

# U. P. Environment

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



## U.P. Profile with Keren Tischler

Photo by George Desort

(This is a continuing series of profiles by independent filmmaker and UPEC board member George Desort. His series serves to remind us once more that some of the U.P.'s greatest resources are its people.-Ed.)

Keren is a loon biologist living in Atlantic Mine, at the doorstep of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Full disclosure: mutual friends introduced me to Keren four years ago, soon after I moved to the U.P. from Chicago.

Before that, I did not know women like Keren Tischler existed. She is an independent freethinker, engaging in salon one night while chopping firewood for the sauna the next. Keren lives true to her beliefs and is not only dedicated to the Upper Peninsula's environment, but to the people and culture, as well. I talked with Keren via telephone on December 7, 2009:

**George Desort:** What is it that you do?

**Keren Tischler:** I study loons and all sorts of gardening. I have been in the U.P. for ten years now. Studying loons is what brought me here. I was doing work on interior lakes in the Ottawa National Forest and also on Isle Royale. Traveling to Isle Royale via Houghton piqued my interest in the Keweenaw Peninsula. I have been working on inland lakes in the U.P. a very long time.

(Cont. page 3)



U.P. Winter Sunrise  
Photo by Jeannine McKenzie

## 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](http://upenvironment.org).



UPEC is a proud member of EarthShare of Michigan, an organiza-

tion that allows working people to donate to environmental organizations through workplace giving campaigns.

Each year EarthShare 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 EarthShare 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](http://www.earthsharemichigan.org)

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(Keren Tischler cont. from page 1)

**GD: Where were you before the U.P.?**

**KT:** I grew up in Cleveland and I went to college at Northland in Ashland, Wisconsin. And I started studying loons there and I really fell in love tracking phenology of things on lakes from spring, summer to fall. But the U.P. really attracted me; it was just across the border from Wisconsin and yet so different in terms of the number of people and development along the lakeshores.

**GD: Tell me - what keeps you in the U.P.?**

**KT:** I love so much about the U.P. One of the things, I think, as I look out my window at the snow, is the seasons. I really enjoy living in a place that has seasons. And the U.P. does not kid when it comes to seasons. Winter is a huge part of living in the Keweenaw and it's harsh. It forces you to pay attention. And you have to dig in and do it. And before you know it, the days are longer, it's spring, and it feels so fortunate to live in a place where the climate is so harsh in many ways, but it is still enjoyable.



Keren and friend enjoying what passes for a stroll in the U.P.  
Photo by George Desort

**GD: How do you survive the winters?**

**KT:** In the winter in the U.P., in order to live here and enjoy it, you have to be outside a lot. I spend a lot of time shoveling, of course (laughs), but once I can leave the house I spend a lot of time cross-country skiing and am beginning to explore the backcountry on skis. I love snowshoeing.

**GD: And summer activities?**

**KT:** In the summer I do a lot of bird watching. I spend a lot of time on lakes because of the work I do. So I paddle a lot. I bicycle. I like anything fairly quiet and kind of slow. I like to be able to observe things.

**GD: Describe your connection to the U.P.**

**KT:** My connection to the land began on Isle Royale. I spend a lot of time there, traveling via canoe and when you do something that slow, you really get to know a place well. And I think I brought that with me when I decided to live in Hancock, Michigan. I wanted to be able to observe things and do things slow enough to create a connection to this place. And that connection here and what I really love about the U.P., it's not just the outdoors, which is what brought me here, but it's the people, which is the part that makes me stay. I think there is a real sense of community here. People living here really need each other, so you find yourself being friendly with all kinds of people with whom you might not otherwise have all that much in common. So there is an interesting mix of folks up here who can find a way to get along, because they kind of need to.

(Continued on page 4)

(Keren Tischler cont. from page 3)

**GD: Describe your relationship to the landscape of the U.P.?**

**KT:** The natural landscape of the U.P. is very important to me. It seems like a part of me. I definitely feel a connection to it. So when it seems like something is happening to impact the landscape, it really bothers me and it almost is hurting me personally. I try to stay involved in things that are going on through my work and through conservation. I enjoy working with landowners and educate them about conservation easements. And also supporting the work that other groups are doing. There are so many great non-profit groups who are doing conservation and environmental type work in the U.P., like UPEC.

**GD: What does the future hold for the U.P. and how would you like to see it unfold?**

**KT:** I would like to see the U.P. have a vision for being a place that is attractive to people via its landscape. It seems like a lot of people who come to the U.P., the tourists, are interested in the remoteness of it and they have outdoor interests. And I'd like to see governmental units having a vision and protect those aspects of where we live. I am not sure what will actually happen. I think a lot if it depends on the economy.

**GD: Perfect day in the U.P.?**

**KT:** I would put on my skis and head out in the woods for several hours and come back, read a book, have a sauna, and maybe get together with friends. It is pretty quiet, my ideal day.

**GD: Favorite movie, today, as I know these answers are probably on rotation?**

**KT:** *Wendy and Lucy* (2008) directed by Kelly Reichardt.

**GD: Favorite book or book you are reading now?**

**KT:** Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*.

**GD: Music you are listening to today?**

**KT:** Chris Dorman

—George Desort



### Save the Date!

As surely as spring follows winter, you can count on UPEC  
sponsoring another

### *Celebrate the U.P.!*

this coming March 19th and 20th at the Three Corners once again in Marquette, MI. And just like our first one, this Celebration will feature a keynote address Friday night, followed by a Saturday packed with speakers talking about our favorite subject—the U.P.

Look for a listing of speakers and topics in the next edition of this newsletter.

*See you there!*



## **Sustainable U.P. Living Topic of Recent Forum**

UPEC recently co-sponsored "Sustainable Keweenaw: Learning from Northern Communities." Other major sponsors included the League of Women Voters of the Copper Country and Friends of the Land of Keweenaw (FOLK), along with many other organizations, churches, and individuals. The event included an evening session for the public which attracted over 60 people. A second session was held over breakfast for municipal officials and businesspeople.

Speakers Mary Rehwald and Irene Blakely, from Ashland and Washburn, WI, respectively, explained how Swedish municipalities approached the problem of protecting the environment while developing a vigorous economy and a sustainable way of life. It soon became clear that the way Ashland, Washburn, and Bayfield are applying some of the Swedish ideas could provide our area with a workable model.

One possibility suggested by the model is that Keweenaw communities could work together to devise comprehensive plans for developing green industries and jobs, upgrade existing public and private infrastructure and establish an identity for the peninsula as the premier region in the country for sustainable communities. Our unique circumstance of topography, institutions and individuals affords our communities an opportunity to pursue funding and develop projects that will secure a sustainable future for the Keweenaw and its residents.

Over the two days of the event, many interesting experiences, ideas and suggestions were discussed during our question and answer period. Two stood out as good candidates for peninsula-wide projects: first was a suggestion that our municipalities develop a comprehensive plan to replace their current street and building lighting with energy efficient units in every township and village on the Keweenaw; and second, to improve the food served in Keweenaw school districts by purchasing and using local and seasonal food products whenever possible. Working cooperatively and drawing on the talents and experience of municipal officials from a variety of communities holds the promise of increasing the likelihood that outside funding could be secured for these and other mutually beneficial undertakings.

For an example of sustainable community living from Sweden, go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9e1pou-db4> and watch how the town of Malmo on Sweden's coast cleaned up a polluted shipyard and made itself a gold standard for sustainable communities.

For an example from here in Michigan, go to <http://www.aiatopten.org/hpb/overview.cfm?ProjectID=661> for a brief overview of how a community of nuns updated their facilities with the environment in mind.

Thanks to Elmore Reese, of the Keweenaw Sustainability Project for this summary of the event.



Submitted by Sherry Zoars, UPEC board member

## Let's Go Tracking!

The first time I saw a wolf track, I stared in awe at its size. I wanted to savor the moment; I touched it, measured it and, through the track, felt the animal's presence. That experience motivated me to become a volunteer carnivore tracker for the Wisconsin DNR.

Now, fifteen years later, the thrill for me is enhanced as I share the skill of tracking with others.

Tracking can be done throughout the year, but winter, especially a day or two after a 1-3 inch snowfall, is my favorite time to bundle up and get outdoors.

Opportunities abound whether you live in the Heart of the Ottawa National Forest, the outskirts of a city or if you just want to explore the tracks found in your own backyard. Young or old, beginner or expert, you will be amazed at the amount of information that can be gleaned from a set of tracks if you take the time to evaluate the clues left behind. Rarely do you see the animal, but tracks tell part of the story of its life, and the fun begins as you unravel the mystery, and the pieces of the puzzle begin to fall into place.

Observe your surroundings. Did the animal escape under a log or up a tree? Did it dive into the soft snow or slide on its belly towards the creek? Listen for sounds. Ravens are Notorious for their inability to keep a secret and their squawking will often lead you to a source of food for other hungry critters. Watch your step! There may be scat - another clue.

(Continued on page 7)

Front and back paws of wolf

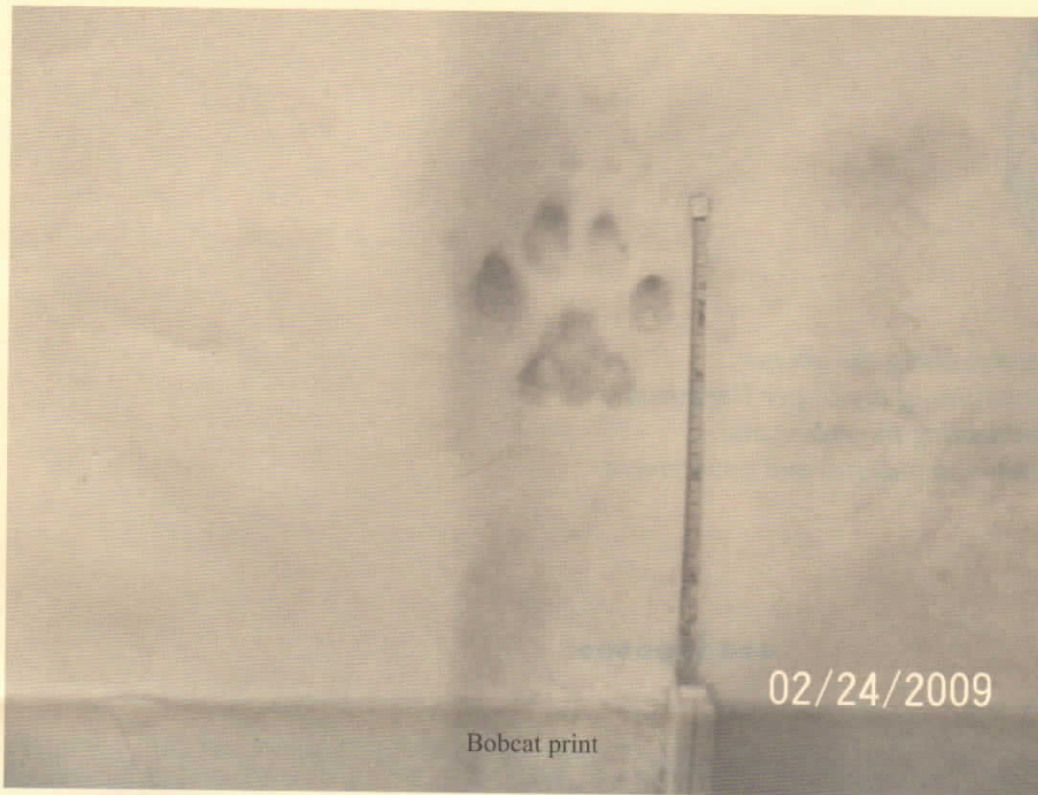


Tracks of two wolves



(Let's Go Tracking cont. from page 6)

As you gather the evidence, you will begin to quickly discern whether a member of the canine, feline or weasel family made the tracks.



- Examine the shape. Is the track round or oblong?
- Are claws present? Count the toes. Are there 4 or 5? Could one toe be partially hidden?
- Take measurements. Record the information.
- Make a cast\*, take it home, and see how many different species you can collect in one season.
- Build on your knowledge. After determining species, differentiate between the front and back paw and left from right foot.

Tracking affords you the opportunity to learn about predator/prey relationships and how animals adapt in harsh conditions. It is also a great way to teach a child to love and appreciate nature. So, shut off the TV, load up the kids and explore our great outdoors.

—Nancy Warren, UPEC Board Member and an Advisory Council Member of the Timber Wolf Alliance



**\*How do you make a cast?**

The basic formula for making a cast of a track is 2 parts plaster to 1 part water. Since plaster of Paris creates heat, only use plaster when the ground is free of snow.

To make a cast on snowy ground, carefully spray a small amount of foam insulation from the can into the track, pat down with a piece of wax paper and leave covered until set.

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Fire Bear and The Electric Shadow  
By Patrick St. Germain

