Tiger, tiger. . .

Not your typical tigers, but Michigan has a few

nature
Timothy Nowicki

Tigers in Michigan? Yes there are, and they're not in the zoo. Well, they may not be members of the cat family, but tiger is in their name.

Just the other day a group of students were searching the leaf litter for tasty tidbits that a robin would like to eat. Using a magnifying lens helps them to see small things and to focus in on one object. While searching, one student found a beautiful iridescent green tiger beetle.

It was still pretty cold outside, which prevented the beetle from moving very fast. Normally they are hard to catch and if caught can inflict a severe bite. We put it in a bug box which has a magnifying lens as part of the top. In the enclosure we were able to see the spots on the sides of its wing covers and the large jaws.

Tiger beetles are called tiger beetles because of their predatory habits. They search the forest floor for smaller insects to prey upon. Those large jaws are used to subdue their prey. Even their larvae, which burrow vertically in the ground, have strong jaws and are predators on unsuspecting insects.

During the warm rains of spring another tiger emerges, the tiger salamander. Tiger salamanders have no teeth or powerful jaws, they get their name from their large size (6-8 inches long) and their striped-like coloration.

Despite the lack of large teeth, salamanders are predators. They feed on insects, worms and snails. A good place to search for them is in a forest with a stream, or in meadow ponds near a forest.

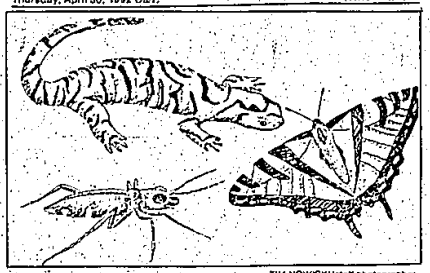
Some areas exhibit mass migrations to ponds on the opposite side of a highway. In some cases their huge numbers have caused traffic problems. So state road commissions have constructed tunnels under the highway which allows the salamanders to migrate under the road.

As the warmer weather approaches, tiger swallowtails will be flying around the meadows. Tiger swallowtails are named not because of their predatory nature, but because of their size and stripes. Next to the giant swallowtail, the tiger swallowtail is the largest butterfly in Michigan. Black stripes on a yellow background suggested the name tiger to people who see one.

So, you see, there are tigers in Michigan.

Tim Nowicki is a naturalist at Independence Oaks County Park in Oakland County. He lives in Livonia.

Your hometown voice



TIM NOWICKI/staff photographer

Yes, there are tigers in Michigan. They are the green tiger beetle, so named because of its predatory habits, tiger salamander, who gets its name from their large size (6-8 inches long) and their striped-like coloration and tiger swallowtails named because of their size and stripes.

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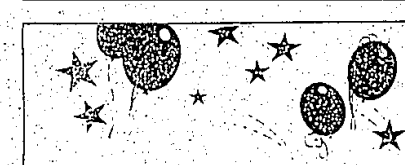

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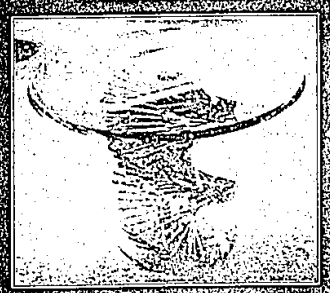

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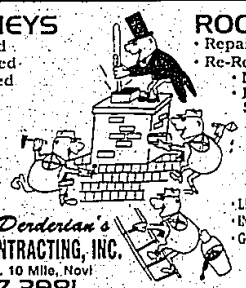

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