

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

FUND-RAISERS

WILD TURKEY FESTIVAL
The Perle Marquette Chapter of the Michigan Wild Turkey Hunters Association will hold its annual Wild Turkey Festival on Saturday, March 27, at Baldwin High School. The festival features seminars on calling, gear, the use of decoys and other hunting techniques. There will also be door prizes, raffles and giveaways. Proceeds from the event will be used exclusively for MWTHA's winter feeding program. For more information call Jim Maturone at (616) 932-2575.

DRAYTON NATURE CENTER
The Drayton Plains Nature Center is holding a bowl-a-thon fund-raiser, 1-4 p.m. Sunday, March 28, at Century Bowl in Waterford. Proceeds from the event will be used at the nature center, which features 137 acres and is open to the public. Call (248) 674-2119 for information.

WHITETAILS UNLIMITED
The Clarkston Chapter of White-tails Unlimited will hold a fund-raising banquet beginning at 6:30 p.m. Friday, April 9, at the Deer Lake Athletic Club in Clarkston. The event will feature a buffet dinner, an auction, door prizes, sporting equipment, limited edition white-tailed deer art, White-tails Unlimited collectibles and much more. Proceeds from the event will be used for conservation and youth related projects. Tickets are \$55 each, \$95 for couples and \$35 for juniors 16 and under. Deadline to purchase tickets is March 29. To order tickets or for more information call Tom Bushong at (616) 781-8430.

TURKEY HUNTER'S WORKSHOP
The Traverse Bay Chapter of the Michigan Wild Turkey Hunters Association will hold its annual spring workshop on Saturday, April 10, at the Northland Sportsman's Club in Gaylord. The workshop will feature presentations by the DNR's new upland gamebird specialist, Al Stewart, local wildlife biologists and veteran turkey hunters. There will also be door prizes, raffles, a kids calling contest and more. Proceeds from the event will be used exclusively for MWTHA's winter feeding program. For tickets and more information call Rick Riley at (616) 549-2179.

SEMINARS

BACKCOUNTRY COMMUNICATION
Learn about the new two-way radios, their features and how they can help you out in a back-country adventure in this class at 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 31, at REI in Northville. Call (248) 347-2100 for more information.

INTRO TO CYCLING
Adult beginners will learn the basics of the sport of cycling during this class, which begins at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 7, at REI in Northville. Call (248) 347-2100 for more information.

STEELHEAD FISHING
Metro-West Steelheaders will present a free seminar on steelhead fishing beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 13, at Garden City High School. The seminar will include discussion on river and lake fishing, trolling, drift boats, planer boards and other offshore tactics. The seminar is held as part of the regular monthly meeting of the Metro-West Steelheaders fishing club and the public is welcome to attend. Call Dominic Liparoto at (248) 476-5027 for information.

YOUTH FLY FISHING
The Michigan Fly Fishing Club will host its annual Youth Fly Fishing School from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, April 17, at the Walleye Lake Outdoor Education Center. Cost is \$25 per person and class size is limited. To register and for more information call Dale Ross at (734) 420-2233.

FLY TYING
Paint Creek Outfitters in Rochester offers a variety of fly

tying classes for beginners and advanced tyers. Call (248) 660-0440 for more information.

ACTIVITIES

PAINT CREEK HIKE
Join members of the Southeast Michigan Paint Creek Club on a six-mile hike along the Paint Creek Trail on Sunday, March 28. Participants are asked to meet at noon behind the Michigan National Bank on 14 Mile Road, just east of I-76, in Troy. Call Mike Scanlon at (616) 884-2214 for more information.

SHOWS

WILDLIFE ART
The 16th Annual Michigan Wildlife Art Festival, Michigan's largest wildlife art exhibit and sale, will be held March 28-29 at the Southfield Pavilion. Sponsored by the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation, the festival annually raises money for wildlife habitat improvement projects statewide. Admission is \$7 adult and children under age 12 will be admitted free.

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, 1-800-477-7766; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178.

MAPLE'S SWEET STORY
Visit the sugarghush and see how maple trees are tapped and the sap collected, then stop by the sugarghush and watch as the sap is boiled into maple syrup during this program, which will be held noon-3 p.m. weekends through the end of March at Kensington. A similar program is being offered at Indian Springs.

SPRING CLEANUP
Spring cleanup days are scheduled at several Metroparks in the upcoming weeks. Cleanup days will be Saturday, April 3, at Walcott Mills (1-800-477-3175); Saturday, April 17, at Stony Creek (1-800-781-4242) and Meigs Beach (1-800-477-3179); and Saturday, April 24, at Lake Erie (1-800-477-3189) and Kensington (1-800-477-3178).

TRAVELS WITH A NATURALIST
Nature photographer Alan Charnley presents a potpourri of his latest work during this program at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 26, at Stony Creek.

SKY SEARCH
Junior girl scouts can complete all the requirements for their Sky Search badge during this program, which will be held throughout the day on Saturday, March 27, at Kensington.

THAW POWER
Experience the thawing power of nature and see what life is beginning to stir in the fields, woods and swamps of the park in this program 2 p.m. Sunday, March 28, at Kensington.

FULL MOON WALK
A naturalist-led hike under the light of the "Blue Moon" - the second moon of the month - begins at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 31, at Kensington.

NRC to address deer hunting issues



OUTDOOR INSIGHTS
BULL PARKER

The baiting controversy rages on. The state Natural Resource Commission is accepting public comment at its monthly meeting on June through June on deer regulations for the 1999 season. While the commission expects to hear from hunters on baiting issues from buck and antlerless deer harvest quotas to season lengths and starting dates, the top issue of concern among many hunters is what to do, if anything, about baiting.

The issue of baiting is expected to be discussed in depth and decided at the NRC's April 7-8 meeting at the Four Points Sheraton, 4960 Towne Center Road, in Saginaw.

In Michigan it's legal for hunters to use bait such as corn, apples, carrots, or sugar beets to lure turkeys into range for a clean shot. Until recently there has been no biological data to support the idea that baiting has an adverse affect on the deer herd or a deer's ability to locate wild food. However, the outbreak of Bovine tuberculosis in Michigan's white-tailed deer herd has raised serious concern that the nose-to-nose contact that occurs at bait piles perpetuates the disease.

"The disease (TB) outbreak in Michigan is a cause for concern because it reveals the notion that baiting is only a social problem," said Becky Humphries, DNR

Wildlife Division chief. "There may be real biological issues associated with baiting deer and the potential for other disease outbreaks when animals are concentrated at bait sites." TB is a serious disease caused by several bacteria that attack the respiratory system. It is primarily spread through the air through coughing and sneezing. Animals in close nose-to-nose contact, such as deer at a bait pile, are susceptible to catching the disease.

The TB outbreak in northeastern Michigan came to light in 1994 when a hunter shot an infected deer on a private club in Alpena County. Deer Management Unit 462 was established so the DNR could closely monitor deer activity and the TB prevalence rates in the infected area. DMU 462 now encompasses the entire five-county area - Alpena, Alpena, Oscoda, Montmorency and Presque Isle - in which the outbreak has occurred.

As of January 20 of this year, 17,187 deer from DMU 462 had been tested and 228 turned up positive or suspect for Bovine TB. In addition, some 23,441 head of live stock in the area have been tested and three cattle herds - one in Alpena County and two in Alpena County - tested positive and were destroyed. The disease has also spread into carnivorous animals in the area. Five coyotes, two raccoons and one black bear tested positive for TB. This isn't too surprising since these animals will eat the carcass and viscera of a dead deer and most likely contacted the disease this way. DMU 462 is comprised largely

of private land and private hunting clubs. Prior to last year, when the NRC imposed a five-gallon bait limit on the ground in DMU 462, it was common practice at many of these clubs, and on private lands in other areas of the state, to establish unconscionable bait piles. These enormous bait piles often consisted of hundreds, even thousands of pounds of bait. They attracted hundreds of deer, which would feed side-by-side, nose-to-nose, coughing, wheezing and breathing on each other. This excessive interpretation of the baiting law, which not only brought deer nose-to-nose, but also supported unnatural deer numbers which exceeded the carrying capacity of the land, is thought to be a large part of the reason the disease has maintained itself in a free-ranging wildlife population.

The NRC is expected to decide at it's April meeting what it should do about baiting in the rest of the state. It has four options. The commission can choose to do nothing and leave things the way they are. It can outlaw baiting completely. It can establish a five-gallon on the ground limit, or it can establish a five-gallon per-day limit.

Let me be the record straight right now. I am not against baiting. But I am against a sickly deer herd and if baiting is the reason for the spread of TB - as recent data seems to indicate - let's take care of the problem. Why take a chance of experiencing another outbreak in another part of the state just to appease a handful of hunters who don't know, or want to know, how to hunt without

bait. Baiting has become such common practice in the last 10 years that many hunters who have joined the ranks during that time have missed the chance to learn what deer hunting is really all about.

To search out natural food sources, bedding areas and connecting trails brings excitement to the sport. Paterning deer as they use these areas is half the fun of the hunt. There is a certain amount of satisfaction gained in scouting, learning the daily habits of a deer, then outwitting it on its own turf.

Baiting sometimes interferes with this learning process because some hunters rely solely on the use of bait. They realize if they stay on a bait pile long enough deer will eventually appear.

A small bait pile can be a beneficial aid in positioning a deer for a quick, legal shot. But I do not believe in the use of preposterous amounts of bait, which upset the natural habits of the whitetail, is what deer hunting is meant to be.

Let's end this flagrant abuse of a beneficial practice, limit the size of a bait pile, and get back to learning the ways of the whitetail.

What do you think? Let the NRC know how you feel. Make the trip to Saginaw next month and attend the NRC meeting. Public comment is welcome beginning at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 7. Persons who wish to address the commission should contact Teresa Golden at (617) 373-2352 one week in advance.

Books offer helpful hints to bird watchers



NATURE NOTES
TIM NOWICKI

Spring bird watching has begun, but many different kinds are still to come. If you want to begin preparing for those colorful warblers and finches that will arrive in April, there are a few thoughts on what book(s) to buy to help you.

Bird watching has become a very popular outdoor activity. The most recent data I have comes from a 1996 survey by the federal government. In 1996, 17.7 million people took a trip to watch birds.

Wildlife watchers spent \$16.7 million dollars on equipment, like books. Because there is such a market for wildlife watching equipment, many companies are getting into the market.

As a result there is a lot to choose from these days. "In the beginning," there was the Roger Tory Peterson Field Guide to Birds, first published in 1934.

More recent editions persist today and it is considered one of the best, despite the competition. The Peterson Eastern Guide, covering birds east of the Great Plains, limits the number of birds and consequently the number of possible birds that a spe-

cific bird could be confused with in North America.

National Geographic and The Golden Guide both cover birds of North America.

If you plan to travel in the U.S., these books will help you identify practically everything you might see. Range maps on the facing page of the portraits will help you determine where they are likely to be found.

All three field guides use paintings by excellent artists, who can position the bird so important field marks, distinguishing features, can be portrayed.

These are the marks, colors, or patterns that bird watchers use to separate one species from another.

Some of the more recent field guides use paintings, but they try and make them look like

works of art. Elaborate backgrounds are painted with trees, mountains, barns and other distracting features.

When you try to identify an unknown bird for the first time, it can be distracting to see lots of miscellaneous things on the page.

You need to see the features of the birds quickly before the real bird flies away.

Peterson paints just the bird and a hint of habitat with each portrait. The Geographic and Golden books add a little more distraction, but not too much.

Recently, Stokes came out with field guides to the eastern and western birds of North America. They chose to use photographs for their portraits. Though it may sound enticing to have the actual bird portrait and

not an artists' representation, I still like the paintings.

Photographs show one bird, but they do not show all the field marks needed to identify a particular species.

A good example is the Northern Flicker in the Stokes book.

The photographs chosen do not show the white rump feathers and the yellow shafts in the wings.

Both these field marks are used to identify this bird from a distance, yet they are not represented in the photographs.

My personal favorite for beginners is the Peterson field guide. As you feel more comfortable with bird watching, it will be good to get another field guide as a cross reference, but I would start with the Peterson Guide. Good birding.

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