

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

SHOOTING RANGES

BALD MOUNTAIN
Bald Mountain Recreation Area in Lake Orion has shotgun (sketch & trap, sporting clays, 5-stand), rifle, pistol, and archery shooting facilities. Hours for archery and clay target shooting are noon to sunset Mondays and Tuesdays; 10 a.m. to sunset Wednesdays; and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Rifle range hours are 3 p.m. to sunset Mondays and Tuesdays; 10 a.m. to sunset Wednesdays; and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Bald Mountain is located at 1330 Greenhills Rd., which is three miles north of the Palace of Auburn Hills off M-24. Call (248) 814-9193 for more information.

PONTIAC LAKE
Pontiac Lake Recreation Area in Waterford has rifle, pistol, shotgun, and archery ranges. Range hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. Pontiac Lake Recreation Area is located at 7800 Gale Rd. Call (248) 666-1020 for more information.

ORTONVILLE RECREATION
Ortonville Recreation Area in Ortonville has rifle, pistol and shotgun shooting facilities. Range hours are 12-5 p.m. Thursday through Sunday. The Ortonville Recreation Area is located at 6779 Hadley Rd. Call (248) 693-6767 for more information.

OAKLAND COUNTY PARKS

COUNTY PARK REQUIREMENTS
Advanced registration is required for all nature programs at Oakland County Parks. Call (810) 625-6473 to register or for more information.

BUG OLYMPICS
Learn all about insects during this program, which begins at 1:30 p.m. Sunday, July 11, at Independence Oaks.

NATURE CLUB
Ages 8-12 will learn about the outdoors during this program, which begins at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, July 31, at Independence Oaks. The club will also meet Aug. 28.

STATE PARKS

STATE PARK REQUIREMENTS
Maybury State Park, Proul Lake Recreation Area, Bald Mountain Recreation Area, Highland Recreation Area, and Island Lake Recreation Area offer nature interpretive programs throughout the year. A state park motor vehicle permit is required for entry into all state parks and state recreation areas. For registration and additional information on the programs at Maybury call (810) 349-8390. For programs at Bald Mountain call (810) 693-6767. For programs at Proul Lake and Highland call (810) 685-2187. For programs at Island Lake call (810) 229-7007.

SNEAKY SNAKES
Learn about the unique lifestyle of the snake during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Thursday, July 8, at Highland.

ENVIRONMENTAL KIDS

Learn the importance of recycling and other ways kids can help save the environment during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 13, at Highland.

SPECIAL SEEDS
Bring an old soup can for a special project and learn about seeds during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Thursday, July 15, at Highland.

CONSTELLATION HIKES
Explore the night sky and learn Native American folk lore during this program, which begins at 8:30 p.m. Friday, July 16, at Maybury.

CREEPLY CRAWLIES
Take a look at the amazing world of insects and other small creatures during this program, which begins at 11 a.m. Saturday, July 17, at Maybury.

SUMMER EVENINGS
Explore the park's natural and cultural history through a variety of weekly hikes and interpretive presentations during this class, which will be held at 7 p.m. each Thursday through the end of August at Maybury.

METROPARKS

METROPARK REQUIREMENTS
Most Metropark programs are free while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks toll free at the following numbers: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7768; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-8192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

ALL AROUND
Take a guided hike and discover many of the things above and below us that often go unseen during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Saturday, July 10, at Kensington.

BUG HUNT
Children ages five-12 will discover the miniature world of insects during this program, which begins at 2 p.m. Saturday, July 10, at Indian Springs.

DAWN PATROL
Get up early and search for wildlife during this guided hike, which begins at 7 a.m. Sunday, July 11, at Kensington.

SMALL FRY SAMPLER
Ages four and five will learn how children and weeds grow during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Tuesday, July 13, at Kensington.

NATURE DISCOVERY
Ages six and seven will learn what makes mammals different from other animals during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 14, at Kensington.

ESPECIALLY FOR KIDS
Ages eight-10 will discover what lives in flowing water during this program, which begins at 10 a.m. Wednesday, July 14, at Kensington.

1999 PERMITS
The 1999 Huron-Clinton Metroparks annual vehicle entry permits and boat launching permits are on sale at all Metropark offices. Vehicle entry permits are \$15 (\$8 for senior citizens). The annual boat launching permits are \$18 (\$8 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-47-PARKS for more information.

Hunting trip to Africa worthwhile



BILL PARKER

A change in plans turned out to be a blessing in disguise for Livonia's Lou Calcaterra.

An avid big game hunter, Calcaterra and his close friends Bob Barclay and John Walter recently returned home from a two-week hunting trip in Africa. The trio was planning a trip to Alaska, but as the plans unfolded and costs escalated they quickly realized it would be cheaper to go to Africa.

"I've hunted in Canada and out west, but nothing I've experienced remotely compares to

Africa," Calcaterra said. "I don't care where you've been, Africa is better. It was just incredible and it turned out being cheaper than a trip to Alaska would have cost us. We did it for about \$8,000 each."

Calcaterra, Barclay and Walter focused their attention on hunting plains animals, including Cape buffalo, kudu, eland, wildebeest, wart hogs and impala, among others. Although the hunts were physically demanding, they stalked most of their prey — sometimes for up to four or five hours — by following fresh tracks and signs. One of the highlights of the trip was that each hunter shot a Cape buffalo with horns in excess of 40 inches.

"The guides were just fantastic," Calcaterra said. "They were

so knowledgeable, not just about the game we were hunting, but about everything else that lived in the plains, the weather, the area, the entire package."

Calcaterra was also impressed with the accommodations his party received.

"We were in Zimbabwe for two weeks. I was real surprised because the living conditions were outstanding," he said. "We stayed in cement huts and field stone buildings that were every comfortable. There were no bugs and the food, and the living conditions were outstanding."

Although Calcaterra couldn't bring home any of the meat — only capes and horns — nothing went to waste.

"Everything we shot was served up for dinner. What we didn't eat was given to the

guides and the local people, who really appreciated it," Calcaterra said. "Absolutely nothing went to waste."

"Sadly, there is a lot of poverty where we were. Money's really not a big thing to the locals because they don't have anywhere to spend it. If you want to buy something or tip someone you give them food. I had some (baseball) bats with me that I gave to some people and they really liked that, too."

Calcaterra said he, Barclay and Walter were already talking about making a return trip to Africa, but said he'd make one chance.

"I'll bring a shotgun this time," he said. "They have some outstanding upland bird hunting, too."

Predators perform role in state ecosystem



TIM NOWICKI

At the turn of the century, people climbed Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania to kill hawks that migrated through the area.

Coyotes were killed wantonly, along with wolves, grizzly bear, and cougar.

Predators in general were killed without their role in the ecosystem and their importance in maintaining a dynamic natural system.

Aldo Leopold, author of "A Sand County Almanac," a classic in natural history and conservation writing, once held the belief that predators were bad. He soon realized they are not bad, and they should not be killed

indiscriminately. Leopold and other wildlife managers began to teach the value of predators to students and the general public back in the 1940s.

Since then, this principle of conservation has been proven in studies time and time again. Laws in turn were passed to protect predators from uncontrolled killing.

Through the years people have changed their attitudes toward predators and today they are more of the large predators in Michigan than we have had in a long time.

The wolf population is a good example. For many years since the 1970s, the only wolves found in Michigan were on Isle Royale in Lake Superior. This population maintained itself for many years surviving natural highs and lows due to disease and their food

supply. Wolves were almost extinct in the Upper Peninsula during this time.

A recent survey confirmed the presence of 174 wolves across the Upper Peninsula.

Earlier this decade they were restricted to the western counties, close to the Minnesota border where they most likely came from. Today wolves are scattered across the length of the U.P. in at least 30 packs.

Coyotes, too, are increasing in numbers across the state. They are found in every county.

Despite extensive poisoning programs, hunting and trapping, this canine cousin has increased in numbers despite man's expansion. Their modest size and adaptable appetite has enabled them to survive in marginal habitats.

As man encroaches on the traditional habitats of predatory species, some individuals are

able to adapt to the presence of man because we have learned to leave them alone. If man is not a threat to their survival, some can tolerate their presence.

Bald eagles are another good example.

This past winter the bald eagle count was 708 for the entire state — that is 16 more than were counted last year. That is incredible news, considering in the 1970s bald eagles were almost extirpated from the state.

Nature can be very flexible and adaptable if given a chance. This may not be true for all species, but if we understand that each species has an important role to play in the natural system, then by maintaining a population we can learn what that role is in relation to other species.

But the species has to be there before it can be studied.

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