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The “Snake Whisperer” Hotline

Right: A parody on the Bat Signal. A call to remove an intrusive snake requires a timely response.



Parseltongue. For those not familiar with the term from Harry Potter lore, it is the language of serpents. Few characters in the series had the ability to speak directly to snakes, but most notably, Lord Voldemort and Harry could - and did. Wouldn't it be a great name for a humane snake removal service?

Follow-up question: How litigious is J.K. Rowling?

We've never advertised "snake removal" service, but you'd *think* we had based on the number of inquiring calls we've received over the years. In every case the person on the other end is more than happy to pay a fee for our time, and if our schedule allows it one of us drops what we're doing to go and remove the snake for them.

Since they are cold-blooded and dormant through the colder months the requests to remove snakes are heavily skewed on the calendar between about late March and October. These bookends to their active season are the times when local snakes of nearly all species are respectively arising from and descending to underground sites - or hibernacula - in which they spend the cold months.

Given our professional capacity we know how people generally feel about snakes (not good). Ergo, we also know how many would react (not well) when a wild one pops up suddenly too close to their living space. They don't want to see it. They definitely don't want to touch it. They just want it out of their life.

Of course, it is a miniscule portion of the whole that manage to actually find and get a hold of us to remove it. How many more mistakenly perceive a harmless snake as a threat, then simply kill it outright or perhaps call on a relative or neighbor to commit the atrocity?

Contact an animal control company to capture and remove it and you are likely in store for some degree of disappointment, i.e., they have no one available to come over immediately, they don't work evenings and weekends, and/or the base fee to simply show up (with no guarantee of a capture) is unacceptably excessive. Additionally, most local township offices and police departments have no staff and no leads to respond to a snake removal 911.

Several years ago, after fielding a call, Carol decided to contact a few animal control companies and pose as a homeowner who needed a snake removed in order to get a feel for their prices and policies. One representative stated that they "don't do snakes." Another said they would charge \$200 to send someone



A lifted item in the garage may expose a hiding milk snake. The mutual surprise may elicit tail-vibrations from one, a shriek from the other.

out, but snakes are good at hiding, and so, if they were not able to find and catch it within thirty minutes or so, she would be out of luck (and \$200). Still another company said they would remove the snake for a fee if *you* capture it and then give them a call to pick it up.

This is not like just making an appointment with, say, a plumber. The pipes aren't going anywhere. Yet, a snake moves, and then manages to spend an exorbitant amount of its time out of view, often in a location that is not readily accessible to a human. Hidden like a mouse within a hole or crevice at the base of a wall, along a foundation, between floorboards or under an immovable appliance, a snake may make itself visible for only a short period of time before retreating to its shadowy safe place - perhaps not to be sighted again for hours or even days.

An animal control place is usually unable to send someone on a moment's notice. Multiple hours or days later, it is practically guaranteed that the snake will not be found and captured.

You know where this is going... Although we've been doing it on a limited unadvertised basis for decades, we're about to officially promote the service through Nature Discovery - and just in time for the spring awakening.

For effective snake removal an instantaneous response is critical, and thus, so is a "hotline." Like a scene out of a certain campy super-hero series you can imagine a red phone flashing in the "snake cave" (in less lurid actuality, one of our cell phones buzzing in our nature center). Donning no mask, no cape, no utility belt - just a pillow case, our snake crusader is poised to respond to the serpentine version of the bat signal at a moment's notice.

If Carol or I are not immediately available we have access to a number of sidekicks, starting with our sons who would love to make the run for us if they are available. Whether it's a garter that's in your garage or maybe basking in your flower bed, or a milk snake after mice in your basement or tool shed, a staff member can safely capture then relocate it in appropriate habitat far away from your home.



Since the Eastern Gartersnake is the most commonly seen snake in yards and around houses individuals frequently choose favorite basking spots and hiding places around porches and stoops.

Watch for a link to the snake removal service on our website shortly. We've settled on calling it *Snake Whisperer* - a more generic term for *parseltongue* that conveys a congruent reprieve with the subject.



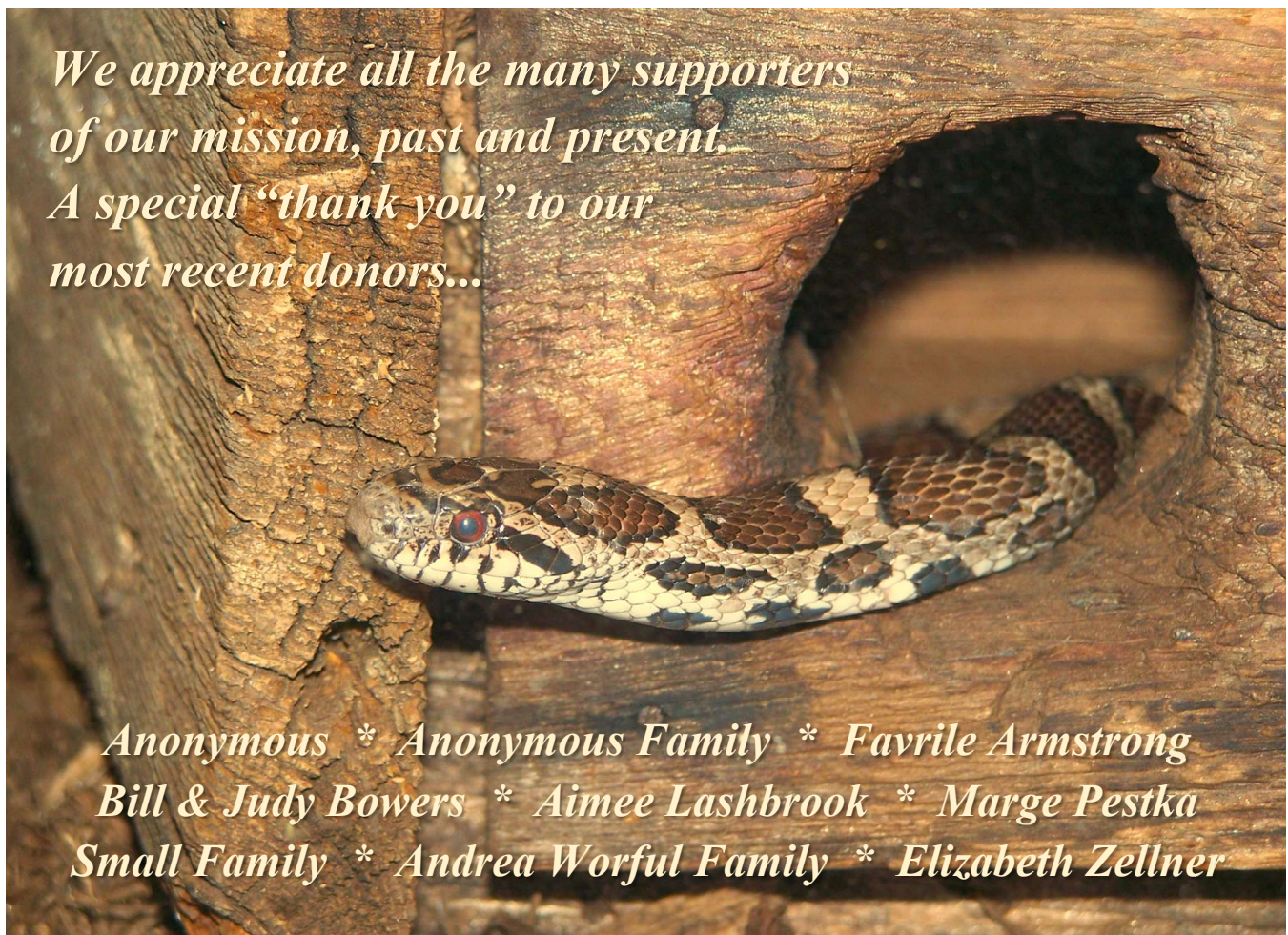
In late summer baby milk snakes will hatch from a hidden clutch of eggs. Small and thin, one may show up along a wall outside or inside a country house.

wonderful diversity - like the songbirds in your yard - that enriches your day. We rejoice with every sighting on our property - whether in the yard, along the side of the house, and yes, sometimes in our garage. To not see any would unacceptably diminish our habitation on this country plot.

To know snakes is to like them. Given that education is primarily what we do, it bears mentioning that there is a second, more direct and long-lasting means to solve any snake dilemma. Adjust your *attitude* by learning about, and thereby accepting them for their ecologically wholesome, shy and nonconfrontational actuality. We often proclaim a guided, personalized experience with the live, ultra-chill native specimens at our nature center to be the most benign setting you'll ever find to overcome a discomfort with snakes. Release from that fear is just a phone call or email away.

Take the step and you'll come to view the wild snake discovered in close proximity not as something that must be removed, but as just another form of the wild and wonderful diversity - like the songbirds in your yard - that enriches your day. We rejoice with every sighting on our property - whether in the yard, along the side of the house, and yes, sometimes in our garage. To not see any would unacceptably diminish our habitation on this country plot.

-Jim McGrath



*We appreciate all the many supporters
of our mission, past and present.
A special "thank you" to our
most recent donors...*

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An adult Eastern Milksnake ventures from its "hiding hole." Snakes of all ilks gravitate to cavities both for safety and because that is often where their prey is hiding too.

Nature Discovery

5900 N. Williamston Road Williamston, MI 48895
517.655.5349 naturedisc87@gmail.com www.naturediscovery.net

Visit Our Nature Center by Appointment

***Suggested Minimum Donation:
\$5/person/hour***



The sky's the limit for natural science learning here – with a Michigan twist! Adults, couples and families are welcome to schedule a safe, intimate outdoor or indoor visit to what we call “The Biggest Little Nature Center in Michigan,” and “Home to the Largest Zoo of Michigan-native Reptiles and Amphibians.” The unique, in-person, hands-on experiences here are unmatched by a trip to a conventional zoo! We will bring snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders out of tanks to interact with adults or students of any age or grade-level. Currently, mask-wearing is optional during indoor time.



Hand-feed lettuce to “Milberta.”

Identify and feed “the grand slam of Michigan turtles” - all ten species native to our state! Meet, pet and feed “Milberta”, our always hungry Red-footed tortoise.

Handle any or all of Michigan’s three species of garter snakes while learning how to tell them apart, then watch them gobble up worms and live tadpoles. Hold or “wear” a gentle 6-foot Black Rat Snake – the largest in the state!

Many more snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders to identify and feed. Take a guided walk on our trails to identify birds and bird song, trees, vines, and invasive plants in early spring.

Ask about arranging weekly or monthly visits, or regarding custom natural science lessons to supplement your student’s interests and grade-specific science requirements.

Contact us for more info or to make an appointment most any day or evening.

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Spring Break Wild Times Day Camp

Monday thru Wednesday
March 28-30, 9am-3pm



Introducing a **NEW DAY CAMP CONCEPT** initially designed to minimize uncertainty during pandemic times.

THREE DAYS are available on our spring break calendar from which parents may reserve a specific day (first-come basis) for their own private day camp pod of up to 5 children - grades K or higher – which may include siblings, friends or classmates.

There is so much to do here that a camp day just flies by! A combination of indoor and outdoor activities include lots of time interacting with scads of specimens of 35 species of the small and large Michigan-native reptiles and amphibians housed here, including turtles, frogs, salamanders and lizards. Participants never grow tired of handling our huge Black Ratsnakes. Our two tortoises, Milberta the Red-footed Tortoise and Fyodor the Russian Tortoise love to eat, and will munch lettuce in slow motion right from the campers' hands.



Outdoor time involves activities on and off-trail across our six acres exploring for birds, bugs, frogs, snakes and more. Weather-permitting, students may wade into our shallow vernal ponds with nets and buckets to sample an array of small animal life that teems within. Pack a bag lunch. A mid-morning snack will be served.

COST: \$400 per pod of up to 5 children per day (\$80/child). Contact us today if you have any questions or to reserve one of these days for your small group - while they last - with a 50% deposit.



Spring Break Wild Bird Mania Field Trip

*Thursday, March 31
8am-2pm*

For students in 4th grade & older.

Jim will lead an intimate group of only 5 students and travel by van to an array of natural habitats throughout Mid-Michigan in search of bird diversity amid early spring migration time.

Students will tally up to 50 birds or more on personal checklists we provide, including over a dozen species of waterfowl, an active bald eagle nest, plus hawks and owls on nests, too. Our powerful spotting scope allows for extra close-up looks. Bring binoculars if you have them (Compacts NOT recommended). Don't have a good pair of your own? That's okay. We have several pairs available for participants to borrow.

COST: \$90. Pack a bag lunch and water bottle, and be sure to dress for weather conditions. Advance registration required.

Summer Day Camp Preview: "Reserve-a-Week" Now for Your Own Pod of Kids

Prior to offering weeks for general enrollment, here is an opportunity to "create your own" day camp. Collaborating parents can choose one of the 4-day weeks (9am to 3pm) below on a first-come basis for your personalized group of up to 5 students (sibs, friends) ages 7 and older.

A combination of indoor and outdoor experiences includes time interacting with our many Michigan reptiles & amphibians, insect-catching, birding, field trips to local natural areas and more. The personalized aspect allows for planning between parents and kids to customize the camp to their favorite specific things to do!

COST: \$1500 for up to 5 students. A reservation for the week requires a 50% deposit payable by check or CC/Paypal thru our website. Deadline for reservations is March 25. Contact us for further details.



AVAILABLE WEEKS

June 20-23

July 11-14

July 18-21

August 8-11

August 15-18

August 22-25

A “Damning Indictment of Failed Climate Leadership”

‘Delay is Death,’ said UN Chief Antonio Guterres of the New IPCC Report Showing Climate Impacts Are Outpacing Adaptation Efforts.

<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/28022022/ipcc-report-russia-ukraine-adaptation-fossil-fuels/>

These Climate Scientists Are Fed Up and Ready to Go on Strike.

https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/climate/ipcc-climate-scientists-strike.html?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20220301&instance_id=54533&nl=the-morning®i_id=97652655&segment_id=84266&te=1&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

A recent column in *The Atlantic*, presents an interview with Saul Griffith, author of the book, *Electrify Everything*, “about his plan to electrify the world, his controversial idea to bribe fossil-fuel companies to go green, and why American gloom and NIMBYism are standing in the way of the abundance agenda.”

https://www.theatlantic.com/newsletters/archive/2022/02/saul-griffith-electrify-everything-solution-save-humanity/622911/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=atlantic-daily-newsletter&utm_content=20220225&utm_term=The%20Atlantic%20Daily

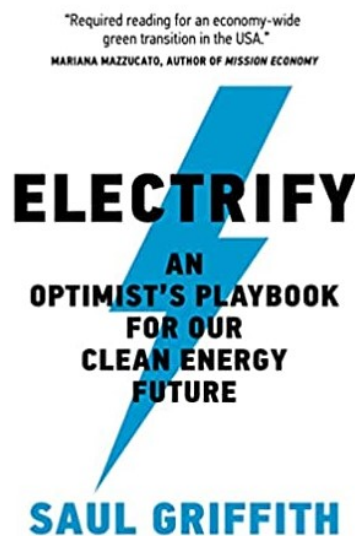
This Map Shows Where Biodiversity is Most at Risk in America. A look at the map showing areas protected at the federal, state and local level for biodiversity shows Michigan as the leader far and away compared to any other state east of the Rockies.

https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/03/03/climate/biodiversity-map.html?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20220304&instance_id=54834&nl=the-morning®i_id=97652655&segment_id=84596&te=1&user_id=e2b8dd8c9b543fb8c35d5dd30658067e

These Towns are Fighting Climate Change at the Local Level.

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/environment/climate-change-sustainability-local-jackson-natick/?fbclid=IwAR1OZfVhPqAF1glwCOfn8-wZL6wRCNMEBQFxxCLsuHJduAbz-DMDXy0s748>

-JM



The next generation would be justified in looking back at us and asking, “What were you thinking? Couldn’t you hear what the scientists were saying? Couldn’t you hear what Mother Nature was screaming at you?” - Al Gore

I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act like you would in a crisis. I want you to act like your house is on fire, because it is. - Greta Thunberg

Scientific findings should never be distorted or influenced by political considerations.

- from President Biden’s Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking.



Less Beef = Less CO₂
Cowspiracy.com

[Union of
Concerned Scientists
Science for a healthy planet and safer world



Worldwarzero.com



RSPO.org



insideclimatenews.org

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