

FRESHWATER REPORTER

A fresh approach to storytelling in Manistee and Mason counties...and a bit beyond.

FREE Vol V, No. 1

freshwater-reporter.com

Jan. 11 - Feb. 14, 2023 FREE

WIDE wheelin' in winter

Photo essay by JOHN NALE

I bike all winter long with my fat tire bike. I have found that with my snowsuit and the heat from exercise, I usually feel very warm — even in the coldest temperatures. Winter biking is incredibly beautiful, and I find that I'm usually the only one out there.

I like to ride on Portage Lake and Bear Lake when it is safe. You have to be very careful on the lake when you hit ice patches. Fat tires do not grab onto ice!

I also tend to follow my regular bike routes along M-22 in the Portage Point and Portage Ridge areas, all around Onekama and Bear Lake.

Riding in snow with your fat tire bike is a lot like driving in snow with your car. The best snow is when it is extremely cold, and the snow is light and fluffy. You tend to get a lot of traction.

When it's not winter, I like to use a road bike as well as a BMX that I converted for dirt trails. I use my BMX mainly in the Arcadia Dry Hill Trails area.

See page 8 for more of John's photographs and a list of groomed fat tire bicycle snow trails. Find more photos in our online story.

John Nale, a 30-year Manistee County resident, is an avid year-round biker. John and his wife Deborah, both real estate agents with the Onekama office of Century 21 Northland, live in Onekama and bike the many trails together. They are active members of the community.



continued on page 8



NORTHWOODS SAUCE BOSS



Santa Chione

By JOSHUA ELIE

Years back, a brilliant man in Sippy Flats, south of Baldwin, decided to get a purebred husky pup, male. Another brilliant man in Sippy Flats decided to do the same thing from a different stock: husky, female. In all their brilliance, they lost the papers — though they figured they would let the dogs play together and see what happened. Well, surprise, surprise, surprise, six more husky pups. Now, these dogs would have been worth a mint if those men wouldn't have been so brilliant about losing the paperwork.

At the time, I was in my late 30's and if you haven't had kids by then, you really get this do-or-die feeling on that issue. In true redneck fashion, and I'm proud to claim it, if you are going to



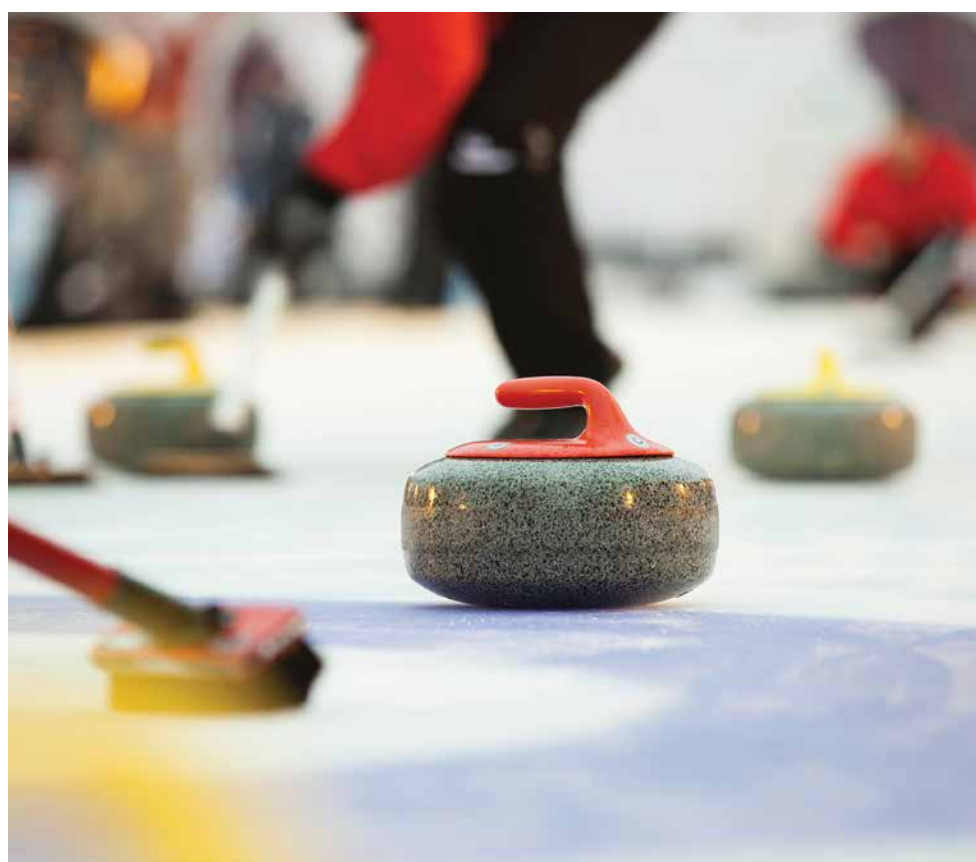
Santa Chione.

have a baby, that baby needs a dog here in the Northwoods. There is nothing in our woods that would attack a grown person, but a baby ... We have coyotes and eagles, and I wouldn't put it past a hungry fox to snatch up a baby, so they need a dog for protection.

Let me hit the rewind button for a moment. Way back when, my parents had a house gig (recurring musical performance) at the Willis Show Bar in Detroit, a fancy place for people to do business. Strippers, first floor. Hookers, second floor. And even though there is no such thing as the Mafia, if there were, this seems like a place they would've wanted to hang out, way back in the day. Chicken Charley, (like calling a giant man "Tiny"), was the bar's bouncer and

continued on page 6

Curling sweeps the counties



By STEWART A. MCFERRAN

The Traverse City Curling Club will host an open house, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m., Jan. 28 and 29, at its new curling center located at 1712 S. Garfield Ave. in Traverse City.

Don Piche learned about curling eight years ago and was able to find and bring together other enthusiastic curlers to establish a club. They practiced at Traverse City's Centre Ice rink, after painting targets on the ice at each end of the rink and lugging the heavy curling stones across the "hog line."

Don dreamed of having a curling home for the club. So did the other 380 members of the TC Curling Club who supported this new project.

The 42-pound stones used by curlers were mined on the isle of Ailsa Craig and manufactured in Ayrshire, Scotland. Stones like that were never sold in the aisles of K-mart at the Cherryland Mall, where shoppers once roamed in Traverse City. These granite rocks will slide down the long sheets of ice newly installed at the former K-mart. Propelled by curlers who

continued on page 6

Community Calendar

TELL THEM YOU SAW IT IN FRESHWATER REPORTER!

To be included in our February 15 edition, submit your announcements by February 1. Be sure to include the address where the event takes place, for visiting readers. Email your events/press releases to: editor@freshwater-reporter.com. Email any time for our online calendar. Always check with the venue before attending as some event dates may change or be canceled due to weather, scheduling or Covid-19. Despite our best efforts, errors may occur.

ONGOING EVENTS

Thru Jan 13

Winter Member Exhibition, Frankfort

Mon – Sat, 10am-4pm. Free. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

Daily Thru Jan 27

Calvin University Lecture Series, Manistee

12:30-1:30pm, Free. Award-winning series featuring a different speaker each day, cultivating deep thought and conversations about important issues of today. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Speakers/topics: <https://calvin.edu/january-series/speakers>

Thru Jan 28

Local Artist Exhibit, Ludington

Tues, Thurs, Fri, 11am-4pm; Wed, 11am-6pm; Sat, 11am-2pm. Free. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St.

Thru Mar 3

Robin Dluzen's Heirloom Art Exhibit, various locations

Free. Dluzen creates art about landscape, labor, family, and what is passed down through inheritance using found, scavenged, and non-art materials. On display at WSCC's main campus, 3000 N. Stiles Rd., Scottville; WSCC's Education Center, corner of River and Maple Sts., Manistee; Old Kirke Museum, 300 Walnut St., Manistee; & Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St.

Thru Mar 15

Fat-tire Biking Season, Mears

Riders will enjoy 450 acres of open sand dunes, elevation changes of 80-100 feet, access to Lake Michigan and sunsets over the lake from the top of the dunes. Silver Lake State Park, 9679 W. State Park Road. Michigan Recreation Passport required for vehicle entry. Info: 231.873.3083

Jan 15, 21, 22, 29, Feb 12

Learn to Curl Clinics, Scottville

4-6pm, \$20. Hosted by the Ludington Area Curling Club at Westshore Community Ice Rink, West Shore Community College, 3000 N. Stiles Rd. No experience or equipment necessary.

Jan 20 – Feb 17

Furniture, Fiber, Photography, & Sculpture Art Exhibit, Frankfort

Mon – Sat, 10am-4pm. Free. Opening reception Jan 20, 5-7pm. Oliver Art Center, 132 Coast Guard Rd.

Jan 25 – Feb 25

The Journey of Discovery Art Exhibition, Manistee

Free. Honoring the contributions of African Americans in rural Michigan. Opening reception Feb 4, 5-7pm. Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St.

DAILY EVENTS

January 11

Classic Film Series: "Empire of the Sun" PG (1987), Manistee

10am & 7pm, \$2. Drama/war. Starring Christian Bale & John Malkovich. Vogue Theatre, 383 River St.

January 12

Live Music: Open Mic with Jeff Louwsma, Beulah

5:30-8:30, Free. St. Ambrose Cellars, 841 S. Pioneer Rd.

January 13

Super Sprint Race, Baldwin

4:30pm. Next to St. Ann's Catholic Church, 1001 Michigan Ave. Please bring a non-perishable food item to support St. Ann's "Bread of Life" food pantry.

Live Music: Barefoot, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Live Music: Nick Veine, Ludington

6-9pm, Free. Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S. James St.

Live Music: Full Cord Bluegrass, Ludington

7:30pm, \$20 ADV, \$25 DOS, Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St.

January 14

Snowshoe Series: Guided Art Park Tour, Thompsonville

See details on page 8.

January 14

G. L. O. W. Black Light Art Experience, Manistee

12pm, Free. For ages 7- teens. Paint & listen to cool tunes. Manistee Public Library, 95 Maple St. Registration required: www.manisteelibrary.org.

Guided Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Metropolitan Opera Live/Encore in HD presents Fedora (Giordano), Manistee

1pm, Ramsdell Regional Center for the Arts, 101 Maple St. Info/tickets: ramsdelltheatre.org

Live Music: Blake Elliott, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Guided Saturday Night Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

6pm, Free. Ludington State Park, 8800 M-116. Guided nature/history walks through the wooded sand dunes under the stars and moonlight. Snowshoes provided for those who need them. (ages 8+) No reservations needed; meet at the warming shelter. Info: 231.843.2423

January 14-15

Sled Dog Races, Baldwin

9:30am. At Wingleton & Stearns Road. Follow signs from downtown Wesco. Please bring a non-perishable food item to support St. Ann's "Bread of Life" food pantry.

January 15

Snowshoe Guided Hike, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Snowshoe Hike & Star Party, Manistee

See details on page 8.

January 18

Classic Film Series: "The Sugarland Express" PG (1974), Manistee

10am & 7pm, \$2. Crime/drama. Starring Goldie Hawn & William Atherton. Vogue Theatre, 383 River St.

January 19

Live Music: Open Mic with Jeff Louwsma, Beulah

5:30-8:30, Free. St. Ambrose Cellars, 841 S. Pioneer Rd.

Live Music: Kyle Brown, Manistee

6:30, Free. North Channel Brewing Co., 86 Washington St.

January 20

Live Music: John Piatek & Friends, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Live Music: John Merchant, Ludington

6-9pm, Free. Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S. James St.

January 21

Grip N Rip Ice Bowl 2023 Disc Golf Singles Tournament, Scottville

11am Tee off, \$20. West Shore Community College, 3000 N. Stiles Rd. Fundraiser for Lakeshore Food Club of Ludington, a low-income grocery store, which also shares knowledge of gardening, healthy eating and finance tips. Please bring a minimum of 5 items (non-perishable food, personal hygiene, baby food, feminine products, household supplies like paper towels, soap, cleaning products, etc.) Shotgun start. 1 round of 24 holes. Ace pool and CTP optional. (If no aces are hit, ace pool money will be donated to LFC.) Raffle, prizes & hot cocoa after the round. 1 raffle ticket for 5 donated items, additional ticket for every 3 extra items. This is an Ice bowl so it will not be cancelled due to weather unless it is a direct safety concern. NO wimps, NO whiners. Let's go have fun! Registration: www.discgolfscene.com

Guided Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Book to Big Screen: Book & Film Discussion, Frankfort

3pm, Free screening of the film "The Storied Life of A. J. Fikry", based on the book by Gabrielle Zevin. Discussion following the showing: Is the book or the movie better? Garden Theater, 301 Main St. Several copies of the book are available at Benzie Shores District Library.

Live Music: Wink, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibaek Rd.

January 21

Lantern-lit Ski & Snowshoe Hike, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Improv Comedy Night with The Comedy Project, Ludington

7pm, \$15 ADV, \$20 DOS. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St.

Live Music: Mark Stuart, Cadillac

7-9pm, \$17.53 Adults, \$9 students 13-18. Cadillac Elks Lodge, 122 S. Mitchell. Info/tickets: gopherwoodconcerts.org

January 22

9th Annual Dark & Stormcloudy Film & Beer Series, Frankfort

2pm. \$10 includes \$5 Stormcloud token. An award-winning film & a small-batch dark beer handcrafted by Stormcloud Brewing. Showing the Sundance Film Festival science fiction prizewinner, "After Yang", starring Colin Farrell. Featured beer is Techno-Sapien, a German-style doppelbock brewed with Bear Earth Herbs custom blend of chaga & their bent oolong tea. Garden Theater, 301 Main St.

January 25

Classic Film Series: "Hook" PG (1991), Manistee

10am & 7pm, \$2. Fantasy/adventure. Starring Robin Williams, Dustin Hoffman & Julia Roberts. Vogue Theatre, 383 River St.

January 26

Live Music: Open Mic with Jeff Louwsma, Beulah

5:30-8:30, Free. St. Ambrose Cellars, 841 S. Pioneer Rd.

January 27

Live Music: Nick Veine, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Live Music: Kevin Murphy, Ludington

6-9pm, Free. Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S. James St.

60th Annual Ann Arbor Film Festival, Ludington

7 pm, \$10 ADV, \$15 DOS. The 70-minute program features eight award-winning experimental, documentary, animation, narrative, and hybrid films from the most recent festival. Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St. Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/screening-tickets-494002172797screening-tickets-494002172797> or in the LACA gift shop.

January 28

Spark Creativity: Talent Open House for Adults, Manistee

1pm, Free. Show & tell roundtable for grownups. Talk about your roses, fiber arts, songwriting or poems, etc. Bring examples/photos of your work. All are invited to learn how others create. The library can provide resources to boost your creativity. Manistee Public Library Meeting Room, 95 Maple St. Registration required: www.manisteelibrary.org or 231.723.2519

Guided Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Snowshoe Guided Hike: Arcadia Dunes

1-3pm., Free. Volunteer Sally Manke will lead this hike of the beginner-friendly Camp Arcadia Loop trail. Bring winter gear, snowshoes, water & a snack. Registration is encouraged: info@gtrlc.org or 231.929.7911. Directions: <https://goo.gl/maps/W67kRzgKt846FgFa8>

BRRRewfest, Ludington

1-6pm, \$35 includes 6 drink tokens, \$5 for designated driver. Legacy Plaza, 112 N James St. Benefitting the Friends of Ludington State Park, this winter craft beer, wine, and cider festival features over 20 Michigan craft brewers. Live music, food. All tickets must be purchased online: <https://pureludington.com>

Live Music: Elizabeth Landry, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Guided Saturday Night Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Snowshoe Hike & Star Party, Manistee

See details on page 8.

January 31

An Evening with Todd & Bred Reed Photography, Manistee

6pm, Free. All ages welcome. Award-winning Ludington photographers share photos & stories that capture the natural beauty of Michigan. Manistee Senior Center, 260 St. Mary Pkwy.

Port City Documentary Series, Manistee

7pm, \$6-8. "Good Night Oppy" Science/space (2022). The film follows the Mars Exploration Rover, Opportunity, nicknamed Oppy by her creators and scientists at NASA. Expected to work for 90 days, she explored Mars for nearly 15 years. Vogue Theatre, 383 River St.

February 2

Live Music: Open Mic with Jeff Louwsma, Beulah

5:30-8:30, Free. St. Ambrose Cellars, 841 S. Pioneer Rd.

February 3

Live Music: Kyle Brown, Ludington

6-9pm, Free. Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S. James St.

February 4

Guided Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Live Music: Blair Miller, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek.

Lantern-lit Ski & Snowshoe Hike, Ludington

See details on page 8.

February 4-5

Stearns Siding Sweetwater Challenge Sled Dog Race, Baldwin

West Wingleton Rd. at Stearns Rd.

February 9

Live Music: Open Mic with Jeff Louwsma, Beulah

5:30-8:30, Free. St. Ambrose Cellars, 841 S. Pioneer Rd.

February 10

Live Music: Barefoot, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Live Music: Tim Krause, Ludington

6-9pm, Free. Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S. James St.

February 11

Snowshoe Series: Guided Art Park Tour, Thompsonville

See details on page 8.

Guided Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Guided Hike: Upper Manistee Headwaters Preserve

1:30-3:30pm, Free. Volunteer Mark Rogers will lead this hike. Bring winter gear, snowshoes, water & a snack. Info/registration: JThroop@GTRLC.org or 231-922-1259. Directions: <https://goo.gl/maps/pXzgLbXgmdXTPI7>

Live Music: Blake Elliott, Thompsonville

5-7pm. Free. Iron Fish Distillery, 14234 Dzuibanek Rd.

Guided Saturday Night Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

February 12

Snowshoe Hike & Star Party, Manistee

See details on page 8.

February 16

Live Music: Open Mic with Jeff Louwsma, Beulah

5:30-8:30, Free. St. Ambrose Cellars, 841 S. Pioneer Rd.

February 17

Live Music: Fremont John, Ludington

6-9pm, Free. Ludington Bay Brewing, 515 S. James St.

February 18

Snowshoe Series: Guided Art Park Tour, Thompsonville

See details on page 8.

Guided Winter Snowshoe Walks, Ludington

See details on page 8.

Lantern-lit Ski & Snowshoe Hike, Ludington

See details on page 8.



News from Space

Look to the sky and screen

By MARK IDEAN

Later this month, a newly sighted comet (first spotted in early March 2022) may be bright enough to see with the naked eye and certainly by using binoculars or a telescope. Known officially as comet C/2022 E3(ZTF), its closest approach to Earth (within 26 million miles) will be between Feb. 1-2. However, the best time for viewing may be around Jan. 21, when the Moon is at its dimmest.

In the Northern Hemisphere, the comet will be visible moving northwest in the

morning sky in January as it travels in its 50,000-year orbit around the Sun. The last humans to observe the comet would have been alive during the most recent Ice Age.

.....
 "Good Night Oppy" — the wondrous story on film of Opportunity, the Mars Exploration Rover that outlived its 90-day lifespan by 14.75 years — will be shown at 7 p.m., Jan. 31, at the Vogue Theatre in Manistee. The movie, released

Historic Downtown Thompsonville
 231-378-2554
 14848 Thompson Ave.

WE ARE OPEN FOR DINING SERVICE.
 PLEASE CALL AHEAD FOR SEATING AVAILABILITY, TAKE OUT.
 FULL MENU AVAILABLE.
 NORMAL BUSINESS HOURS

Best BBQ Ribs In The NORTH!
 Every Thur 5:30 - 9pm
 (Come early; they do go fast!)
 DAILY SPECIALS
 Fish Fry Friday

Gasoline ReFind
 RESALE STORE
 BUY - SELL - TRADE

#RETROPETRO **GOOGLE IT.** #SORRYNOGAS

Open Saturdays 10am to 4pm
 ERDMAN ROAD ~ BEAR LAKE
 3 MI. WEST OF US31 & 1 MI. EAST OF M22
 BETWEEN POTTER & 13 MILE ROADS
 SHOPGASOLINEREFIND.COM
 (231) 268-4970

in November 2022, follows the rover nicknamed "Oppy" by her NASA creators and scientists. She traveled 28 miles over the Martian surface and made numerous scientific discoveries before a sandstorm stopped her in her tracks in 2019.

NASA employees and thousands of people around the world made deep emotional connections to the plucky rover. Engineers made more than 1,000 attempts to restart Oppy, but none worked.

On Feb. 12, 2019, ground control sent one final message, transmitting Billie Holiday's "I'll Be Seeing You". A NASA scientist posted the lyrics on Twitter, and it went viral: "I'll find you in the morning sun and when the night is new, I'll be looking at the Moon but I'll be seeing you."

Tickets are \$6-\$8. The Vogue Theatre is located at 383 River St. in Manistee.



Christmas Day 2021 - Driving in (very little) snow for a sunny beach day.



Christmas 2022 - NOT driving in snow. Hunkering down where it's warm and cozy.

(Not) Driving in Snow

Story and photos by KEVIN HOWELL

I'm sitting here watching snow falling hard and blowing. Windchills are dropping, and I'm remembering other years of snow and winter driving excursions. Pondering past times, I realize I didn't mind driving in snow so much when I was about 50 years younger.

Unless it's like the Christmas of 2021. We had a little snow but drove out to Buttersville Beach south of Ludington. The day was sunny, temperatures were mild, and a light breeze was rolling the not-yet-frozen waves toward shore. The snowpack was minimal, and navigator Jean and I managed to find some cool rocks. That's the kind of driving in snow I like these days.

I remember, though, driving in real snow — you know, up to your, um, rear in snow.

We had an old truck once, and our young son was with us. We drove through heavy, blowing snow after seeing family for the holidays. The tires were pretty shot, and it was a rear-wheel drive vehicle. Driving without sliding was a bit hairy. I had a set of old tire chains and pulled over to slip them on. I guess I was too cold to get the clamps tight. Every few miles I'd hear a clunk, clunk, ching, and a chain went flying off. Those chains are probably still along the road, but they lasted long enough

to get us home.

When I was more adventurous, I liked to take my 80-pound German Shepherd Mangas for a walk by a city golf course. I drove a different truck then, an old Ford 3/4 ton with big tires on it that, as usual, were getting a bit bare. I drove the truck down a slight hill and onto the snow-covered field. We had a nice walk, loaded in and proceeded to get the truck stuck. We couldn't move more than a foot before the tires spun. Fortunately, I had a snow shovel. I got out, grabbed the shovel, and weighted the truck's bed with a ton or two of snow. Off we finally went.

I try not to do those things anymore. Get stuck, that is. But I still like to get out in the snow to sightsee. Not so much for backroad drives. Not purposely. Which reminds me of another adventure.

We first learned about two-tracks when we were looking for a place to live here in Michigan. We didn't know the roads around Manistee and Mason counties and took off to find a house for sale on one of the small lakes near there. Fortunately, that time we drove a small SUV with front-wheel drive. It had snowed recently, but the main roads were pretty cleared. We followed our phone's Google maps thingy, which doesn't seem to discern between

two-lane paved roads and single lane two-tracks. The map led us off the paved road and onto a narrow track resembling a snow tunnel. It was one of those situations where you just keep driving and hope you don't meet someone coming from the other direction. We finally came out the other end, located the house, which we didn't buy, and found a paved road home. So much for Google maps.

We're a little older and wiser about snowy roads these days (he said, tongue in cheek) and tend to wait for the plows. Though, there was this one time last year. Tired of being cooped up, we decided to explore. We found a road with another house for sale and, out of curiosity, headed down a two-track. Yep, it was after another snowfall. We had to wait a minute for some guys to finish clearing a fallen tree, then we meandered on side streets in a lightly populated area.

Down one street the road began to narrow, but the navigator (she was driving) decided to keep going. A two-track followed power lines, and we thought it was a shortcut back to the main road. Instead, it led us onto woodsy, snow-covered dunes and got rougher. You know those two-tracks with no turnarounds? This was one. We managed to back up to a wide spot and

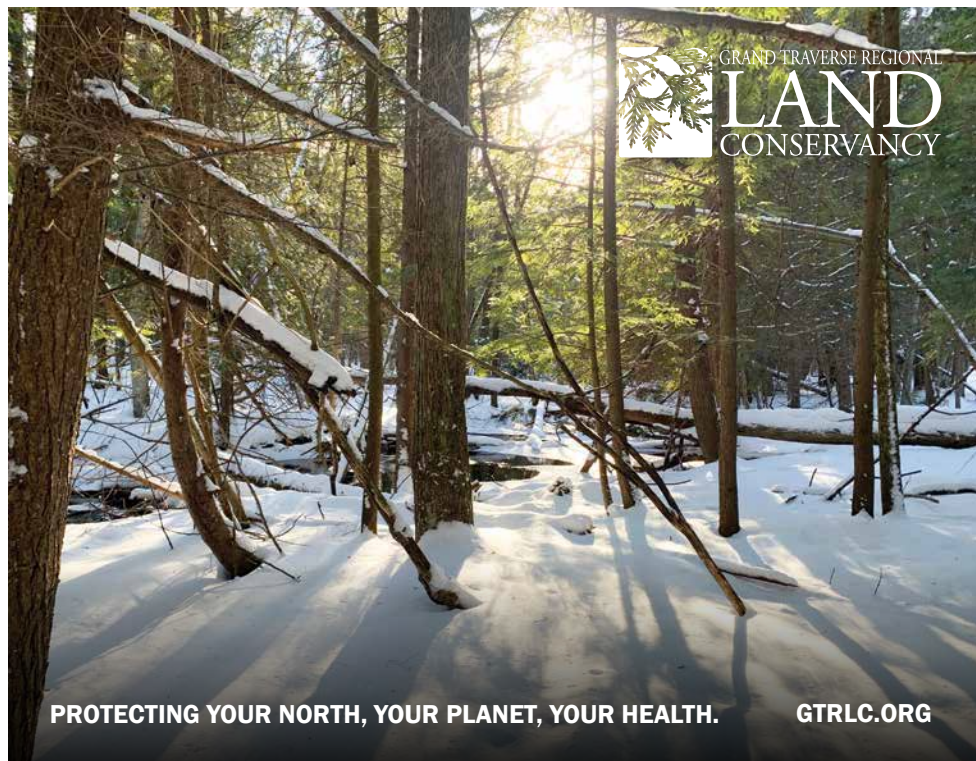
attempted to turn. We landed sideways across the track, in a hollow that managed to put our car tires high enough off the surface that it was like floating in air, with the tires spinning.

This mishap called for a tow truck to first find us, using GPS, then figure out how to get our rears turned in the right direction. With a little maneuvering, and a lot of pushing and grunting from me and the tow driver, we were finally on our way. As we waited for the tow, we saw a "new" bird come wandering out of the trees to look us over. A grouse. Jean thought it was going to attack me, but I think it was just curious to see what these two idiots were doing there.

So, that brings us to this winter with the Christmas blizzard. We didn't make it to a beach. We just hung at home watching the snow come down, NOT driving in it. And I swear, no more backroad stuck-in-the-snow days.

But, hey, it's still a ways until spring, right?

Kevin Howell is a Mason County freelance writer. He loves the Michigan woods, lakes and especially Michigan craft beers — not necessarily in that order!



- ✓ Engine Repair & Services
- ✓ Transmission Repair to Replacement
- ✓ Brakes, Steering & Suspension
- ✓ Oil Changes & Maintenance
- ✓ Tire Services
- ✓ Experienced Mechanics
- ✓ Competitive Pricing
- ✓ 12-Month Service Warranties

231.399.0500
 620 Frankfort Ave., Elberta
 willoughbytireandauto.com

VOTED BEST
 IN BENZIE CO!

OPEN Mon.-Fri.
 8am-5:30pm
 CLOSED SAT./SUN.

WILLOUGHBY
 TIRE AND AUTO

ST. AMBROSE CELLARS
OPEN DAILY AT NOON

OPEN MIC THURSDAY
LIVE MUSIC FRI & SAT
INDOOR SEATING!

WWW.STAMBROSECELLARS.COM
FOR MORE INFORMATION!

MI BACKYARD

The hidden life of ermine

By JENNIFER DEVINE

Living in a mostly untouched 20-acre forest, we've been able to see our share of native plants and animals. From the normal deer and mice to animals my eyes had never seen previously, like ruffed grouse and bald eagles.

At dawn in early 2022, our ears began picking up the telltale scritch of mice as we enjoyed our morning coffee at the table. We had set out homeopathic repellent, like balsam sachets, and even resorted to kill traps, but this critter was very sneaky. Dear Husband (DH) kept telling me it was not a mouse, but I was skeptical. What other animal could come inside, and our big, bad German Shepherd would stay unmoving? The clink of dog food nuggets in his bowl sounded in the mudroom, and all he would do is look over and sigh.

A few late-winter mornings later, DH had taken the dog out for a walk and left me to the peace and quiet of the cabin. Coffee in hand, I sat with a dog bowl in my periphery. Scratching sounds began and I looked to the left. The cute little face of a weasel (Mustela) was staring back at me. The Disney Princess in me spoke, "So you're the sneaky little fella that befriended the dog, huh?"

It was like a whack-a-mole game as his slinky body shot back fast into the less-than-1-inch hole in the wall.

I looked up "weasels" online and learned of two that call the cold woods of Michigan home. One is the highly mobile, sleek, short-legged and black tip-tailed ermine (Mustela erminea), which turns all-white in winter, and the other is the smaller and shorter-tailed least weasel (Mustela nivalis). My research shifted from both weasel types to

only ermine when we happened to snap this picture of ours, mid change, venturing from under our deck during spring thaw. As the weather warms, his white coat will change to brown on top and off-white underneath.

These carnivorous mammals like to live around farms and households with small animals and animal feed. They keep dens in multiple places in the woods — near rivers, underground and in fallen logs — while also denning under sheds and abandoned buildings. They don't usually invade inhabited homes, but some comments online suggest more than one household cat has caught them indoors. Not having any issues with chickens, ducks or rabbits disappearing, I wasn't too concerned with these "vermin." They must have been partaking in their second-favorite foods of frogs, mice, insects, berries and, in our case, old hidden chicken eggs under the deck, plus the dog food.

According to esf.edu (the website of the Adirondack Ecological Center-SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry), "Ermine kill prey by biting the base of the skull, and when attacking larger prey, cling to the struggling victim with both front and hind limbs. The notion that the weasels suck the blood of the prey is a myth. However, before they begin to feed on flesh and internal organs, weasels often lick the blood from the wounds ... because of the uncertainty of locating prey, [ermine] often kills more than it can eat at once, caching the excess...."

Ermine are territorial, maintaining and patrolling exclusive boundaries marked with scent. Fast-footed, nocturnal and athletic, they can cover more than 8 miles



Jennifer Devine captured this photo last spring of their ermine, its coat in mid change, as it emerged from its hiding place beneath their deck.

in a single night, easily climb trees, swim well, leap forward 20 inches and reach a 6-foot vertical! All their senses are sharp and used for hunting, hiding and mating.

These critters do not mate for life as they are polygynous (promiscuous). Mating happens in early summer and a female will give birth to an average of six young after 280 days. Young are blind and helpless. They grow quickly and hunt with their mother by week eight. Females do not reach adult size until week six and often get mated when they are an average of 65 days old, before they are weaned. After 7-12 weeks, young are fully weaned. Males grow to their full adult size by the next year and won't breed until then. Females are smaller, hunt underground and survive for at least two breeding seasons. Males hunt above ground and get trapped more often, thus not surviving as long. The number of offspring an ermine has depends on the amount of food available.

Ermine have few predators and often perish due to lack of food, instead of being the food, though royalty once wore their fur. In Native American cultures, they are symbols of "energy, ingenuity and stealth," according to Beverly Two Feathers, writing for Native-American Totems.com. In other Native traditions, they are seen as symbols of transformation, new beginnings and hope. Look and listen for ermine as you play outdoors in 2023.

Jennifer Devine has a passion for writing and plants. Living in cities and homesteading off grid has offered a myriad of experiences, memories and adventures with her family as they utilize the natural resources Michigan has to offer within their crafts, cooking and all-around lives.

Everyone Waves

*Should old acquaintance be forgot
 and never brought to mind,
 Let's sip a cup of kindness, dear
 for Aulde Lang Syne.*

Everyone waves
 in our small village
 as we pass by each other
 along the road
 even on snow-driven blustery days.
 Briefly, we are on the same page,
 friends, kin, community.
 What if we all generously
 extended this gracious moment
 to our estrangements, our alienations,
 those we've dismissed?
 What if we reach out
 to our friend we've ghosted,
 family we shun?
 Why not
 one more nudge open
 in the door
 slammed
 on those we feel
 betrayed us?
 A tincture of compassion
 and humble uncertainty
 to touch across the divide?
 Come on!
 Let's jump
 into the small-town truck
 trapped in the frozen part
 of our soul,
 shift into a new gear
 hit the road,
 surrender
 to at least one more
 gracious wave
 at the passerby
 who once we held
 close in our heart.

By Louisa Loveridge Gallas
 riverlakelou@gmail.com

Notes on Everyone Waves: My sadness over broken relationships I've witnessed and my hope that some fresh moment of generosity might begin healing led to this poem. I was also inspired by our Arcadia tradition of frequent friendly waves as folks drive by; in fact, if you usually do wave and then one day fail to, you may well get a phone call to be sure you're OK!!



Ermine in its full winter coat. Steven Hint, Wikimedia Commons.

Like Our Paper?




Do you enjoy our stories?
Please donate today!

We are not a charitable organization, and there is no tax advantage to your contribution, but we appreciate your support of our FREE paper.

Please send to Freshwater Planet, LLC
PO Box 188, Manistee, MI 49660
THANK YOU!

MARIE MARFIA FINE ART
AND THE
BONAFIDE GALLERY



Working artist's studio and gallery featuring local landscapes, portraits and skeleton art.

Ludington, Michigan
Hours by Appointment
MarieMarfia.com • 904-566-4473

RECREATIONAL 5-ACRE PARCEL



BENZIE COUNTY. Along the Benzie-Manistee snowmobile trail, N.E. of Thompsonville on Bentley Rd. Next to state acreage. Near two rivers for paddling/fishing. Mix of hardwoods and cedars. Property used for outdoor fun, including hunting. Rough wooden cabin is old & needs TLC. Owner says there's an artesian well on the N.W. property corner. **\$39,900** 1897023

Stapleton Realty
Christine Stapleton
Cell/Text 231-499-2698
www.cd Stapleton.com



KNOWLEDGE. SERVICE. INTEGRITY.

Family Owned for 60 Years



HERE to help YOU with your Hardware & Building Projects
www.honorbldgsupply.com
(231) 889-3456
4847 Main Street, Onekama

MEMBER FOCUSED COMMUNITY BASED JOIN NOW!

SAVE | BORROW | INVEST | BUSINESS
FILERCUCOM



FILER CREDIT UNION

Pine River rafting offers wintry wonders

By **CHRISTINE STAPLETON**

On one of those rare January days when the sun was shining warmly, skies were blue and the wind was resting, my friend Pat and I experienced a magical winter rafting trip on the Pine River. The float was guided by Jake Miltner, and we requested the company of his snowdog Hoxey.

Jake and his wife Alaney are the owner-operators of Pine River Paddlesports Center, founded by Jake's father Mark Miltner 40-plus years ago. They offer summer and winter river trips and all kinds of rental equipment to float on the Pine and Manistee rivers. The center's three-season headquarters is located east of Wellston off M-37 and includes a sporting goods store and a campground.



Jake Miltner and mascot Hoxey. Photo: C. Stapleton

The winter rafting trip, however, begins near the Walker bridge within the Manistee National Forest. I met Pat at a service center at the intersection of M-37 and M-55. We drove together to the landing, several miles south. Not knowing what to expect, we were ready with heavy winter clothing, blankets, water bottles and cameras. Another couple arrived about the same time, and we pulled on



Alaney guides a second raft. Photo: P. Stinson



Pat, Hoxey and Chris. Photo: J. Miltner

the offered lifejackets and piled in our raft ahead of theirs. Jake instructed us to sit on the sides, not the interior, and he hopped in the back and pushed us away from shore. We never spied the other raft again until we reached a large bend in the river toward the end of the trip.

The water flowed slowly and smoothly, giving us plenty of time to observe the wonders on the river along our way.

Some of our memorable river moments included three different eagle sightings, close and spectacular. The water along the edges of the banks, and in and out of the trees, was frozen into honeycombs and small icicles. They sparkled as the sun danced along with us. Jake was a wealth of information about the history of the area and the river. He pointed out some of the



Beaver sign. Photo: C. Stapleton

different vegetation, including brilliant red-osier dogwood, and even showed us a hidden, small waterfall. He also told us about the behind-the-scenes work they do to keep the river navigable. Sometimes they use a boat to get to trees that need cutting after they have fallen across the river! Other trees over the river create beautiful archways or low bridges for critters, with plenty of headroom for river travelers.

The trip was a little more than an hour long and because of the beautiful weather we stayed warm and dry. We got out near the Lincoln bridge. Jake offered us a ride



Bent tree arches over the Pine River. Photo: P. Stinson



Icicles form on twig ends. Photo: P. Stinson

back to the car and we let him take our gear but opted to walk the two miles back on the Silver Creek Pathway. This is a gorgeous trail along the river, with many climbs to panoramic river overlooks. There were two small and scenic bridges to cross. At the end, we took a minor wrong turn but managed to find our way back to the start, where we were warmly greeted and given delicious homemade cookies.

I can highly recommend this winter adventure experience. It's obvious the Miltners love what they do, and they made our outing special and enjoyable.

Christine Stapleton is the broker-owner of Stapleton Realty. She lives on a farm with babydoll sheep, an affectionate barn cat and three high-spirited border collies. In winter she enjoys ice fishing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

Curling

continued from page 1

grip the handles, and their teams that sweep a path toward the “house” for a score, the stones will be the focus of activity at the new center.

Five “sheets” of ice will greet curlers in the TC Curling Center. During my recent visit to the center with Don Piche, there was lots of activity. But no one was wearing the special shoes needed to grip the ice on the “hack,” the raised footholds curlers use to push themselves and their rocks forward. Instead, work boots were the footwear of choice of electricians and carpenters who were putting finishing touches on the 28,000-square-foot facility.



From left: Don Piche, Lindy Kellogg, Cara Colburn, David Truax. Courtesy photo.

The sport of curling is unique among sports in that anyone can play, and teams are co-ed, Piche explained. He said he especially enjoys curling because it fosters a unique esprit de corps among people of all ages. Piche is proud that the American curling team had performed so well in the recent Winter Olympics. He said he expects that his club will host Olympic-level competitions in the future. A “bonspiel” is scheduled to take place at the new TC Curling Center in April. Bonspiel is a Dutch word that means “a good fight,” according to Piche.

For curling competition to take place,



An open house will be held at the new Traverse City Curling Center on Jan. 28 and 29. Photo by S.A. McFerran.

care must be taken to prepare the surface of the ice. No Zamboni will be used on the sheets of ice where the stones slide. Instead, a large blade is kept very cold and is drawn across the surface of the ice.

All four curlers on each team are careful to keep their special shoes clean. Any bit of sand or grit on the ice will bring the stone to a grinding halt. Team members “sweep” the ice to speed the stone’s travel on a preferred trajectory. There is much furious sweeping as the stones move toward the “house,” large circular targets on the ice at each end of the sheet. The house is where stones come to rest and scores are achieved.

Complex strategy is employed to place the stones on the center of the bullseye. After the stone is released at the hog line, the curler must stop. However, the other three team members continue with the slow-moving stone and guide it with broom sweeps until it comes to rest. Opposing teams frequently knock their opponent’s stones off scoring positions attained in the house. The outcome of each match often comes down to the last stone weaving a



Cara Colburn and Sayeed, a German technician with ISS (Ice Sport and Solar). Courtesy photo.

path, with the help of sweepers, to slowly come to rest on the red circle.

After victory, or defeat, beer will be available in the lounge, with views of the hack, hog line and house. Video cameras above the action will show stones jostling for position as loungers choose their beverages and cheer on their teams.

Piche said curling is the fastest-growing winter sport in the country. Indeed,

opportunities to learn to curl are available at the West Shore Community Ice Arena in Scottville and on a miniature (half) sheet with a small group of your choosing at Stormcloud Brewing in Frankfort. There are other places to curl within a couple hours’ drive or so of Manistee or Ludington. Maple City, northwest of Traverse City, and Lewiston, east of Gaylord, each has two sheets. The Midland Curling Club has four sheets.

Ludington Area Curling Club

West Shore Community Ice Arena, West Shore Community College, 3000 Stiles Rd., Scottville. www.westshorecia.com. 231-843-9712. Lessons currently offered at the ice rink. (See Calendar on page 2.)

Stormcloud Brewing Private Group Curling Lessons

Stormcloud Brewing, 303 Main St., Frankfort. www.stormcloudbrewing.com/private-curling. 231-352-0118. Group lessons by appointment only.

Traverse City Curling Club

TC Curling Center, 1712 S. Garfield Ave., Traverse City. <https://tccurling.org>. Follow them on Facebook @tccurling. info@tccurling.org. 231-412-7748.

Leelanau Curling Club

Broomstack Kitchen & Taphouse, 172 W. Burdickville Rd., Maple City. curling@eatdrinkcurl.com. 231-631-6763

Lewiston Curling Club

4230 Co. Rd. 612, Lewiston. www.lewistoncurlingclub.com 989-786-3888. Lessons offered.

Midland Curling Club

2009 S. Jefferson Ave. Midland. club@midlandcurls.org. 832-793-2212

S.A. McFerran has always enjoyed sport. He has skied, canoed and sailed and reported on snurfing, swimming, pickleball and disc golf. McFerran recently learned about curling and says he has yet to approach the hog line with a stone but hopes to in the near future.

Sauce Boss

continued from page 1

my first babysitter.

I was not even a year old, so I must go with what people tell me, but I guess I was quite the escape artist. The traffic on Cass and Third was backed up one day because in the street was a toddler, crawling on hands and knees. Yes, me. That was my parents’ last straw; they were moving north. Two dogs, four Siamese cats and me. This was not the end of my adventures, however.

When I was about two, I wandered off into the woods here in the north and, of course, my parents freaked out. My father went to the logical place, the Oak Grove Tavern, and rounded up a posse to go looking for me. Everyone spread out for miles trying to find me. They found me leaning against a pine tree and taking a nap. All three dogs were there: Daisy, a poodle/terrier, queen bitch of the three; Joey, a rescue from the woods — half wolf, half black spaniel; and Jessica, a lab, not as intelligent as you might think, though loyal as the day is long. They were very protective of me, so I always felt safe.

Fast forward to my late 30’s again. I didn’t have any fitting takers for “insemination” at the time, so I decided to get the dog first. I asked around about husky/timber wolf pups. I wanted a mix because a wolf will stay on its own property. A husky will run 30 miles before stopping for water. Well, I didn’t find what I was looking for, but remember that litter of Siberian wolves (aka huskies) at the beginning of this



Chione after sneaking into the eggnog.

tale? Five of those pups sold fast because of the beautiful markings. What was left was this all-white, beautiful glacier-blue-eyed female puppy. I took her everywhere with me, let everyone love on her because I wanted her to love, not attack. She thought everyone was her new best friend. She was a Siberian, so people were spooked at first and asked if she bit; she would never bite, but she might have licked you to death.

I will end with, I would never drug an animal or put booze in their water. That is not funny; that is abuse. Now, in my home eggnog is holiday tradition. We make a big

ol’ bowl of it and, you know, I do not spare the bourbon. One year, that eggnog bowl was five feet above the floor on Christmas Eve when we went to bed, and Christmas morning it was on the floor ... empty! Chione is Greek for white, or snow, and the story behind it is about a truly blameless woman. Well, I can blame her for lapping up all that eggnog.

Joshua Elie is a musician and retired building contractor. He now enjoys life as a homesteader.

Chione’s Eggnog

- 4 eggs
- 1 14-oz can sweetened condensed milk
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 quart milk
- 1 cup bourbon (Evan Williams is my preference)

Separate the egg whites from the yolks. In a big bowl, beat the egg yolks, then beat in the condensed milk, regular milk and salt. Mix in the bourbon. Beat the egg whites in a mixing bowl until they peak (get thick). Fold them in. You can add a little vanilla and/or some nutmeg on top to make it fancy, though I like my bourbon not tainted with extra spices.



Nordic Skiing, Manistee: an ode to Michigan winters

Story and photos by EMILY COOK

While I was in high school, I went with my dad to purchase my first set of cross-country skis. Living downstate at the time, we ventured to Bill & Paul's Sporthaus in Grand Rapids where I was given a set of classic Fischer skis and matching boots. My dad got the same, albeit mine were a bit shorter, and we were on our way. As runners, to us it seemed cross-country skiing was a natural "next step" in staying active during Michigan's long winter months.

With no real knowledge of the sport or proper body mechanics, I ventured onto state land across the road from my childhood home and learned by trial and error — often landing on my back, struggling to get up as my skis crossed during a fall. In theory, the back-and-forth gliding motion should be simple, not too different than walking (or running), but deep snow and even the slightest elevation change provided a unique challenge.

Flash forward 18 years. I still love the day we finally have enough snowfall to warrant bringing my skis up from the basement. It's the same pair of Fischer skis I purchased with my dad. They look their age and are certainly not perfect for my preferred skiing locations. However, the nostalgia attached to them — and my refusal to part with any gear that isn't physically broken — means they remain my go-to.

While some of our most recent winters have left plenty to be desired, snow-wise, Michigan still delivers opportunities to venture outdoors in colder months. When my family relocated to Benzie County 17 years ago, and I personally landed permanently in Arcadia 7 years ago, my eyes were opened to the many ways one can explore northwest Michigan from cross-country skis.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have the Arcadia Dunes Nature Preserve trails at my fingertips. A 5-minute drive from my house, the backcountry stillness of snow-covered mountain bike trails offer a true Nordic ski workout. Loops ranging from 1 mile all the way up to 10 miles (and more if you factor in two-track roads) allow for a "choose your own adventure" experience. If I'm lucky, someone will have beaten me to the trails and broken a more skiable pathway. The trails are not groomed and are shared with snowshoers, boot-packers (winter hikers), and sometimes even fat tire bikes. To some, these conditions are not ideal for skiing. However, just sliding through the mature hemlock forests makes it worth the unknown trail conditions.



Joe Frederick cross-country skis in Arcadia Dunes.

My almost 20-year-old skis? This is where they leave a little to be desired. Long and skinny, they were made for groomed and tracked trails. At times, it can be frustrating to navigate through deep snow on the wrong equipment. If you are new to backcountry skiing, you can get skis just for that — and the styles are only improving! Shorter and wider skis, with metal edges, are designed for breaking through non-traditional trails and gliding more easily through ungroomed snow.

There are other supreme skiing

opportunities. The Big M Recreation Area, along M-55, about 20 minutes outside the City of Manistee, offers more than 18 miles of groomed trails. Partnering with the Forest Service, an active group of volunteers work to maintain the trails and even plan fun events such as moonlight skiing. More information on conditions, along with maps, can be found at www.skibigm.org.

The Manistee Non-Motorized Trails Park offers another chance to explore in a groomed setting. Three miles from the



Winter trails and hemlocks.

US-31/M-55 intersection, this 170-acre property is owned by the City of Manistee. Mostly flat, it can be a great location for beginning skiers to practice and become more comfortable with the Nordic style. www.skimanistee.org provides up-to-date grooming information. Note: Skate skiers zoom along this trail too.

Bring your long, skinny skis for these locations. Tracked trails are a dream for my old Fischers, one of the reasons I will likely keep them for as long as possible.

It's easy to cocoon indoors, waiting for winter's gray skies to lift. However, skiing can provide a wonderful reprieve from cold-weather blues. There's scientific evidence that exercising outdoors can provide boosts to serotonin. Fresh air is often the cure-all for my own bouts of seasonal depression.

As I wrap-up my words of encouragement to explore in winter, I can see through my office window that more snow is falling. It's adding a soft, fluffy layer to the existing foot we received over Christmas. With the blizzard subsiding, it's clearly time to make my annual trip to the basement to retrieve my hardy old skis.

Emily Cook is a resident of Arcadia where she lives with her husband and two collies. She is a conservationist by training and a writer and artist when time allows. She explores nearby nature trails and the Lake Michigan beach as much as possible.



A different kind of Dune Ride

By PAT STINSON

SLEEPING BEAR DUNES — Many moons ago, when a younger version of myself worked in a small office in Empire, I heard about a group of people who would slide down the nearby snow-covered Dune Climb in their kayaks. At the time, I thought that sounded like a whole lot of crazy fun, but I never took the extra time in the freezing cold to lug my kayak out of its hidey-hole in the root cellar, throw it and some foam on the roof of my Honda, and cinch all the straps needed to drive us safely the 26 miles to work. Go ahead. Cue that ol' Leon Redbone rendition of "Lazy Bones".

Then, two years ago, my good friend Pam suggested I make the drive from

Manistee to join her and her two grade-school-aged granddaughters for some sledding down that gigantic dune. I smiled, envisioning grasping the looped handles on silver saucers or putting my boots on the steering bar of a wooden sled, a rope in my hands. By the time I pulled in the parking lot beside them, the girls had already tuckered themselves out repeatedly climbing and sliding down the big sand hill, which by now looked more like a foothill on Colorado's Front Range.

Not yet ready to call it an afternoon herself, Pam pulled two shiny, flat, narrow sheets of bright blue plastic from the back of her van. These thin, slippery sheets were all that would separate our backsides from

the bumps and dips in the frozen dune. There was no easy way to park this type of "sled" as you positioned yourself on it. It was more like running after it and jumping on top before lying back, feet first, as it quickly gained speed down the impossibly big hill, my screams and whoops trailing behind it.

I confess, it was a whole lot of crazy fun. And I'm sure the view of the Glen lakes at the summit was as breathtaking as ever, only I never made it all the way to the top to see it. Still, from midway up, I did get a nice view of Alligator Hill and a narrow slice of frozen Glen Lake, and I felt I earned my cold beer afterward at Joe's Friendly Tavern.



Above. Ludington State Park Interpreter Alan Wernette leads a group on his Saturday guided snowshoe hikes. Top right. A family stops to read a story card along the lantern lit trail during a combination book walk/lantern lit hike in 2022. Two book walk events this year will coincide with lantern lit hikes. Right. Lanterns on shepherd hooks line the one-mile trail.



Snowshoeing hikes for all

By CARMELITTA TIFFANY. Photos by STEVE BEGNOCHE.

Michigan winter and snowshoes go mitten in mitten.

For many who remain in northwest Michigan year-round, winter can be as enjoyable as busy summer months. Fortunately, there are plenty of places to experience the area's beauty when Mother Nature is cloaked in white.

Two local state parks, Ludington State Park and Manistee's Orchard Beach State Park, offer miles of trails for winter activities. A Michigan Recreation Passport is required for vehicle entry to the state parks, but the snowshoe hikes are free.

A third park, Michigan Legacy Art Park, on the Benzie-Manistee border, offers guided hikes through its outdoor sculpture park for a per person fee that includes snowshoe rental and park entry.

Ludington State Park 8800 W. M-116, Ludington

Located north of Ludington on M116, Ludington State Park is situated between the 5,000-acre Hamlin Lake and 7 miles of sandy Lake Michigan shoreline.

These guided programs include some of the most beautiful State Park scenery, through woods and snow-covered sand dunes. The Friends of the Ludington State Park, park staff, and park interpreter Alan Wernette work together to groom a trail for walking, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing. Snowshoes are provided for those who need them. Age 8 and up.

The Friends of the Ludington State

Park volunteers can help people new to snowshoeing. If there isn't sufficient snow, the hikes are on foot and still offer an exhilarating way to enjoy the park.

Guided Saturday Afternoon Winter Snowshoe Walks

- Saturdays, Jan. 14, 21, 28 and Feb. 4, 11, 18.
- Meet at the Park's Warming Shelter at 1 p.m.
- Guided nature and history walks through the wooded sand dunes on snowshoes.

Guided Saturday Night Winter Snowshoe Walks

- Saturdays, Jan. 14, 28 and Feb. 11.
- Meet at the Park's Warming Shelter at 6 p.m.
- Guided nature and history snowshoe walks through the wooded sand dunes under the stars and moonlight.

Winter Night Lantern Lit Trail Events

- Saturdays, Jan. 21 and Feb. 4 and 18 from 6 to 8 p.m.
- Starting at the Park's Warming Shelter.
- Walk, ski, or snowshoe one of the park's trails through the wooded sand dunes under the illumination of 75 lanterns.
- Be rewarded once getting to the Amphitheater where a warm campfire and free hot cocoa awaits you. Trail distance is one-half mile over easy terrain.

Orchard Beach State Park 2064 Lakeshore Rd., Manistee

Orchard Beach State Park is best known for its spectacular views of sunsets and Lake Michigan. Please note: Due to high water and erosion, access to the beach (only available via the stairs) is closed.

The Friends of Orchard Beach State Park will lead a hike on a lighted park trail or in the campground. Star party with NASA/Solar System Ambassador Brooke Edwards will happen on selected dates with clear skies.

Snowshoe Hike & Star Parties

- Jan. 13 and 28 and Feb. 12 and 25.
- Meet at the Shelter House at 6 p.m.
- Warm fires in the fireplaces. Hot chocolate and coffee available.
- Sponsored by Friends of Orchard Beach State Park.

Visit <https://www.michigan.org/property/orchard-beach-state-park> for more information.

Michigan Legacy Art Park/ Crystal Mountain Resort Snowshoe Introduction and Hike

12500 Mountain Drive, Thompsonville
Enjoy a guided tour of Michigan Legacy Art Park with rental snowshoes from Crystal Mountain. The special packaged rate of \$20 per person includes Crystal Mountain snowshoe rental and Art Park entrance fee per event. Saturday dates are Jan. 14, Feb. 11 and Feb. 18.

The snowshoe tours will include an introduction to using snowshoes, followed by a one-hour snowshoe around the Art Park.

To attend the tour, arrive at 9:30 a.m. at Park at Water's Edge (across from the Mountain Market) at Crystal Mountain to register and be sized for rental snowshoes. Tours begin at 10 a.m. at the Art Park. Visit <https://michlegacyartpark.org/snowshoe-series/> for more information.

Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy

A guided snowshoe hike led by Sally Manke will be offered on Jan. 28, 1-3pm, at Arcadia Dunes, Camp Arcadia Loop. On Feb. 11, Mark Rogers will lead a hike from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Upper Manistee Headwaters. Find details on Calendar page 2. gtrlc.org

Fat Tire Bicycle Snow Trails

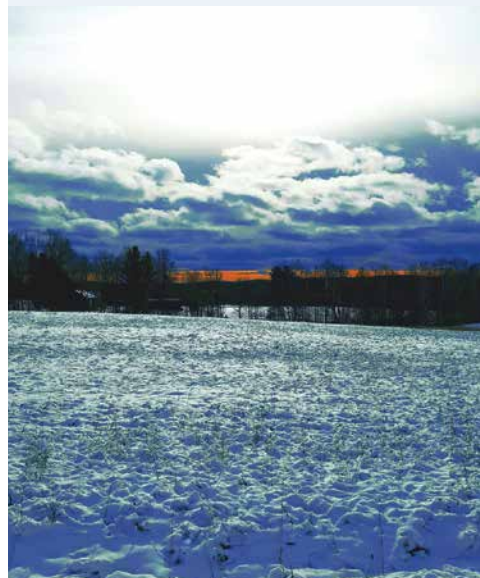
From staff reports

Big M trails in Wellston, Manistee County, offer a groomed 17-mile advanced Outer Loop and 6 miles of fairly level fat-tire bicycling. Check with the Manistee Cross Country Ski Council and Shoreline Cycling Club (or skibigm.org) for moonlit ski/fat-tire bicycling events. National Forest parking fee applies. Onsite pay station available.

Non-Motorized Trail Park, just east of Meijer off M-55 in Manistee County, has 5.4 miles of groomed trails for fat-tire bicycling. visitmanisteecounty.com/winter-trails-slopes

Crystal Mountain in Thompsonville (Benzie County) provides 12 miles of fat-tire bicycle groomed trails and offers bike rentals. Trail conditions: 888-968-7686 ext. 7000. More at: crystallmountain.com/activities/fat-tire-snow-biking/

Silver Lake State Park in Mears (Oceana County) has a new fat-tire bike season, Dec. 15-March 15, at the ORV area. According to an MDNR news release, bicyclists can ride from 8 a.m. to dusk on 450 acres of open sand dunes with 80-100 foot elevation changes and Lake Michigan access. Learn more at Michigan.gov/SilverLake. Michigan Recreation Passport required for motorized vehicles entering the park.



FRESHWATER REPORTER

A fresh approach to storytelling in Manistee and Mason counties...and a bit beyond.

P.O. Box 188, Manistee, MI 49660 231-835-0867 editor@freshwater-reporter.com

Publisher/Editor: Pat Stinson Co-conspirator: Mark Videan

Graphic design/layout: Amy Hansen Advertising Sales: Pat Stinson/Stewart McFerran

Contributors: Emily Cook, Jennifer Devine, Joshua Elie, Louisa Loveridge Gallas, Kevin Howell, Stewart McFerran, John Nale, Christine Stapleton, Carmelitta Tiffany

Freshwater Reporter is published by Freshwater Planet LLC of Manistee. We distribute free copies in Manistee, Mason, western Lake, and western Wexford counties. Advertising inquiries are welcome, as are suggestions, articles, poems and photos. ©2023, Freshwater Planet, LLC, all rights reserved. Visit our website at www.freshwater-reporter.com. Like us on Facebook. Follow us on Instagram.