

outdoors

Spring tornado season near

By Lem Meese
outdoors writer

Spring means more than warm weather, flooding and green grass. It's also the time of year tornadoes strike in southern Michigan.

Since 1950, Michigan has been struck by an average of 17 tornadoes a year, resulting in more than 230 deaths.

Michigan ranks third in the nation in the number of tornado-related deaths.

TORNADOES can occur at any time of day or night, in any month or year. However, most occur in April-July in the late afternoon and early evening hours, 4-7 p.m.

They usually come from the southwest at speeds of 20-40 mph. Some have been recorded at up to 70 mph.

The average tornado is on the ground less than 10 minutes and travels about five miles. Some tornadoes have stayed on the ground for more than three hours and traveled more than 200 miles.

The width of the tornado as it touches the ground averages 300-400 yards. They develop from dark thunderstorm clouds, and research has shown many occur toward the end of the thunderstorm.

Tornadoes do their destructive work through the combined action of their strong rotary winds, flying debris and the partial vacuum in the center of the vortex.

TORNADO TERMS:

• "Tornado watch" is issued whenever conditions exist for severe weather to develop. Watches are usually for areas about two-thirds the size of lower Michigan and are two to six hours long. People in or near a watch area should place small objects, such as garbage cans and bicycles, inside the house before they become deadly missiles. Keep children under close supervision. Listen to radio or television reports.

• "Tornado warning" means a tornado actually has been sighted. Take shelter immediately. Once a tornado is spotted in Oakland County, a single, steady three-minute siren tone will signal that a funnel cloud has been sighted in the area.

In a home or building, go to the basement. If there is no basement, go to an interior room or hallway on the lowest possible level.

If you're in a mobile home or car, get out immediately. Seek shelter in a sturdy building, or take shelter in a ditch or ravine on the windward side of the mobile home area or car. Warnings cover three or four counties and are usually no longer than an hour and a half.

Tune in a local radio or television station for weather information. Do not call your local police or fire departments. Weather information calls tie up emergency switchboards, and callers with true emergencies may be unable to reach help.

HURON-CLINTON Metroparks has these programs this weekend:

• **Tonight at 7 —** The art of spinning and double plying wool will be taught at the Farm Center of Kensington Metropark near Milford. Farm Interpreter Lori Anderson will demonstrate spinning wool and how to "double-ply" wool on a spinning wheel during a 1½-hour program. People should meet at the Farm Center Restaurant. There is a \$1 charge, and advance registration is required by calling the park offices 689-0105 or 685-1561.

• **Friday at 7 p.m. —** "National Wildlife Week," a family nature program, will be held in the nature center of Kensington Metropark. Park naturalist Julie Cerbus will provide a 1½-hour program on the history of the bald eagle and other wildlife of Michigan. She will also point out what individuals and groups can do to help conserve the country's wildlife. The program is free, but advance registration is required by calling 685-1561.

• **Sunday at 10 a.m. —** "Twigs, Buds and Bark — or trees without their leaves" is the theme of a nature walk at Stony Creek Metropark northeast of Rochester. Naturalist Roger Bajerke will take a look at native Michigan trees and discuss their history, identification and their uses. The program is free, but pre-registration is required. Call the nature center at 781-4621.

• **Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. —** "How to get Stuffed," a taxidermy workshop, will be held in the nature center of Stony Creek Metropark. Naturalist Bill Thomas will explain what is needed, the process and the restrictions with animals concerning taxidermy. Participants will be able to practice what they learn by mounting a bird for the nature center. The program is free, but advance registration is required by calling 781-4621.

• **Sunday at 11 a.m. —** "Spring is Here," a family nature walk, will begin at the Kensington Nature Center. Naturalist Julie Cerbus will conduct the two-hour walk to help people look for signs of spring along the nature trails. The program is free, but advance registration is required by calling 685-1561.

• **Sunday at 2 p.m. —** "Early Spring Bird Arrivals," a 90-minute family nature program, to help people learn more about spring migrant birds of Michigan, will be held in the Kensington Nature Center. Bring binoculars. The program is free, but register in advance by calling 685-1561.

High schoolers invited to MSU open house

High school seniors and juniors will be able to get a first-hand look at college life during a campus-wide open house April 12-17 at Michigan State University.

The open house is designed to help those considering attending MSU and their parents get answers to their questions about the university. There will be no charge for the event.

Information will be available about different fields of study, career opportunities, student life, residence halls, scholarships and other financial aids.

There will be opportunities to sit in on actual university classes, to meet with professors and to visit the colleges and academic units that make up MSU.

Faculty members, MSU students and advisers will be available to discuss their pro-

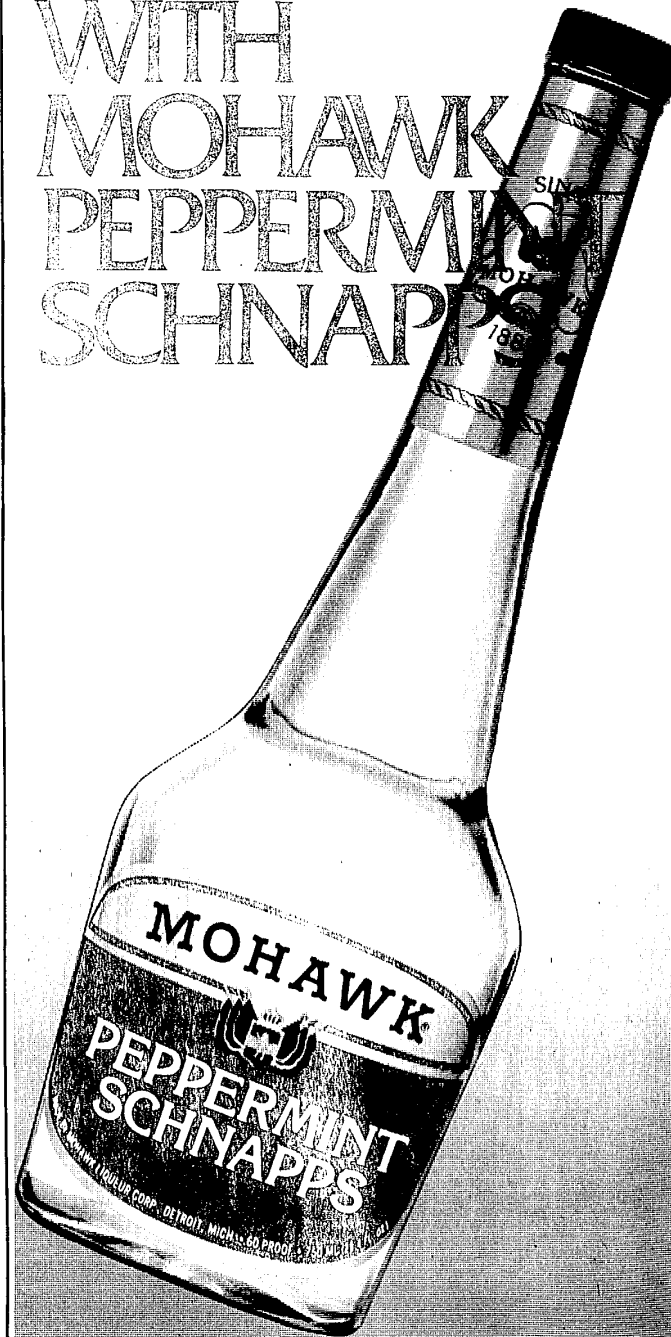
grams of study, the kinds of courses offered and the career opportunities resulting from particular fields of study.

Campus tours for visitors will be provided on a continuous basis during the Open House. Tours of residence halls and living units are also planned.

Information will also be available about honors programs, independent study options, opportunities for study abroad and field placement internships.

While classes will be in session on April 17, those attending the Open House will still be able to obtain the full range of information about MSU. In addition, MSU's College of Engineering will hold an expanded open house of its own with exhibits and demonstrations April 17.

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