

# Safety prevents wildfires

**WE HAD BEEN** tubing down Arizona's Great Salt River for about two hours when we decided to stop on a sandy bank for a quick refreshment.



**Bill Parker**  
outdoors

We hadn't been off the river five minutes when we saw a thick stream of smoke billowing from the top of the small ledge we were sitting beneath. When we found the source of the smoke the fire was still contained in a 30-foot circle.

Three young men were beating the flames with large branches. Less than 100-yards away, the four-wheel drive truck which had carried the trio to the river bank sat burried to the axles in sand.

The wind was blowing parallel to the truck so the fire wasn't headed directly toward the vehicle. But the flames weren't too far away either. A quick wind burst in the wrong direction and that truck would have been history.

The three men, my friend and I worked frantically shoveling dirt and moving fallen branches, trying to contain the fire and keep the flames away from the truck. Our efforts were futile. After a few short minutes the fire was raging out of control, engulfing grass, bushes and entire trees in a matter of seconds.

Moments later a fire truck arrived on the scene. We were ordered back to the river and away from the "danger area." There was nothing more we could do.

**WE RETURNED** to our tubes and watched the smoke from a distance. That night we heard a report that more than 200 acres of state

park had gone up in smoke in that blaze. We never heard a thing about a truck blowing up. They were lucky.

Although this fire burned thousands of miles away, the threat of such a fire is never so high in Michigan as it is right now. With dead leaves and grass drying in fields and forests, the potential for such a fire is great. Later in the spring, when leaves fill the trees and green grass covers the forest floors, fires won't burn as quickly and fire fighters will have a much better chance of containing a blaze.

Gov. James J. Blanchard and the Natural Resource Commission have proclaimed the week of April 17-23 as Michigan's Wildfire Prevention Week.

Last year, there were more than 13,250 wildfires in Michigan. More than 23,000 acres of land and forest was burned.

The sad thing is, many of those fires could have been prevented had individuals been a little more careful.

**DEBRIS BURNING** — including grass, leaf and brush pile fires and trash barrel fires — was the number one cause of wildfires in Michigan last year accounting for 33 percent of all wildfires. Human carelessness

reaches children. Also be sure matches are dead out and never throw matches or cigarettes out car windows.

- Report incendiary (arson) fires — anyone with information about a suspicious fire is urged to call the 24-hour arson hotline at 1-800-44-ANSON.

- Use a spark arrester screen — wire mesh grating with holes no larger than a half inch should be used on fireplace and wood stove chimneys.

- Maintain a ring of safety around your home — keep grass mowed up to 100 feet from all buildings, keep tall grass, twigs and leaves away from around buildings and under porches and make sure your house number is clear and visible so fire trucks can locate your home.

- Extinguish campfires properly — draw campfires with water or sand, then stir until cold to the touch. Dunk charcoal in water and stir until cold. Do not throw charcoal on the ground and then leave. It will smolder for a long time and could start a wildfire.

"The only thing we can say is to be careful," Sutton added. "Don't burn when it's windy. If you have any concern about the wind forget it."

(Bill Parker is happy to answer or find the answer to any questions readers may have regarding the outdoors. He is also open to suggestions on topics to be covered in this outdoor column. Send your questions or comments to Outdoors, Bill Parker, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012.)

exercising options  
**Myrna Partrich**

## Studies show fat genes play role in producing pounds

I am an unhappy, "pleasantly plump," 24-year-old female. I've always been chubby. My parents are both heavy. I've heard about fat genes. Is this true? Will I always be fat?

Well, the research goes on. Over the past five years, doctors who research the causes of overweight have come to believe that biochemistry plays a significant role in producing excess pounds. In fact, we all start life with a genetic program that dictates whether we will head toward heaviness or stay slim.

Researchers have observed that children in families where parents are overweight are about seven to eight times more likely to become fat than children who have grown up with parents of normal weight.

But until recently, doctors had disagreed on whether heredity or family eating and exercise patterns were to blame. Two publicized studies helped convince a number of experts that in many cases genes play the larger part.

One study, published in 1985, revealed that 540 adults who had been adopted strongly resembled their biological parents, when it came to weight, rather than the parents who raised them.

Also interesting enough, the adopted women appeared to resemble their biological mothers most strongly. This shows that parents, particularly mothers, pass along their weight genes to their children, especially daughters.

The second study revealed that identical twins, who have the same genetic makeup, tend to be similar in weight. Fraternal twins, who may differ genetically, have a much wider weight variation.

I know what you must be thinking by now. . . "Oh boy, am I in trouble."

But does the fact that you have one or more overweight parents mean that you have a fat future no matter what? I promise you, no! Genes are not the only fat factors you have to consider.

The human body is amazing and you have the ability to control about 50 to 75 percent of your body weight. So let's control it. You know the story, so I'll make it short. Diet and exercise! Diet as in changing your way of eating for life! Exercise as in becoming a healthy habit.

(Myrna Partrich, co-owner of The Workout Company of Bloomfield Township, is happy to answer any questions readers may have regarding exercise. Please send your signed letters to: Sports Department, Myrna Partrich, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham 48012.)

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## outdoors calendar

- IMPORTANT DATES**
- April 21 — Trout Unlimited fundraiser, hosted by the Paul H. Young Chapter of TU, the fund-raiser features guest speakers, prizes of fishing and hunting trips with local sport celebrities, wildlife art, fur coats, crystal, dinner and drinks and more. For details, call 353-4565.
  - April 23 — River Crab Salmon Stakes fishing tournament will be held on Lake St. Clair beginning at 6 a.m. The tournament sponsored by Chuck Muer's River Crab Restaurant and the Blue Water Sport Fishing Association, raised \$68,000 last year for child abuse and neglect, and evaluation and treatment programs. Raffle/entry tickets are \$10 each and are good for \$10 off the price for dinner-for-two at Chuck Muer's restaurants. For more information, call 987-9539.
  - April 30 — The last day to receive 10 free Colorado Blue Spruce trees for joining the National Arbor Day Foundation with a \$10 membership. The 10 trees will be shipped postpaid in May with enclosed planting instructions. The 6-12 inch trees are guaranteed to grow, or they will be replaced free of charge. To become a member send the \$10 membership contribution to: Ten Blue Spruces, National Arbor Day Foundation, 100 Arbor Avenue, Nebraska City, NE 68410.
  - April 30 — The Marine Division of the Oakland County Sheriff Department will conduct a boating safety class at Dodge #4 State Park (4246 Parkway, Pontiac) beginning at 9 a.m. To pre-register call the park at 682-0800.
  - April 30 — Opening day of trout season on designated trout streams and lakes.

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- Redwings, Robins and Bluebirds, a walk through the park to discover the colors and sounds of spring, will be held at 10 a.m. Sunday at Stony Creek.
- The Dandy Dandelion, an outdoor program about this common plant of ill-repute, will be offered at 1 p.m. Sunday at Stony Creek.
- Amphibian Afternoon, a nature program about the mating calls of some amphibious creatures, will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday at Kensington. Waterproof boots are required.
- Woodcock: Flights of Fancy, a nature program about the courting antics and history of the woodcock, will be offered at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 27, at Kensington.

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