

U. P. Environment

Quarterly Newsletter
for the
Upper Peninsula
Environmental Coalition,
The oldest grassroots
environmental organization
in the U.P.



UPEC President, Jon Saari, takes his turn at the podium during the forum portion of the presentation

Photo by Connie Julien

Summer 2009



Deer with antlers in summer velvet

Photo by Jeannine McKenzie

“Celebrate” a Huge Success!

Whether held in a small room or a large conference area, the result of each presentation was pretty much the same: SRO. Standing Room Only.

On Saturday, March 28, UPEC packed three houses—the Landmark Inn, the Federated Women’s Clubhouse and the Peter White Library—with hundreds of people as they listened intently to nearly two dozen outdoors activists, hikers, artists, historians, naturalists and others share their love for and knowledge of the U.P.

- We mentally paddled our kayaks alongside Sam Crowley as he led us via slide presentation into the striated sandstone caves of Pictured Rocks.
- We wandered Bear Bluff, Horseshoe Harbor and other storied places in the U.P. that Eric Hansen loves to visit.
- We nodded in happy agreement when birder Scott Stewart noted that, in just a couple more weeks, Brockway Mountain, (Continued on page 7)

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Don't forget those Econo Foods Slips!

Thanks to you and Econo Foods, UPEC has earned several hundred dollars over the past few years by submitting grocery receipts from the store collected by UPEC members. That amount represents 1% of total gross receipts from all the slips.

That may not seem like a lot, but when you're a non-profit organization every little bit helps. Of course, that amount could be even higher this year if more of you were to save your slips and send them to us!

Either save them throughout the year and mail them off to us before the end of May, or simply hand them to a UPEC board member when you attend a meeting—whichever is most convenient. It's one of the easier ways you can offer your support.

About UPEC...

The Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition has a 30-year track record of protecting and seeking to maintain the unique environmental qualities of the U.P. through public education and watchful monitoring of industry and government.

UPEC seeks common ground with diverse individuals and organizations in order to promote sound planning and management decisions for all the region's natural resources.

Our newsletter, the *U.P. Environment*, is published four times a year.

You can send your comments or contributions to UPEC by standard mail at P.O. Box 673, Houghton, MI 49931, or e-mail us from our website at upenvironment.org.



UPEC is a proud member Of Earth Share of Michigan, an organization that allows working people to donate to environmental organizations through work place giving campaigns.

Each year Earth Share provides UPEC with critically-needed funding for environmental education and program operation.

If you would like to help us earn more funding for UPEC, consider letting your employer know you want the Earth Share of Michigan giving option at your workplace and give to the annual payroll deduction plan.

For more information, please call 1 (800) 386-3326 or view the website at www.earthsharemichigan.org

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Celebration Loud and Clear

For myself and, I suspect, many others, the UPEC-sponsored Celebration of the U.P. on March 28 was a rousing success.

It brought to mind the thoughts of a backcountry ski guru who once noted that great trips are not just memorable for the notable variety and quality of their content. He believed that an outing qualified for status as a classic when you spot a half dozen more trips you want to do along the way.

"Celebrate the U.P." met that standard and became an instant classic.

Not only were the presentations and visiting that day outstanding, but I left with a got-to-be-there-next-year sense of presentations I had missed and dearly wanted to see; conversations that had been all too short and that I looked forward to continuing.

Other thoughts emerged during the days that followed. Lingering enthusiasm from The Celebration event seemed to add valuable perspective to our current challenges and campaigns.

We are conservation activists and we speak out.

Inevitably, those that hear us speak out on an issue wonder what our motivations are. They wonder whether we are just outspoken people -- or whether we speak for good reason. Whether our motivation to be against something boils down to "not in my backyard" or whether we are clearly acting so that it is "not in anyone's backyard". Whether we care about them and their families, and their ability to make a living, or whether we just want their vote and then will be on our way.

They want to know what makes us tick.

Something about The Celebration brought a simple truth home: how much easier these conversations are -- whether on a front porch or in an op-ed essay, visiting at a boat landing or on public radio, at the market or at a hearing -- when we lead with measured tones of affection for what motivates us, the land that heals us all.

Weeks later, the themes from March 28 were generating even more ideas. Phyllis Northup, an artist and leading light in the Munising arts scene, and I visited over coffee at the Falling Rock Café.

It was a far ranging conversation but it often returned to one central thought: the positive effects of "Celebrating the U.P." becoming more than an event but something akin to an ongoing campaign. We were particularly fascinated with the possibilities of what "Artists and Authors Celebrating the U.P." could become.

That is a conversation all of us should continue.

-Eric Hansen, conservation activist, hiking author and "Celebrate the U.P." presenter



Eric Hansen talking to a rapt audience

Photo by Connie Julien

UPEC Aids Students' Water Study

Last year, Superior Central science teacher Tim Bliss won one of our Environmental Education grants. Part of the money was used to purchase hip waders and the rest went to the acquisition of a Lamotte Chemical Analysis Kit. With those critical aids, he and his middle and high school students launched a year-long water quality study of two nearby bodies of water: Quarry Pond and the South Branch of the Slapneck River.



The Superior Central students diving into their research!

Photos courtesy of Tim Bliss

The 3rd and 7th hour science classes spent hours testing water samples. They checked for the presence of macro invertebrates, and, with the help of the kit, measured pH levels, alkalinity, turbidity, conductivity, phosphates, nitrates, dissolved oxygen and water temperature. At the end of the study, students produced brochures with their results.

Here are some of their published observations:

“Macroinvertebrates (can be) seen with the unaided eye...The abundance of certain macroinvertebrates in the water can indicate the following water quality...

- Excellent: Caddis Flies and Mayflies
- Good: Dragonflies and the clam
- Poor: Leeches and the Black fly
- Bad: Maggots and Blood Midges

Due to the abundance of caddis flies found in the Quarry, our water quality is excellent.”

“The temperature of a body of water influences its overall quality. Water temperatures outside ‘normal’ range for a stream or river can cause harm to the aquatic organisms that live there. Thermal pollution cause by human activities is one factor that can affect water temperature.”

“Phosphates are necessary for plant life, but if you have too much... phosphates begin to stimulate unnatural rates of plant growth.”

“Based on our data we have come to the conclusion that the Slapneck Creek has excellent water quality.” And “All of our data proves that our quarry pond has great water quality. Thank you for reading.”



-Ed.



Pearly Everlastings

Photo by Jeannine McKenzie

Plant Society Schedules Summer, Early Fall Field Trips

The North Woods Native Plant Society is a group of professional and amateur botanists interested in learning about and preserving the native plants and ecosystems of the western U.P. and northern Wisconsin. We plan free field trips to special places every summer. These trips are open to folks at all levels of botanical knowledge. We email details of each trip 10 - 14 days before the trip. If you'd like to receive updated trip plans, please contact me, Sherry Zoars, at nwnpsociety@gmail.com.

Plant Society Summer and Early Fall Field Trips

- Saturday, June 13** - van Vliet Tract (Presque Isle, WI) - Rod Sharka, Quita Sheehan
- Saturday, June 27** - Miners Memorial Heritage Park (Ironwood, MI) - Monie Shackleford
- Sunday, July 19** - McDonald Lake Aquatics - paddle trip (Bessmer, MI) - Susan Trull
- Saturday, July 25** - Victoria Settlement site and North Country Trail (Bergland, MI) - Ian Shackleford
- Saturday, August 22** - Esrey Park, (Keweenaw) - Colleen Matula, Joan Chadde
- Saturday, August 29** - Michigan Botanical Club - Mini-foray at University of Michigan Biological Station, (Pellston: 30 mi. south of the bridge) For updated info, watch :
<http://www.lsa.umich.eduumbs/>
- Sunday, September 13** - Limestone Mountain (near Baraga, MI) - Ian Shackleford, Sue Trull
- Saturday, September 26** - Public Lands Day - (near Marenisco, MI)

Other events of interest:

- Thursday, June 4** - Growing Native Shrubs and Herbs - Ottawa Visitor Center (Watersmeet, MI—7:00 pm)
- Monday-Saturday, June 15-20** - Isle Royale Botany Workshop to be taught by botanist Janet Marr. For info
call or email Jill Burkland 906-482-7860 or jburkland@irnha.org
- Saturday and Sunday, August 29 - 30** Gratiot Lake Conservancy - workshop on aquatic plants and invasives. (Keweenaw County, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. both days)
<http://www.mlsa.org/Gratiot-Lake-1508/> for more info

-Sherry Zoars, UPEC Board Member

**A few more photos
from a great day...**



("Celebrate" *Huge Success* cont. from page 1)

a main thoroughfare for migrating birds, "will be a fabulous spot to be," where "eagles sometimes fly just below you" under the bluff.

- We paused to listen to and revere Mother Earth with Earl and Aiesha Meshigaud.
- We learned how the moose and wolf populations interact and impact each other on Isle Royale by way of a documentary film created by our own George Desort.
- We reviewed photos of invasive plant species with Jan Schultz and were instructed in the value of native plantings.
- We discovered how love for her particular corner of the U.P. informed and inspired Nita Engle, a renowned local artist, who, as another artist put it, "paints with the hand of God."

But, above all, we were entertained. The day flew by in a frenzy of "gotta get to the next presentation," "don't want to miss a minute of this one" excitement. The presenters practically had to scramble to find time to eat lunch. They found themselves nearly mobbed both before and after their presentations, peppered with questions by those of us in attendance.

We all wanted to learn more.

And perhaps we will. If this year's foray into U.P. lore and landscape taught us anything, it's what Eric Hansen tells us on page 3: we really must try and do this again sometime.

-Editor

(Yes, it may be summer. But lest we forget the joys of our recently passed longest, most silent season, Patrick St. Germain offers this observation along with his artwork featured on the back page. -Ed.)

Ravens love our winter storms. The wilder the weather, the more they enjoy flying in it. They fly to the top of the tall pine trees and hang on to the topmost branches until a terrifying gust of wind comes along. Then they spring into the air and let the wind toss them through the sky, returning to the top of the trees, only to start the process all over again.

The ravens treat the storms as a game. The harsher the weather, the more they exhibit defiant joy. We have much to learn from these creatures about the discovery of joy in the midst of life's wild storms.

-Patrick St. Germain, Board Member



Documentary-maker and Celebration presenter George Desort hauling tools of his trade on Isle Royale

**Upper Peninsula
Environmental Coalition**

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*Protecting and maintaining the unique
environmental qualities of the Upper Peninsula
of Michigan by educating the public and
acting as a watchdog to industry and government*



Ravens playing in a winter storm, by Patrick St. Germain
(See page 7 for a more complete description of the work)