



Waterloo News

New Funding Process for State Parks? It Could be a "Passport" to Oblivion!

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A last minute change in the *Recreation Passport* bill could place our state parks in jeopardy. It was originally proposed as an opt out program based on a model that has been successful in several other states.

In the end, it was changed to an opt in program, as conservative legislators refused to vote for a proposal that could possibly be interpreted as a tax or fee increase.

It is actually a fee decrease for state residents, as the annual pass was reduced from \$24 to just \$10. The parks system now automatically loses \$14 for every visitor who regularly purchased annual motor vehicle permits in the past.

The only way to overcome the loss and to bring in new revenue is to recruit at least two new purchasers of the Recreational Passport for every one who purchased motor vehicle permits in the past. This is how it is to work in its present form.

This initiative grew out of a proposal developed by the Citizens Committee for Michigan State Parks. It replaces the traditional state park and boating Motor Vehicle Permit (MVP) system currently in place at state parks, recreation areas and boat launches.

The legislation, known as the state's Recreation Passport, allows motorists to "opt in" to support Michigan state parks, state forest campgrounds and local parks by agreeing to pay an additional \$10 when renewing their license plates through the Secretary of State. The passport will be required for entry to state parks, recreation areas and boating access sites. The \$10 fee will authorize entry into state parks and boat launches during the one-year registration period, but additional camping fees would remain in place.

Motorists who opt in to the system will be given stickers to apply to their license plates, indicating they paid the \$10 State Recreation Passport fee. Those who decide not to pay the \$10 fee when renewing their license plates but later want to visit a state park or boating access site will be required to purchase the Recreation Passport (for a possibly higher fee) upon entry to the park or site. This legislation takes effect on October 1, 2010.

The revenue generated by this legislation will be split between state parks, state recreation areas, state forest campgrounds, state boating access sites, state non-motorized trails and pathways, and local parks for operation and infrastructure improvements and for cultural and historic resource protection at state parks.

Where Does the Money Go?

The first \$10.7 million received each fiscal year will be deposited in the restricted State Park Improvement Fund.

The next \$1,030,000 received each fiscal year will be deposited in the restricted Waterways Fund.

Up to \$1 million per fiscal year will be reserved for necessary expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in administration and implementation of the passport fee.

Starting on Oct. 1, 2010, these revenues replace the revenue once collected for park entry and boating access site fees, which will be replaced by the Recreation Passport.

(continued on page two)

Fall Building Hours

**Tuesday—Friday 10:00 a.m.
to 5:00 p.m.**

**Saturday - 10:00 a.m. to
5:00 p.m.**

Sunday - Noon to 5:00 p.m.

Closes Monday

**Visitor Building will be
closed from Thanksgiving to
January 2.**

**Trails and Grounds will be
available
From Dawn to Dusk Daily**

(passport funding program continued)

Should revenues generated exceed those described, the balance will be deposited as described below.

- 50 percent in the restricted State Park Improvement Fund for capital improvements at state parks, including recreation areas.
- 30 percent in the restricted State Park Improvement Fund for operations and maintenance at state parks, including recreation areas.
- 10 percent in the new Local Public Recreation Facilities Fund for development of public recreation facilities for local units of government.
- 7 percent in the Forest Recreation Account for the operation and maintenance of--and capital improvements to--the state forest system of forest campgrounds, access sites, and non-motorized pathways and trails, including equestrian trails.

When renewing your motor vehicle registration, be sure to opt in to the Recreation Passport. Now more than ever the future of our state parks depends on everyone's support.

- 2.75 percent in the restricted State Park Improvement Fund for operations, maintenance and capital improvements of state park cultural and historic resources.
- 0.25 percent in the restricted State Park Improvement Fund to promote, in concert with other state agencies, the use of state parks, state-operated public boating access sites, state forest campgrounds and state forest non-motorized trails and pathways; and to promote the use of the Internet for state park camping reservations and for payment of the Recreation Passport fee in conjunction with motor vehicle registration.

In its present form, the Recreation Passport funding program is totally unproven. Although provisions have been made for distributing extra revenues, should they materialize; no provisions have been made if revenues generated fall short of expectations.

Message from The Chair

This is my first contribution to the newsletter and I hope it will be the first of many, many more. I have a few items that I think you all should be aware of. First off, if you haven't heard, our Naturalist here at the Center, Kathy Kavanagh has retired from the DNRE and is no longer at the Center. It kind of surprised us all but we wish her the best and hope she'll help out the Association in the future.

The next item is that the Board of Directors is in the process of putting together a membership drive mailing list and we will make a mailing to those individuals on the list in October. After these many years of existence of the WNHA we felt it was time to boost our membership and hopefully our revenues so we can continue to provide environmental education to the public and support the needs of the Eddy Discovery Center. If you know someone who you think might want to become a member of the association please let us know.

I would also like to announce that we hold our annual general membership meeting at the Discovery Center on 6 November at 6:00 pm. As always we will have a potluck dinner, a short business meeting and then entertainment from Paul McCormick. Please plan attending this get together with the general membership. We always have great dinner thanks to all the members. And don't forget to get out and enjoy the change into early fall at the center and watch the colors change from summer green to their autumn brilliance.

Maybe I'll see you on the trails as I walk my Shepherds - Ned & Indie. And just as a last note - as the day passes by always try to pause and enjoy the nature around you.

Gregg Burg, Chairperson

Rare Whooping Crane at Haehnle Sanctuary



On September 13, a rare whooping crane like the one above was observed flying into the Haehnle Sanctuary to roost for the night. It will quite likely be there through October. The sanctuary is on Seymour Rd. about 1 1/2 miles west of Race Road in Jackson County. Most cranes fly to the roost 1-2 hours before sunset.

Waterloo Natural History Association Programs

September - November 2010

INCREDIBLE EDIBLES WALK
1:30 p.m. Sunday, September 12



Come walk with wild edibles expert Tom Jameson and get acquainted with samples from Mother Nature's kitchen. Tom will share some of his recipes and his gourmet cooking after the hike. **Limited to 35 people. Program length 90 Minutes**

TURTLEMANIA

2:00 p.m. Sunday, September 19



Live turtles, large and small, land-dwelling and water-loving, will be featured in this entertaining program by naturalist Paul McCormack. Find out what it's like to be a turtle as you observe and touch these unique animals.

TIME FOR A CRITTER QUEST!

3:00-4:30 p.m. Sunday, September 26.



Join Smithsonian Channel host, Peter Schriemer, and get tips for exploring the natural world, finding wildlife, and seeing signs of the approaching autumn season. Will show live creatures and share some clips from his TV series "Critter Quest!", and lead an optional walk outside.

FALL MUSHROOM SEARCH

2:00 p.m. Sunday, October 3



Join mushroom expert Phil Tedeschi in a search for mushrooms around the Discovery Center. After the walk, learn about what you have collected and which to take home to cook. A basket or paper bag and waxed paper are useful for collecting. **Limited to 35 people. Program 90 min.**

GEOLOGY ARTS FAIR

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Saturday, October 9.



Come join the fun! There will be geology walks, fossil digs, and Petoskey stone polishing plus many items for sale, including jewelry, fossils, rocks and minerals. This free event is sponsored by the **DNRE, and no registration is necessary.**

SELF-GUIDED FALL COLOR AND CRANE TOUR MAPS



Available beginning October 9.
Free maps and driving directions to the park's best fall color routes and crane viewing areas. Pick them up at the Discovery Center.

ANIMALS AROUND THE WORLD
2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Sunday, October 17



All ages will enjoy the many live animals from several continents brought by Larry Grudt of Animals Encountered. Observe these animals close-up and learn about their lives in the wild.

SANDHILL CRANE TOUR
2:00 p.m. Saturday, October 23



Local expert Bill Wells will lead a driving tour through Waterloo Recreation Area to see large flocks of these magnificent birds at close range. Bring binoculars and cameras.

Remarkable Animal Adaptations
2:00 p.m. Sunday, November 14.



Science Alive will bring a variety of live animals for this engaging, hands-on presentation. Find out about the many special features that these animals have developed to survive and raise their young in the world around them.

Advance Reservations Required for the Above Programs. Call 734-475-3170

River Otters in Waterloo Rec. Area



River otters like the ones above have been recently seen in Big Portage Marsh and along the Portage River System. The best chance of seeing them is by canoeing or kayaking the Portage River. There is also have a good chance of seeing mink, muskrat and a variety of waterfowl and wading birds. The river channel has a slow current, but there are many deadfalls to negotiate.

Although nearly eliminated from much of Michigan, river otter populations have now stabilized and individuals can even be found in the Southern Lower Michigan.

Because they are secretive and most active at night, most park visitors never see one. In recent years signs of otter activity have been found with greater frequency. Most of the activity is concentrated in Big Portage Marsh and the Portage River system. Otters are the largest member of the weasel family found in Michigan, with a body length of up to four feet and a weight up to twenty five pounds.

They are highly aquatic, being equipped with webbed feet and extremely dense fur which is essentially water proof. In addition, they have a thick layer of fat under the skin that further insulates them from the cold water and cold weather of winter. They can also close their ears and nostrils while diving to keep out the water. They are active all year around. Powerful lungs allow it to swim up to 1/4 mile underwater at speeds up to 6 miles per hour, while holding their breath for up to eight minutes.

River otters live alone or in family groups, typically females and their young. They appear to be playful animals, exhibiting behaviors such as mud/snow sliding, burrowing through the snow, and water play. Many "play" activities actually serve a purpose. Some are used to strengthen social bonds, to practice hunting techniques, and scent mark. River otters get their boundless energy from a very high metabolism, which also requires them to eat a great deal during the day.

River otters are often heard before they are seen. They vocalize with whistles, growls, chuckles and screams. A family of otters can be quite a noisy bunch.

They also scent mark using paired scent glands near the base of their tails, or by urinating/defecating on vegetation within their home range. These glands produced a very strong, musky odor. They also use touch and communicate through posture and other body signals.

Otters have an abundance of very sensitive whiskers on their faces that are used extensively in hunting, as smell, vision and hearing are diminished under water. They eat mainly aquatic organisms such as amphibians, fish, turtles, crayfish, crabs and other invertebrates. Birds, their eggs, and small terrestrial mammals are also eaten on occasion.

Prey is captured with the mouth, and mainly slow, non-game fish species like carp and suckers are taken. Prey is eaten immediately after capture, usually in the water, although larger prey is sometimes eaten on land.

In Michigan it is legal to trap otter for their fur, but with very strict limits. Each trapper is allow three otter per season, but only one can come from Southern Lower Michigan.

River otters have a very large home range often covering several square miles, so that it is unlikely that there are more than one or two families in the entire Waterloo Recreation Area. However, without the habitat protection that the park provides, there would probably be none at all.

May apple, *A Little Known Fruit of the Forest*



Left: a new May apple sprout in April. **Above:** the fully developed plants as they appear in late May. **Right:** the plant and ripe fruit as it appears in late August and early September. Find them now, before the raccoons and opossums do.

Hidden among the ground plants in many woods and thickets in southern Michigan is an edible plant that is very seldom harvested. Its name, May apple, is very misleading. Its golf ball sized fruits ripen in late August and early September, not in May and are more the color of lemons than apples. The European settlers called it Mandrake after a totally unrelated Mediterranean plant whose stems and roots were valued for their medicinal properties. Those parts of May apple contain a powerful drug called podophyllin, which can be fatal. Its ripe fruit neither looks or tastes like an apple, but is quite edible.

The roots of May apple are long lived, and send up new stems year after year. Over time they spread and form large colonies. The stems and leaves first appear in spring when many other plants are still dormant. They sprout very quickly and reach their full height of twelve to eighteen inches in about a week. They look like small umbrellas or miniature palm trees. Each underground root will send up several sprouts. Some will have one leaf with the stem attached at the center. Others will have two leaves attached to a forked stem. In April and May a single white blossom appears in the fork of the stem. From this flower a single fruit develops and

slowly ripens over the summer. Spring is the best time to locate May apple colonies. They stand out in stark contrast to the leaves on the forest floor. In late summer the conditions will be quite different. Other plants will have grown up around the May apples. As the fruits ripen, the leaves and stems often turn yellow and fall to the ground. One will have to look closely to find them. If the eyes fail, follow the nose, as the ripe fruit have a sweet pungent odor that can be detected from some distance. When ripe the fruits are pale to bright lemon yellow and may be found still attached to the plant or lying on the ground. Their flavor is tart, not unlike that of the inside of a concord grape. Although edible and good, like prunes, they must be eaten in moderation. They are at their best in preserves. The following recipe for May apple Marmalade is taken from the book, Stalking the Wild Asparagus by the late Euell Gibbons. **May Apple Marmalade:** ½ gal. ripe May apples, 1 cup water, 1 box Sure-jell 5 cups sugar, Paraffin

Remove the stem and blossom ends from the washed fruit. Cut into quarters and put into a suitable sized kettle. Add the water and simmer 15 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent sticking. When the fruit is soft, put through a colander to remove the seeds and skins. Add a box of Sure-jell to four cups of the pulp and bring to a boil. Add the sugar. Return to a boil for one minute. Skim and pour immediately into prepared jars and seal with paraffin. I'm sure you will be pleased with the results. My wife and I sent some to friends along with other homemade preserves and labeled it "Mystery Marmalade." It generated many positive comments and a lot of curiosity.

A ripe May apple fruit cut to show the tart but delicious pulp. The recipe above will yield a marmalade with a distinct and delicious flavor. Try it for yourself.

Then you'll be hooked and will have a good reason to explore the woods every summer.



Flowers From The Fen



The fens in Waterloo host a variety of colorful wildflowers in both summer and fall. Pictured here are fringed gentian (above left), coreopsis (above right), bidens, (below left), and bottle gentian (below right).



The glaciers that formed Waterloo some 10,000 years ago left behind gravelly hills surrounding valleys that hosted lakes, marshes, swamps, fens or bogs. Wetlands without a source of nutrient bearing water became stagnant and acidic and often developed into bogs.

Fens, are peat-forming wetlands that receive nutrients from sources other than precipitation: usually springs flowing from surrounding hills and from groundwater movement. Fens differ from bogs because they are less acidic and have higher nutrient levels. They are therefore able to support a much more diverse plant and animal community. These systems are often covered by grasses, sedges, rushes, and beautiful wildflowers.

Most of the fens in Michigan have been mined for peat or drained for farming. Many of those that remain are located in permanently protected lands like our state parks.

The Waterloo Recreation Area has many small fens scattered throughout its 21,000 acres. They are seldom visited by park users, as they are not very foot friendly. They contain large clumps of grasses and sedges that are a sprained ankle waiting to happen. Stepping into the breaks in the mat of grasses and sedges can leave one stuck to the knees in mud. Losing one's balance may mean grabbing for something to break the fall only to discover that the something is poison sumac.

Fens may not be the friendliest places to visit, but they are important for many reasons. Fens provide important benefits in a watershed, including preventing or reducing the risk of floods, improving water quality, and providing habitat for unique plant and animal communities.

These rare and unique habitats are worthy of our protection.

Annual Members Pot Luck

6:00 p.m. Saturday, November 6
At the Discovery Center

Great Food: Join other WNHA members for an evening of wonderful food and great family entertainment at our annual pot-luck meeting. Bring a dish to share and your own place settings; beverages will be provided.



Special Entertainment
Paul McCormack
and his creepy crawly friends

View this newsletter in Color at www.wnha.org

MEMBER'S CORNER

The Waterloo Natural History Association gratefully acknowledges the support of the following new members and those who have recently renewed their memberships:

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Dave & Susan Horvath
Dan & Norma Green
Tom & Sandra Jameson

Sustaining

Robert & Kelli Kadlec
Edward & Ann Comeau
David & Sharon Brooks
Dave & Joanne Rowe
Steve & Dayle Wright

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Family

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Diane Wilson

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Walter Wojtysiak
Ms. Kay Lantis
Philip Tedeschi
Kathy Kavanagh

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