

THIS ISSUE

Around the State in September
Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment
Raise Luna Moth Caterpillars Now
Thank you, Donors
Reading for Concerned Americans

Michigan's Ten Turtles ... Face-to-Face



Blanding's Turtle (MI Special Concern status)

There are ten species of turtles to be found in the wild within Michigan's borders.

Perhaps nowhere can you see live specimens of all ten together other than at the 'big little' nature center attached to our rural home north of Williamston. So far, we've found no other location in the state that houses 'The Grand Slam of Michigan Turtles.'

Along with an impressive array of state-native snakes, frogs, salamanders, and one lizard, we use the turtles extensively to educate the public either on our premises, or, far more frequently, at any of a huge range of venues across the state that may host audiences of any demographic make-up.

To further acknowledge Michigan turtle diversity we recently took the liberty of arranging 'Turtle Portrait Day' here at Nature Discovery so readers can begin to get to know them better. Some individuals required more cajoling or coercive nudging than others, but we were ultimately able to snap a face-forward photo of each of the species that resides here. Just as in people, you might be able to determine young from old ones by the 'freshness' (or not) of their facial features.

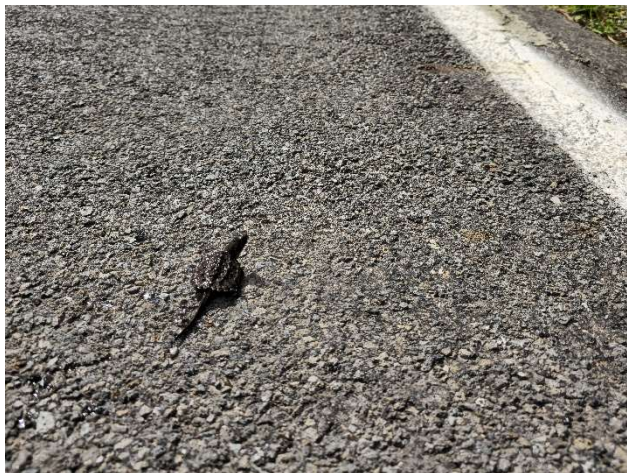


Common Snapping Turtle

As you'll see, none smile for the camera as spritely as the young Blanding's Turtle above. In fact, some look grumpy, bored or even downright annoyed, but don't hold it against them. Surely, even the cutely-beaming Blanding's was not as happy with the course of events as you might assume.

Far from the pliable facial flesh that tells much about how a human may be feeling, the tissue on a turtle face is quite rigid. Thus, that happy Blanding's smile happens to be perpetually frozen that way - no matter how it is feeling. Similarly, a disgruntled countenance

on other turtles is a mere mask – not necessarily an accurate reflection of the actual mood or personality underneath. To wit, despite the ‘look,’ our three-year-old Common Snapping Turtle is a sweetheart.



September is ‘turtle hatchling month’. With a carapace length barely exceeding one inch a driver might assume a newly-hatched Snapping Turtle on the road to be a small stone or chunk of mud. Road-kills are common.

In a nutshell - fact is, the world that modern society has created for human convenience and comfort happens to be terrible for turtles. For starts, think *habitat loss* due to ever-expanding landscape ‘development’; also think *roads and vehicles*, lethal to so many turtles as they attempt to reproduce and disperse to new habitats. It bears mentioning that these two factors alone are damaging to the population dynamics of birds, butterflies and a host of other wildlife, as well.

As if these weren’t enough to put a dent in wild turtle populations... Through the month of June, abundant and abundantly-efficient, ovivorous Raccoons consume turtle eggs almost as fast as they’re laid.

Illegal collecting of rare turtles is ongoing, both, by those who don’t know any better and by criminals who definitely do.

How can a concerned citizen help? You can examine your personal role, directly or indirectly related to the above dilemmas, then conscientiously strive to curtail your individual contributions to them.

Secondly, learn about the turtles that live in your state. Become familiar with the field marks associated with each one so you can readily identify any of the Michigan’s ten species not only when you personally encounter them, but when a relative, neighbor or friend shows you a photo of one that they encountered.

I impress this on kids all the time. In a lesson related to Michigan turtles, elementary-school aged children who care about the survival of wild turtles in their neighborhood (and they do) may ask, “What can *I* do to help save them?” I say, “Plenty.” Any child can play the role of teacher as easily as an adult. I encourage them to share what they’ve learned, not just in relation to turtles but also pertaining to acquired knowledge about other Michigan wildlife, including invertebrates.

Correct identification of the various turtle species acts a springboard to more learning... You quickly find that their physiologies, behaviors and habitat associations are far more complex – and *interesting* – than the generic, largely rudimentary knowledge that many folks have in their heads, i.e., *The turtle has a shell. The turtle lives in the pond.*

I’d wager with quite high confidence that less than two percent of adult Michigan residents can even recite the ten turtle species that are found here, much less, identify them if encountered in the environment.

Everyone knows two of the species... Painted and Snapping. At least partially, this may have to do with the fact that these are the only two that can be found end to end, occupying every county in the state. Additionally, despite the taxonomic and physiological differences between the two, both are wetland *generalists*. Pretty much any body of water will do: large,



Midland Painted Turtle



Red-eared Slider

deep lake, yup; small shallow pond, okay; flowing water? Stagnant water? Check, check; even a wet ditch on the side of a rural road if it holds water long enough. It is no wonder people encounter them so often and recognize them so readily.

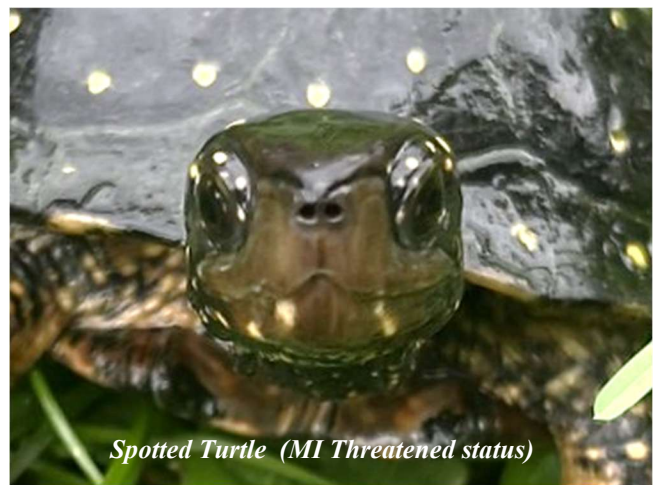
The range of each of the others is limited to just a fraction of Michigan counties. Additionally, most of them are physiologically adapted to occupy specific wetland types. As habitat *specialists* they will *not* be found in just any old pond.

Indeed, it is not all that difficult to come to know Michigan's ten turtles well enough that with an awareness of where you are in the state, you become

adept at identifying the type of wetland in front of you, then proceed to quite accurately predict what species (beyond Painted and Snapping) you are likely to encounter there.



Northern Map Turtle



Spotted Turtle (MI Threatened status)

Realistically, the depth of learning required to fully know and appreciate our diverse neighbors-in-a-shell; the learning required to transform you into the most effective ally of wild turtles where you live cannot be attained by just reading a short column. It also can't be attained within a mere one-hour presentation (like so many that we are contracted to give). It needs to be an academic course, or minimally, a science unit that encompasses multiple sessions.



Eastern Spiny-Softshell



Common Musk Turtle

I didn't personally learn about Michigan turtles – their identification, range, specific behaviors and ecological relationships – until I took a herpetology course as a wildlife biology undergrad at MSU; but, with an eye on becoming an educator I often found myself thinking, *Any second grader could assimilate this information.*

In my academic journey from kindergarten through high school, at no time was I given the opportunity to learn the least about the various turtle species that occupy my immediate world. I had to wait until I took a purposeful step beyond high school into a very specific area of advanced academia to become exposed to something as basic as the recognition of local turtle diversity through the use of visual field marks.



Wood Turtle (MI Threatened status)



Eastern Box Turtle (MI Threatened status)

Are you geeked to take a Michigan Turtles course yet? If not, I have a feeling your kids or grandkids are. Ask any child if they want wild turtles to survive in Michigan. Let's incorporate it now into state el-hi curricula. Our wild turtles would surely thank us if they could. Our lives will be enhanced for it, as well.

- Jim McGrath

Around the State in September

- ❖ Sunday, September 6: 10am-2pm. Michigan Turtles Exhibit; Williamston Farm & Artisan Market.
- ❖ Friday, September 11: 5-7:30pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Washtenaw Promise Block Party, Ypsilanti.
- ❖ Saturday, September 12: 9am-3pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Sportsmen for Youth, Muskegon.
- ❖ Thursday, September 24: 4-6pm. MI Reptiles & Amphibians Exhibit; Stepping Stones Montessori, East Lansing.
- ❖ Saturday, September 26: 11am. Michigan Snakes Presentation; Ferris State University, Big Rapids.



Nature Discovery

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Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment

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

See and feed the state-threatened Spotted Turtle.

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/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 nearly any of our many Michigan snakes while learning how to tell them apart, then watch them gobble up worms, fish, frogs or mice. Hold or “wear” a gentle 6-foot Black Ratsnake – the largest in the state!

Identify and catch insects to feed to a diversity of frogs and salamanders, too!

See dozens of Luna Moth caterpillars munching on walnut leaves. Even arrange to take some home to raise!

Take a guided walk on our trails to identify birds, bugs, insect and plant life.

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

Inquire about indoor and outdoor volunteer opportunities for high school students, adults, retirees.



Check out our second-brood Luna Moth farm.

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Raise LUNA MOTH Caterpillars Now!



All you need is access to **WALNUT or **HICKORY** leaves!**

EDUCATORS: What a great way to kick off the school year! This is so much better than raising Painted Ladies in the classroom - on a number of levels. Now, semi-grown caterpillars will feed on leaves for two more weeks before spinning cocoons in late September. Moths emerge in early June just before the end of the school year. A valuable addition to middle school and high school science/biology classes too.

Contact us to schedule a special presentation - featuring Powerpoint images and live specimens - covering the life cycle, behavior and ecology of this beautiful but seldom seen moth.

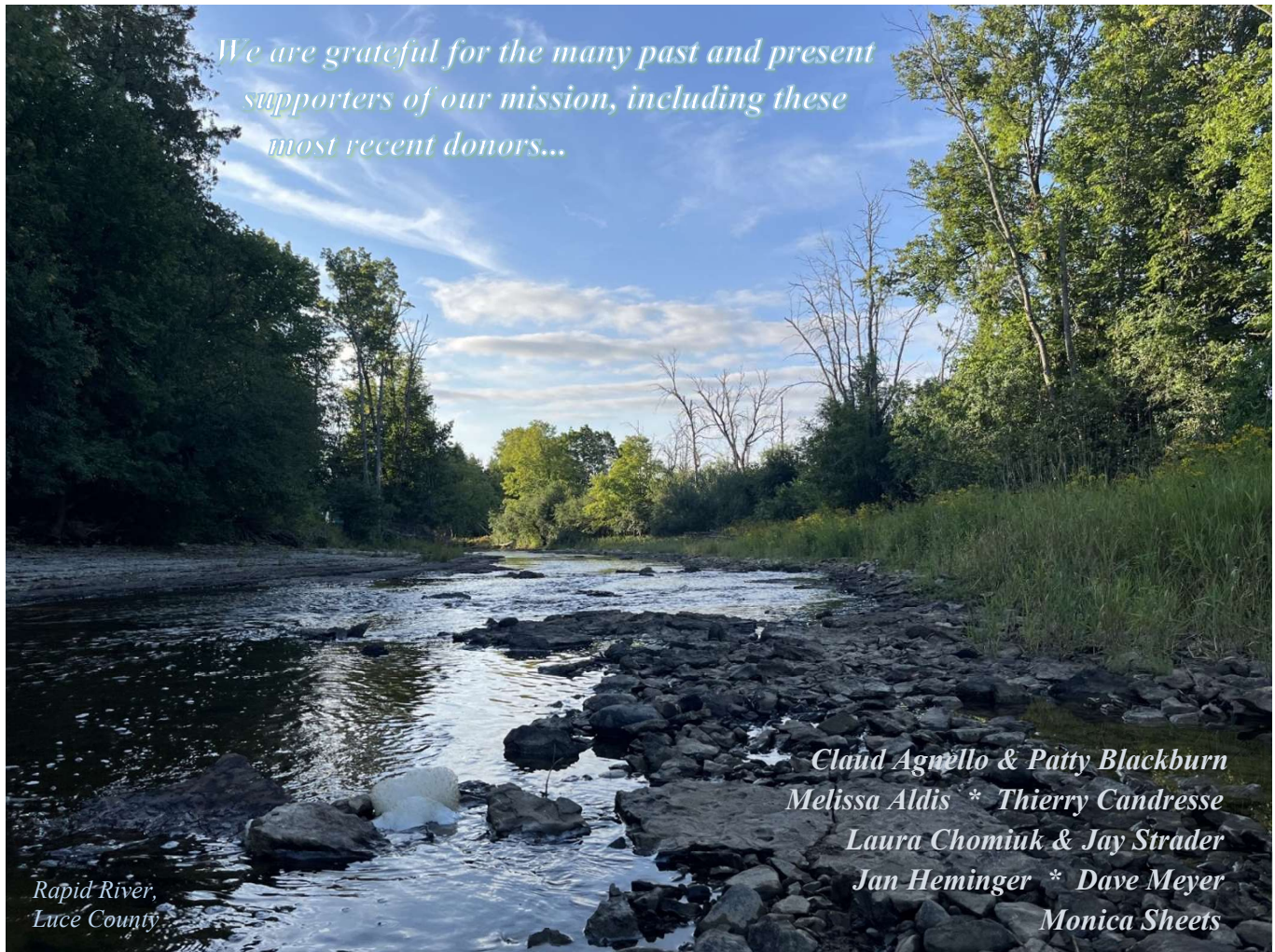
PARENTS: Raise Luna larvae with children right at home. There is so much to be learned through daily nurturing and observation of your growing subjects.

LEPIDOPTERA ENTHUSIASTS OF ALL AGES: Hey, this is hardly just kid stuff! Any adult with an interest in the natural world or a desire to reconnect with it in an engaging way can take advantage of this unusual opportunity.

FIVE SEMI-GROWN LARVAE FOR \$15 includes complete, detailed care instructions. Inquire about reduced rates for larger quantities while they last.

NO NEED TO PURCHASE ANY EXTRA SUPPLIES. All you need is a large, clean, dry jar to get started.

Contact us to make a purchase and pick up arrangements (Shipping not available).



More Reading for Concerned Americans

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/10082026/global-warming-record-high-temperatures/>

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/30082026/north-carolina-wasted-chance-to-fix-hog-pollution/>

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/01092026/trump-epa-clean-air-water-retreat/>

https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/september-7-2026?r=dpj5a&utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email

https://heathercoxrichardson.substack.com/p/september-9-2026?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



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insideclimatenews.org

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