Shrew likely made snow tracks

NATURE NOTES

TIM NOWICKI

There was a light snowfall today, just enough to cover the ground in white. It allowed me to view tracks made by animals, as they stepped on the ground.

Discovering tracks after a snowfall allows the winter walker to recall the activities of animals never seen.

One particular trail I discovered was not the typical foot prints of the animal, rather it looked like a trail made by a snake.

Across the undisturbed snow was a raised tunnel of snow with some abrupt bends and angles along its route. It was no more than three quarters of an inch across. The snow was not deep, so some of the tunnel had breaks in the top.

Because the snow was not deep, this animal must have been very small to have been able to tunnel rather than run on the surface. My guess was that it was a shrew. Based on its size, possible a masked shrew.

A masked shrew is one of the smallest mammals in Michigan. They are about 4 inches long with a half-inch of that in tail.

Like all shrews in Michigan it has a pointed nose, its eyes are very tiny, there are no distinguishable ears and the masked shrew has a brownish body with a buff colored belly.

Shrews remain active all year and need to eat constantly. Though a masked shrew weighs about one-fifth of an ounce, or less than two pennies, they must eat about one and a half times their weight each day to survive.

This time of year masked shrews look for small invertebrates like wintering spiders, crickets, caterpillars, salamanders and any other animal matter they can find. Seeds are not a big part of their diet.

Though invertebrates are not active in winter, shrews are able to nose under leaf litter, explore hollows of logs or sticks to discover where they are spending the winter.

Small animals like the masked shrew are able to stay warm in cold winter temperatures by staying low to the ground and staying out of the wind.

Staying close to the ground is not hard for a shrew that stands 1/2-to-3/4 of an inch tall, and being that small allows them to find many areas of shelter.

While searching for their own food, masked shrews need to watch out that they don't become food for other animals trying to survive the winter.

Weasels, such as the least and short-tailed are small enough to hunt in the haunts of the masked shrew. Owls are also potential predators of the shrew. Even larger species of shrew are threats. Being small is not easy in the animal world.

Shrews are difficult to see because of their size and speed, but with snow on the ground it is possible to at least see where these little dynamos have been traveling.

[illegible] the trails of shrews.

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

CLASSES/CLINICS

FLY TYING

Hook Line & Sinker bait shop in Lake Orion will hold fly tying classes every Wednesday and Thursday until the beginning of ice fishing season. Call (248) 814-9216 for more information.

ROD BUILDING

Hook Line & Sinker bait shop in Lake Orion will hold fishing rod building classes every Wednesday and Thursday until the beginning of ice fishing season. Call (248) 814-9216 for more information.

FLY TYING

Paint Creek Outfitters in Rochester offers a variety of fly tying classes for beginners and advanced tyers. Call (248) 650-0440 for more information or to make a reservation for an upcoming class.

MORE FLY TYING

River Bend Sport Shop in Southfield offers fly tying classes for beginners, intermediate and advanced tyers. Classes will be held at various times. For more information and to register call (248) 350-8484 or (248) 591-3474.

SHOWS

SILVERDOME BOAT, SPORT AND FISHING

The 17th annual Silverdome Boat, Sport and Fishing Show will be Feb. 2-6 at the Pontiac Silverdome. The show features over 300 boats from more than 75 manufacturers, fishing tackle, fishing trips, charter captains, virtual fishing, trout ponds, seminars, casting demonstrations and more. Show hours are 3-9:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 2 and 3; 11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 4; 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 5; and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 6. Admission is $7 adult, $3 for children ages 6-14 and children under five will be admitted free.

DETROIT BOAT, SPORT AND FISHING SHOW

The 42nd annual Detroit Boat, Sport and Fishing Show will be Feb. 12-20 at Cobo Center. The show features the 2000 premiere showing of new model boats, motors, trailers, accessories and more. Some 1,000 boats will be available for viewing including fishing boats, ski boats, pontoons, cruisers, inflatables, personal watercrafts, canoes and kayaks.

SPORTFISHING EXPO

The 12th annual Greater Detroit Sportfishing and Travel Expo is set for Thursday through Sunday, March 2-5, at the Palace of Auburn Hills. An all-star lineup of seminar speakers is already scheduled. The show also features exhibitors, merchandise booths, casting and fishing activities and more. Show hours are 4-9:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, March 2-3; 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Saturday, March 4; and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday, March 5. Admission is $7.75 for adults, $3.50 for children ages 6-12 and children age 5 and under will be admitted free.

SPRING BOATING EXPO

The eighth annual Spring Boating Expo is scheduled for March 16-19 at the Novi Expo Center. The show features some 200 exhibitors with new boats and watercrafts, motors, trailers, docks, accessories and more.

ARCHERY

LIVONIA RANGE

The Livonia Archery Range is open to the public. The range features seven field lanes and one broadhead lane and is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Cost is $4 for adults and $2 for children. Livonia residents shoot free of charge. The range is located on Glendale Ave., east of Farmington Road. Call (734) 466-2410 for more information.

JUNIOR OLYMPICS

The Oakland County Sportsman Club in Clarkston offers a Junior Olympic Archery Development Program beginning at 1 p.m. on Sundays. Call (248) 623-0444 for more information.

JUNIOR ARCHERS

A weekly program for junior archers begins at 9 a.m. the first Saturday in November at Detroit Archers in West Bloomfield. Call (248) 661-9610 or (313) 835-2110 for more information.

CLUBS

CLINTON VALLEY BASS

Clinton Valley Bass Anglers club is seeking new members (boaters and non-boaters are welcome.) The club meets monthly at Gander Mountain in Waterford. Call Mike Daly at (248) 666-8910 for more information.

METRO-WEST STEELHEADERS

Metro-West Steelheaders meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month in the cafeteria at Garden City High School. Call Dominic Liparoto at (248) 476-5027 for more information.

MICHIGAN FLY FISHING

The Michigan Fly Fishing Club meets at 7:30 p.m. the first and third Wednesdays of each month at Livonia Clarenceville Middle School, located on Middlebelt Road between Seven and Eight mile roads. Call (810) 478-1494 for more information.

FOUR SEASONS

The Four Seasons Fishing Club meets 7:30-9:30 p.m. the first Wednesday of each month at the Civic Park Senior Center, 15218 Farmington Road, in Livonia. Visitors are invited and refreshments will be served. Call Jim Kudej at (734) 591-0843 for information.

FISHING BUDDIES

Fishing Buddies Fishing Club meets the third Tuesday of each month in Rochester Hills. Meetings are open to all anglers (boaters and non-boaters). Call (248) 656-0556 for more information.

HURON VALLEY STEELHEADERS

The Huron Valley Steelheaders meets the third Thursday of each month at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 27600 Hall Road, Flat Rock. Call Carroll White at (734) 285-0843 for more information.

BASS ASSOCIATION

The Downriver Bass Association, a non-tournament bass club, meets at 6:30 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of every month at the Gander Mountain in Taylor. Call (734) 676-2863 for information.

SOLAR

The School for Outdoor Leadership, Adventure and Recreation (SOLAR), a non-profit organization interested in promoting the appreciation of outdoor activities, meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month at the Colony Hall in Southfield. Call (248) 988-6658 for information.

METROPARKS

METROPARK REQUIREMENTS

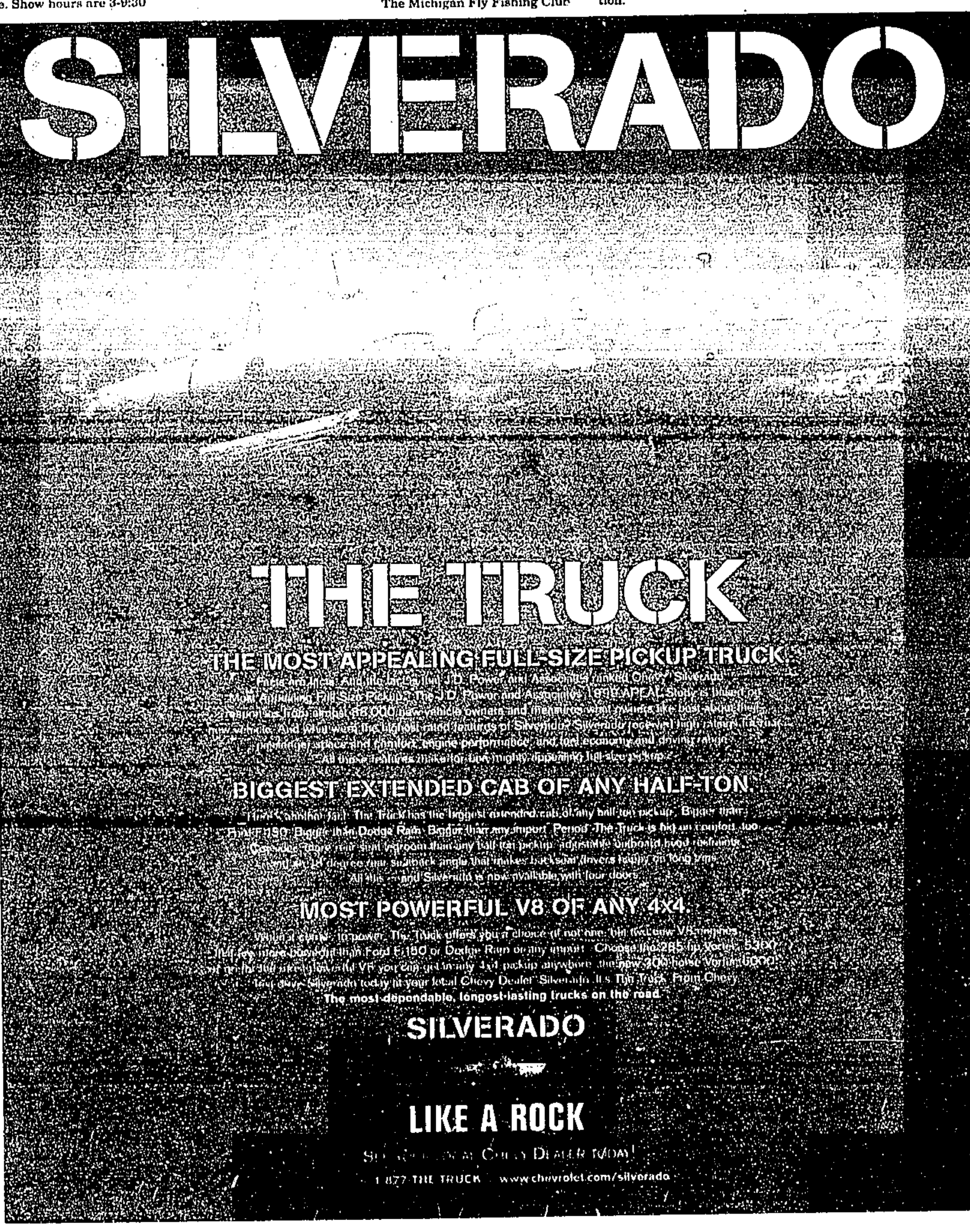
Most Metropark programs are free while some require a nominal fee. Advanced registration and a motor vehicle permit are required for all programs. Call the respective parks toll free at the following numbers: Stony Creek, 1-800-477-7756; Indian Springs, 1-800-477-3192; Kensington, 1-800-477-3178; Hudson Mills, 1-800-477-3191.

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 ($9 for senior citizens). Call 1-800-47-PARKS for more information.

WINTER BIRDING FOR BEGINNERS

If you've never gone birding before, winter is the perfect time to start. Bring your binoculars and take a walk through a variety of habitats to discover which birds have the "right stuff" to stick around through a Michigan winter. Pre-registration required for this event, which is scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 16 at Kensington. To register or for more information, contact Kensington Nature Center at (248) 685-0603 or 1-800-477-3178.

FULL MOON WALK

A 90-minute interpreter-led walk at Stony Creek, scheduled for Friday, Jan. 21, discussing the activities of wildlife under the light of the "Moon of Winter's Sleep." Dress Warmly. For ages eight years and older. Pre-registration required.