

State bans baiting and feeding deer

Within the next few months, baiting and feeding deer will be banned throughout the Lower Peninsula of Michigan in an effort to slow the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), a fatal neurological illness discovered in free-ranging Michigan deer in May 2015. There is no known cure for the disease, which occurs in elk and moose as well as deer.

The area of immediate concern, a hundred miles south of Otsego County, was declared immediately banned from baiting and feeding in August 2018. The ban takes effect in Pigeon River Country and the rest of the Lower Peninsula Jan. 31, 2019. The Department of Natural Resources also imposed a statewide ban immediately on use of all natural cervid urine-based lures and attractants except for lures approved by the Archery Trade Association.

It is not known if CWD can be transmitted to humans. The DNR is advising hunters to not consume meat from animals with CWD lesions. The disease has been confirmed in 60 animals from six counties: Clinton, Ingham, Ionia, Jackson, Kent, and Montcalm.

The department has modified hunting regulations with approval from the Michigan Natural Resources Commission. Details are posted at michigan.gov/cwd and information is available at DNR Wildlife Division at 517-284-9453.

The DNR is allowing a partial exception to the baiting and feeding ban for disabled hunters who meet certain requirements.

The DNR says signs of CWD include the following: Affected animals may walk repetitive courses; they may show subtle ataxia and wide-based stance; subtle head tremors occur in some animals; they may be found near water sources or in riparian areas; they may have periods of somnolence; and they may carry their head and ears lowered. Animals affected with chronic wasting disease continue to eat but amounts of feed consumed are reduced, leading to gradual

loss of body condition. Excessive drinking and urination are common in the terminal stages because of specific lesions in the brain. Many animals in terminal stages of CWD have excessive salivation and drooling; this may result in wetting of the hairs of the chin and neck.

Hundreds visit Discovery Center

Several hundred people have toured the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center since it opened Memorial Day weekend down a short path from forest headquarters, viewing displays about why the remote forest is so important in our increasingly urban society, and leaving compliments in a log book.

The initial supply of visitor log pages ran out by the end of August, as people entered their names and wrote comments. The visitor total by Aug. 31 was 754 and counting.

The center is open weekends, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and noon to 4 p.m. Sundays, plus holidays, staffed by volunteers who sign up through Otsego County's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) as hosts.

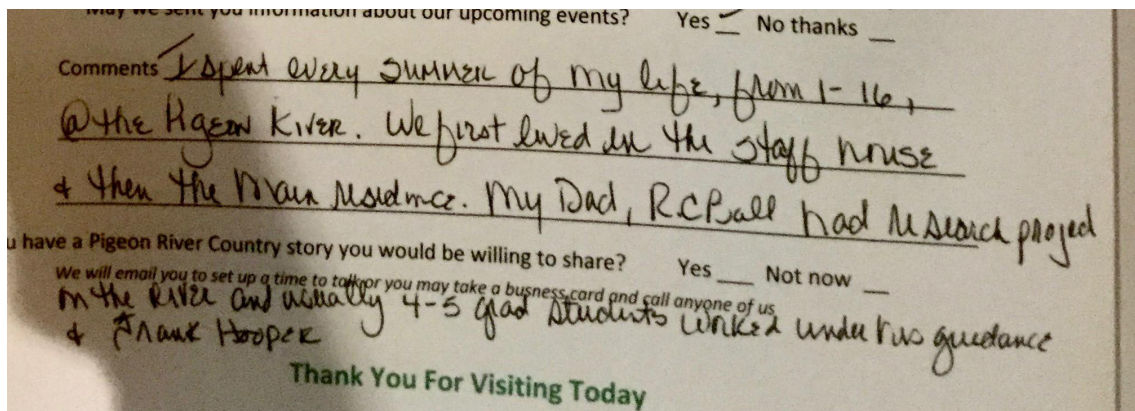
One sizable group visiting the center was the family of the late Norma Horsell, who grew up in the building when her father, William Horsell, was forester there. The family moved into the structure, built in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corp, from the original headquarters building a mile downstream along the Pigeon River. Norma's youngest brother, Lyle, was on hand Sept. 2, 2018, to show his relatives in the Wolf family around.

Sarah Wolf said of the family visit, "We were so pleased to see the spectacular job that you did on the Discovery Center. It's a beautiful way to honor the Pigeon River and we feel blessed to be part of it."



Lyle Horsell (second from left) with his late sister Norma's family visiting the Discovery Center.

Here are some entries in the log book so far from a variety of visitors:



May we sent you information about our upcoming events? Yes No thanks

Comments Our first time here and we LOVED IT!! Thank you for a wonderful memory!!

Do you have a Pigeon River Country story you would be willing to share? Yes Not now

We will email you to set up a time to talk or you may take a business card and call anyone of us

May we sent you information about our upcoming events?

Comments Loved the center! You've all done a magnificent job with house and exhibitions!

May we sent you information about our upcoming events? Yes No thanks

Comments I love it here. (Wyatt, age 9?)

Do you have a Pigeon River Country story you would be willing to share? Yes Not now

We will email you to set up a time to talk or you may take a business card and call anyone of us

May we sent you information about our upcoming events? Yes No thanks

Comments 2nd visit. Thanks for doing this. Wifi someday would be helpful to all - including the center

Do you have a Pigeon River Country story you would be willing to share? Yes Not now

We will email you to set up a time to talk or you may take a business card and call anyone of us

Thank You For Visiting Today

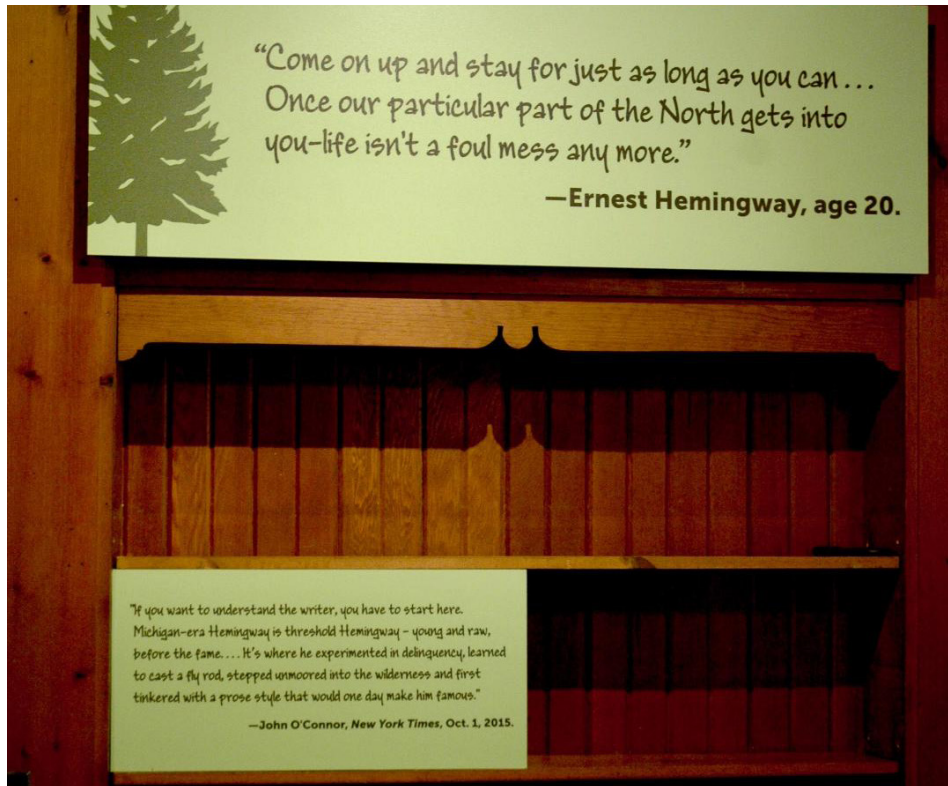
May we sent you information about our upcoming events? Yes ___ No thanks ___
Comments *Great displays! Lots of information
(I need an answer sheet for identifying the footprints)*



Display shows some animal footprints and scat.
Identity of the animal is on the underside of each mount card.

May we sent you information about our upcoming events? Yes No thanks ___
Comments *Nice job! Very pleasant and informative
facility. The fireplace and furniture welcomes
with an exceptional quietness and sets the tone*
have a Pigeon River Country story you would be willing to share? Yes Not now ___
We will email you to set up a time to talk or you may take a business card and call anyone of us
Wideman

E-Mail Address MANISTEE Please print carefully
May we sent you information about our upcoming events? Yes ___ No thanks ___
Comments Love the Ernest Hemingway quote. Super interesting! ☺
Do you have a Pigeon River Country story you would be willing to share? Yes ___ Not now ___



Making the Discovery Center accessible to all visitors

For the second year in a row, the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center is applying for a grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The fund receives numerous grant applications and the selection process is highly competitive.

The Trust Fund Board awards points in various categories and the higher the points awarded, the more likely the

application is to be approved. Last year's application by the Discovery Center was not funded.

This year, the Discovery Center's application was selected for an accessibility review, by both an internal Department of Natural Resources accessibility team and a wider, statewide Accessibility Advisory Council, to ensure that the Discovery Center is doing everything possible in its design and operation to accommodate visitors of all abilities. The reviewers' goal is that projects will exceed Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) standards to incorporate Universal Design principles.

On Aug. 21, 2018 the Accessibility Advisory Council heard and approved the Discovery Center's proposal. It includes plans for a van-accessible parking space and modifying the front ramp to provide one entrance for all visitors, plus modifications to the pathway between parking area and building to accommodate trash and recycling containers, a bench, and outdoor exhibit panels.

Learning about accessibility has brought our attention to several important issues to consider when operating a facility aimed at "increasing visitors' awareness of and appreciation for the land, the wildlife and the history of the Pigeon River Country and to fostering a new generation of stewards and protectors of this unique place called "The Big Wild."

While ADA sets out measurements, such as maximum and minimum shelf heights, considered reasonable for variously-abled people, Universal Design sets out seven principles, such as making the design useful to people with diverse abilities. The emphasis is on *universal*, making the design accommodate as many people as possible.

There has been a concern that applying accessibility standards in the forest could alter its character by imposing paved trails in place of natural forest ground cover and thus take away the opportunity of hunters and other visitors to experience the wildness of a remote forest. Such inroads of "access" could foreseeably destroy the character of the Pigeon River Country. But the accessibility involved in the grant application is for the building and adjacent accommodations, and so has only a narrow focus.

But what of accessibility overall?

The forest does not have to be compromised for it to be accessible. For some, a solitary trek off-trail deep in the woods is what the Pigeon can offer. For others, parking the car and standing or sitting for a moment on a forested two-track or being near a flowing northern river can bring intense solace. The Discovery Center is there to help all the various visitors understand why the forest is a special place, to appreciate why we need locations where a person can get lost in the woods—to realize our own limits yet appreciate what might lie beyond those limits.

The Discovery Center can help make people aware that some areas, such as the Pigeon, are so extraordinarily special yet so increasingly rare that they need dedicated advocates to protect them, to keep them quiet and remote. And those advocates might need a reminder that not only the stereotypical able-bodied visitor finds profound engagement and spiritual satisfaction in the remote outdoor setting of Pigeon River Country.

So the accessibility application relates to the Discovery Center facility rather than the forest itself or its management. It is bounded by the word *design* as being what we make that we can make better. If we don't build any structures, we don't need any ADA rules.

Of course, accessibility taken as an idea holds merit in the broader sense. Accessibility already exists for such a natural thing as the outdoors in general or the Pigeon specifically. The forest's own design is there to experience, not make. Read on.

A forest open to life

In applying for an accessibility grant, the Discovery Center is highlighting an often overlooked quality of Pigeon River Country. The intricate interworkings of the forest show us a natural system that capitalizes on the strengths of all its inhabitants, all its parts. It engages all manner of differently enabled beings, from the nearly blind talpids (moles) with massive claws and shovel-like feet aerating hard-packed soil, to chiroptera (bats) who spread their fingers and fly, navigating with music so high that homo sapiens can't hear it.

Among ourselves, we humans are differently enabled, whether it be a sharp wit, a steady hand, an attentiveness

to detail, a calm disposition, a courageous heart, or any of innumerable factors that we bring to our interactions. Likewise, all facets of a forest have their different strengths. Take what's known as the indole ring structure. The indole ring structure captures light energy from the sun and converts it to biological energy, thereby powering the world life system as we know it.

Indole is an organic compound. Its ring structure is found in bacteria, plants, and animals. The indole ring is the most efficient molecule for converting photons (light energy) into biological energy, such as what happens when plants are cycling oxygen and carbon dioxide. (see *Plant Intelligence and the Imaginal Realm* by Stephen Harrod Buhner)

We don't have to apply our sharp wit, steady hand or any other human factor for the indole ring to do its stuff. Plants use indole rings to produce serotonin, which produces melatonin and auxin, which serve crucial actions in the life of plants. Plants, one expert notes, "are complex, multicellular organisms that have specialized cells that function as a unit, a holistic organization."

A forest network of plants and animals is there to be experienced, studied, appreciated for how it uses all the various characteristics of the forest's life forms to provide a prospering community of living things. People in wheelchairs or on foot, with serious or witty dispositions, or with cautious or courageous hearts, can benefit from exposure to this intricate system at work, what we call a forest—home of insects, which are the largest and most diverse group of animals on our planet; dwelling place of black bears and other mammals ranging in mass from 2-gram (0.07-oz) shrews to 450,000-gram elk; birthplace of rainbow and brook trout; nesting site for chickadees and eagles.

In making the Pigeon River Country Discovery Center accessible we enlarge the population of support for keeping forever the natural variability and wildness of the forest.

Volunteers pitch in

In recognition of American lives lost 17 years ago on Sept. 11, local employers allow their employees to work that day in community service. Rudi Edel, chair of the Discovery Center Steering Committee, who arranged for the center to receive workers from the program, provides this report.

Otsego County United Way held its annual Day of Caring on September 11th.

Day of Caring is a one day, hands-on experience where volunteer teams from local businesses and governmental offices are matched with local non-profit agencies and schools to complete meaningful projects that fulfill agency and community needs.

I had five volunteers helping. We completed the following:

1. Removed the old ADA ramp and stacked the wood in the enclosed rear porch;
2. Caulked 21 windows on the main floor (windows that are not going to be opened), and one window on the second floor, south end (22 windows finished); removed screens on caulked windows and stored them in the basement;
3. Re-pointed with metal points, the second floor south window glass, then applied new glazing compound to the window;
4. Drained the hoses and stored them in the basement;
5. Picked up sticks around parts of the building.

Even though the Center was technically closed, while we were there working today we had 11 visitors from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m., coming in groups of one or two. I let them in and joined them briefly to answer questions.

In addition, there was a surprise visit by two inspectors from the Department of Public Health to check our water, on-demand water heaters, and the furnace. They inspected, walked the building, and gave us a thumbs up. Great water. I could have told them that, I drink it all the time. Keeps me young.



©Rudi Edel



©Rudi Edel

Membership renewal reminder

Membership dues help provide a scholarship to a student intern who assists the forest manager in the summer, and help us protect the wild character of the PRC. Your membership expiration date is on your mailing label or email sending this newsletter. Please keep your membership current. Thank you!



Visit our website at www.pigeonriver.org

Writer & Editor: Dale Franz

Layout/Copy Editor: Julie Feldpausch