

Bad Weather Saved Snowmobilers' Lives

Poor weather - rather than safer snowmobilers - was the probable reason why Michigan recorded 25 snowmobile fatalities this past winter as compared to 30 during the 1971-72 snowmobile season, according to Automobile Club of Michigan.

"We suspect that the snowmobile death toll will again climb upwards next winter due to the recently enacted state law that allows snowmobilers to drive on most highway rights-of-way in southern Michigan," said Fred Rehm, Auto Club general manager.

The impact of the new law is hard to gauge at this point, Rehm said.

"Compared to previous seasons, this past winter was a disaster for the snowmobile sport. Warm weather and lack of snow almost completely eliminated snowmobiling in the Lower Peninsula during most of January and March."

Trails in southern Michigan generally were reported open only five weeks this past winter. All-round good to excellent snowmobiling prevailed throughout the state for roughly one week in

December and two weeks in February. The 1972-73 season ended about six weeks earlier than usual.

An Auto Club analysis of this winter's 25 snowmobile deaths shows these facts:

- Fourteen (or 56 per cent) of the deaths involved snowmobilers that were in operation on highways or high-way shoulders.
- Eleven deaths were off-road fatalities. These figures continue the pattern set last season, when 66 per cent of the snowmobile fatalities were highway related.
- Eight of the 15 highway-related fatalities occurred south of an imaginary line between Bay City and Muskegon, an area where snowmobilers previously were prohibited to travel on or adjacent to roadways.

- Collision with other motor vehicles caused eight snowmobile fatalities, including five deaths as result of collision with cars. Eight other persons died by colliding with fixed objects, such as trees or parked cars. Six deaths occurred when victims, driving off lakes, went through ice and drowned.
- Darkness was a contributing factor in an estimated 72 per cent of the snow-

mobile deaths. Eighteen fatalities occurred between 6 p.m. and 3 a.m., including 12 between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m.

- The average snowmobile victim was a 34-year-old male. The youngest victim was nine years old and the oldest, 63. Five of the 25 who died were women.

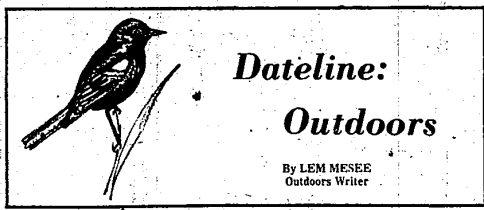
A bright spot is that 53,500 Michigan youngsters successfully completed snowmobile safety courses this winter. Safety instructions, coordinated by the State Department of Natural Resources, will become mandatory after Jan. 1, 1974, for all children aged 12 to 15 who want to operate snowmobiles without adult supervision.



JOHN EMMETT, 3159 Old Bedford, Farmington, has been promoted by Hooker Chemical Corp.'s Durez Division to the newly created position of industry manager - automobiles. He is a plastics industry sales and applications engineer.

AAA Service

LIVONIA John Knack Standard Service, 2733 Plymouth Rd., Livonia, has been designated an official AAA emergency road service garage serving the Livonia area, according to Norman LeBlanc, Livonia area manager for the Automobile Club of Michigan.



Dateline: Outdoors

By LEM MESEE
Outdoors Writer

Handsome and charming but a most destructive bird, the monk parakeet, a pigeon-sized parrot, has escaped or been liberated from life as a pet and is now beginning to establish itself in the United States - cities, suburbs and woods.

An alarmed Federal Fish and Wildlife Service has learned that in Argentina the birds often run as much as 45 per cent of crops of corn, sunflowers, millet or fruit. It is recommending a ban on importation of the bird and is considering eliminating them wherever they can be found. More than 50,000 of them have been brought into the U.S. for sale as pets.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has joined the federal agency in the study and in a survey of the incidence and habits of the bird. Michigan is one of a half-dozen states where the bird has been sighted.

DNR Director A. Gene Gazay said the parakeet, a prolific breeder - one pair is reported to have raised 40 young in a single season - has a much higher potential for nuisance and damage than such imported pests as the starling and English sparrow.

The DNR is requesting that persons identifying a parakeet report it, either to a conservation officer or biologist or write to DNR Wildlife, Mason Building, Lansing, MI 48926.

Care must be taken in identifying monk parakeets. About a foot long, they are

greenish gray above, with lemon yellow belly. Breast and forehead are quaker gray (from which it may take its other name) with darker feather edges. Its wings are blue gray and its tail bluish green, long and pointed.

Its more identifiable characteristics are the large hooked beak and its resemblance to a parrot. Grosbeaks, which have heavy beaks like a cardinal, are smaller, but are often misidentified as parakeets.

Parakeets have also been sighted in Massachusetts, Florida, Virginia, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, and New York City area. Sightings in Michigan have been generally unconfirmed, except a pair that built a characteristic large nest on the ladder of a farm silo in Bennington Township, Shiawassee County in 1971. Nearly shrubbery was heavily damaged by the birds in their nest building.

Large, permanent parakeet nests, constructed of twigs and branches, are used as apartment houses. They contain many chambers used by many pair for rearing their young or an overnight sleep. They are continually enlarged, and sometimes get so heavy they break the branches that hold them.

Ornithologists believe the birds are winter hardy in Michigan and that the limiting factor, if any, is the accessibility of food, which during these last years has generally been supplemented by neighborhood bird feeding stations.

Parakeets live in flocks of 15 to 50; they fly in swift - usually about 30 feet high - and wingbeats are rapid. In England, as well as in Argentina, they are listed as agricultural pests. Controls have failed; although Argentina paid bounties on 427,206 pair of feet, 1958-60, in one province.

Israel's Birthday Is Theme

DETROIT "The Day Israel Was Born," a dramatic narrative with music, will be presented by the Center Theater in honor of Israel's 25th anniversary at 8:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 18, in the Jewish Community Center, 18100 Meyers.

Beth-Sheva Laikin of Bloomfield Hills, who has staged many Center productions, will be the director. Included in the cast will be Leonard Brown and Harriet Goldman of Southfield and Ruth Seligson of Farmington.

The program focuses on two key moments in Israel's contemporary history, 1948, when Israel achieved independence, and 1967, when Israel regained Old Jerusalem and the Wailing Wall.

Admission is 75 cents. Passover refreshments will be served.

Tent Material Law Is Signed

Gov. Milliken has signed into law a bill to require all tents and tent materials sold in Michigan by late 1975 to be fire resistant, postponing the date of a present law which would have imposed the requirement this year.

The bill, (H-1169, I.E.) applies to camping tents. Tents for such purposes as public assembly and animal exhibits are not required to be fire resistant.

Under the new law, camping tents purchased in Michigan after Oct. 1, 1975, must be fire resistant.



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