whitewater four times.

Every close friend of mine today I won in part with ecological knowledge that I retained from Jim; sharing knowledge on outdoor outings, passing on the joy of knowing the nomenclature and lifeways of the biota with which we co-exist.

In fact, I first wooed my now-wife, Katie, with Nature Discovery-inspired sharing of local plant and animal knowledge. From high school, owl-calling while nighttime cross-country skiing with her through the winter woods of mid-Michigan, to searching for Rocky Mountain Fairy Slipper orchids in our middle-age, Nature Discovery gave me the ability to bring joy in this way to my very favorite person.

While I am no longer working as a federal land manager, my most valued free time is spent giving our young children the same experiential education in local plants, animals and ecology that Nature Discovery helped me to understand and appreciate.

Thank you to Mike and Max for taking time to share their heartwarming stories and impressions. Their life-paths affirm the thirty-eight years Carol and I have dedicated to 'The Cause.' For any career-educator the feedback doesn't get any better than that. Any dedicated teacher would agree, this is not a field you choose for the money. It goes way beyond that...

If you (or someone you know) has had a past experience with Nature Discovery that has enhanced your relationship with the natural world; or, as in Mike's and Max's cases, impacted your direction in life and career, we'd love to hear it then possibly share it in next month's issue. Please contact us!

- Jim McGrath



Hey, this isn't just 'kid stuff.' Join ND on an intimate guided birding excursion. Here, a fall trip to Mackinaw Straits Raptor Watch.

Around the State in July

- ❖ **Sunday, July 19:** 10am-2pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Williamston Farm & Artisan Market, Williamston.
- ❖ **Thursday, July 23:** 10am. MI Wildlife Presentation; Robert J. Parks Library, Oscoda.
- ❖ **Thursday, July 23:** 1pm. MI Wildlife Presentation; East Tawas Library, East Tawas.
- ❖ **Saturday, July 25:** 10am-3pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Grindstone Port Hope Sportsmen's Club Youth Day, Port Hope.

We are grateful to have the backing of so many supporters of our mission, including these many recent donors...

***Melissa Aldis * Jeanette Gladstone * Will Gold * Grand River Bait & Tackle
Jan Heminger * Olivia Killips * Lauren Leaman * Mike & Shara LeValley***

***A just-molted 5th instar
Cecropia Moth larva reclaims
lost nutrients by turning around
and munching its old skin.***

***David Meyer * Nora Nanzer * Meg Nichols & Family
Max & Katie Schultz * Ariela Silva * Nolen Snyder***

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Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment

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



The sky's the limit for natural science learning here – with a Michigan twist! Adults, couples and individual families are welcome to schedule an intimate indoor 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.” The unique, in-person, hands-on experiences here are unrivaled at any other nature center or zoo! We will bring snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders out of tanks to interact with adults or students of any age or grade-level.

Identify and feed “the grand slam of Michigan turtles” - all ten species native to our state as they swim and bask in pools on the patio! Meet, pet and feed “Milberta”, our hungry Red-footed tortoise.



Handle any or all of our Michigan garter snakes while learning how to tell them apart, then watch them gobble up worms and frogs. Hold or “wear” a gentle 6-foot Black Ratsnake – the largest in the state! See our newly-hatched baby ratsnakes!

Many more snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders to identify and feed. Identify birds at the feeders. Take a guided walk on our trails to identify breeding birds by their songs.

See our ‘farm’ of huge Luna, Polyphemus and Cecropia Moth caterpillars. Take some home to raise on your own!

Ask about special guided birding outings and nature walks in our rural neighborhood or at a natural area of your or our choosing!

Nature Discovery

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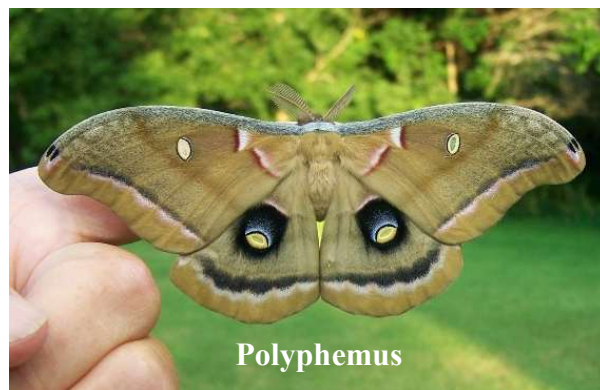
Raise Giant Silk Moth Caterpillars Now!



*It's
Like
Raising
Monarchs
...
on
Steroids!!!*



Semi-grown larvae of huge and beautiful Luna, Polyphemus and Cecropia Moths are available now, while supplies last.



Four larvae of one species with detailed care instructions, only \$15. Contact us to arrange a pickup date/time.



Emily at CCV poses with our Snapping turtle patient.

Cedar Creek Vet Clinic: Official Veterinarian of Nature Discovery!

We are grateful to the professionals at CCV for their long-time support of Nature Discovery. The clinic provides health services when needed for the gamut of ‘working’ Michigan native reptiles and amphibians that reside in the nature center.

Did you know that CCV, located south of Williamston, is acclaimed across the state and beyond for their specialty health care services for birds and reptiles?

Check them out, and tell them that you saw it here!

<https://www.cedarcreekvet.com/>

More Reading for Concerned Americans

Even with Tariffs and Tax Changes, Solar Power is Soaring

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/09072026/inside-clean-energy-utility-scale-solar-booming/>

Steve Hofstetter’s speech to the American Association of School Librarians

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1139338981678764>

The latest *Letters from an American* by political historian, Heather Cox Richardson.

Subscribe for free.

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Yes! We the People want our country back...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo6hBw0v8Z4>

—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

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This newsletter thoughtfully and laboriously composed, written, and edited with no artificial input.



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