



Superior Land Preservation Society News

FALL-WINTER
2018
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What can I do about global warming?

Dan Moerman, SLPS Vice Chair

Generally, it seems, we are not supposed to do anything about it. It's a Chinese plot. It doesn't exist. It's "libtard nonsense."

Well, I don't agree. I think it's really serious. So, what can I DO about it. Well, there is one thing:



This is the Google Earth view of our house with it's 73 solar panels, installed by Amy Strutz of AJ Leo Electric and Solar, in Ypsilanti. Aren't they beautiful?? Solar panels, all busy making electricity!! There *is* something I can do about global warming. Well, how much? you ask. On average, so far this year (I am writing this on October 8, 2018) our panels have produced on average 55.25 kilowatt hours [kWh] per day. They produce the least on snowy days, especially if the panels are covered with snow. The best predictor of how much they will produce on any given day is the number of minutes of sunlight per day we have. Then it varies with cloud cover and other weather issues. This year, the highest production was 111.76 kWh on April 19.

We do still need DTE. We can't produce power at night, and we don't have storage batteries. But we often produce more in a day than we can use, and it goes into the grid to

power your house. (DTE credits us a tiny amount for that excess.)

We have a big house, and we use a lot of electricity. Many electrons were bothered by me making this newsletter! But, before we installed the solar, we were paying approximately \$11 per day for electricity from DTE. Last year, we paid \$3.20 per day. In 2016, we paid \$2.99 per day. That is a WIN.

But there is more. This year, to date, we have avoided producing 10,829 kilograms (=11.94 tons) of carbon. That is also a WIN, our contribution to fighting global warming. It warms me!

It was expensive to install. But with the savings I noted above, we will be even in about 6 years after installation. After that. . . it's all gravy. This was possible in part because of the Federal solar tax credit of 30% of the installation costs (through 2019; after that it goes down over a few years to 10%, at least with current law).

Occasionally, I walk outside and down through the flower garden, and turn around to just LOOK at them. So so beautiful!!



Superior Township Residents.

A Word from the Chair, Marion Morris

“Dog Days of Summer?”

It was early July, and I and our 2 dogs were out in the yard. I, working in the flower beds, the dogs chasing squirrels. Deciding to take a break, I sat down in the back yard as both dogs headed into the west pasture. Amber, our boxer, stopped at the gate. Sadie, our beagle, kept going until all I could see was the white of her tail. Suddenly, she was running toward the house as fast as she could go; right behind her is a doe, with head down, hair up, chasing her practically up to the barn! Then the doe turned and ran back a short distance, snorting and blowing. Obviously, Sadie had encountered a doe with her fawn! Now I've seen dogs chase a deer, but never a deer chasing a dog. Seems deer are developing some moxie!

Where was our boxer? She never moved a muscle during all of this.

How fabulous are the encounters with wildlife in this wonderful Superior Township which wouldn't be possible if we hadn't had the foresight to set about keeping our township as green as possible. It has taken years of hard work, dedication, and the support of many, many people to accomplish this and we are not finished yet.

Please, get outdoors, enjoy nature with what it has to offer and thank you, thank you for your continued support. We couldn't do it without you.

Night Crawlers!

By Marion Morris

My first real encounter with earthworms was when I received an Indian tepee for my 7th birthday.

I was a tomboy you see, and playing cowboys and Indians with my friends was great fun; no dolls for me!

What does this have to do with night crawlers? Well, let me tell you.

After dinner that evening, I took my new tepee with its lodgpole into the back yard along with a chair to stand on, so I could pound the center pole into the ground.

It was twilight that evening many years ago, the

back porch light was on, so I could see what I was doing.

With my hammer, I started pounding the pole into the ground. After some time pounding,. I looked down and the ground was *covered* with earthworms!

Horrified, screaming, I, in what seemed one huge leap, made it to the porch and into the house. Leaving tepee, chair and hammer to the worms. My parents, of course, calmed me down, explaining the pounding of the ground had brought the worms to the surface. How easy then to get worms for fishing.

But now let's talk about earthworms and how valuable they are in nature.

They can grow to as long as 11 inches and are segmented, mucus covered, so they won't dry out. They are part of the food chain: toads, frogs snakes, turtles, shrews and moles, all eat them. Don't forget robins, and human beings with their spades, hoes, roto-tillers, digging them out of the ground.

In order to avoid these predators, and to avoid drying out, earthworms are adapted to night time activity. Much of this involves food getting. Worms will eat either plant or animal debris, but their favorite is rotting vegetation. Earthworms also eat a lot of soil; as they do this, they deposit their waste – called castings – in the topsoil and on the surface of the ground, little deposits of reconditioned soil. One casting isn't much, but over time many castings from many, many worms make for healthy soil, which is very good for our yards and gardens.

So, the earthworm or night crawler certainly has a solid place in our ecosystem, serving not only as food for other creatures, but as a wonder reconditioner of mother earth.



The Historic Ford Farm

by Jack Smiley

Many people are unaware that one of the most significant properties in all of Michigan is right here in Superior Township. I'm referring to the Ford Farm, a wonderful expanse of land which lies along Gotfredson Road between Geddes and Cherry Hill Road. The Ford Farm's historic, ecological, agricultural and social importance is unmatched in the region.

The Ford Farm, historically known as Henry Ford's Cherry Hill Farm, is the last remaining Ford Farm in existence. The farm was personally bought by Henry and Clara Ford in 1931 and transferred to the family-held Ford Motor Company in 1945. Additional acreage was bought by the Ford Motor Company in 1945 after Henry Ford resumed as President of the company. The Ford Farm now encompasses 879 acres.



Barns at the Ford Farm

Although Henry Ford is best known as the man who put America on wheels, his roots and many achievements were in agriculture. Henry was born and raised on a 40-acre farm in Springwells Township, now Dearborn, and many relatives owned farms nearby. One of his primary interests came to be improving motorized implements and farm tractors to make life easier for family farmers. After achieving success with the Ford Motor Company, Mr. Ford acquired an extensive network of farms in southeast Michigan consisting of thousands of acres. He also had vast farm holdings in Georgia and Florida.

His deep appreciation of agriculture led him to become heavily involved in experiments with an array of crops from peanuts to sunflowers. He sought to develop useful products which could be used in industry and make farming more profitable. Some of his most noteworthy experiments were with soybeans. At one time, over 300 varieties of soybeans were planted on 8,000 acres of

Michigan Ford Farms and were used to develop products such as oil for paints, plastic, textile fibers and food. He was known to serve meals made entirely from soybeans, from soup to ice cream.

The Cherry Hill Farm was one of the most prominent farms in the Ford Farm system and it was a key laboratory for his experiments. It also served as a proving ground for the Ford Tractor Division and was used to demonstrate different farming techniques.

The Ford Farm still comprises one of the most important agricultural landscapes in southeast Michigan. Perhaps surprisingly, it is also one of the top birding destinations in the state as birders regularly flock to the farm to see birds such as Lapland Longspurs, Merlins and Short-eared Owls. In fact, the Ford Farm is one of the best places in the state to see raptors year-round. Fifteen raptor species have recently been sighted at the farm including Northern Harriers, Red-shouldered Hawks and Peregrine Falcons. Henry Ford's efforts in passing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918 undoubtedly led to the survival of many of these species today.

The Ford Farm is a remarkable property which plays a key role in maintaining sustainable agriculture in Superior Township and the region. The Ford Motor Company has continued to be a good steward of the Ford Farm and hopefully this historic and ecological treasure will be around for generations to come.



Soy Beans

About the author: Jack Smiley was raised in a "Ford family" and fondly remembers when his Dad drove him around the Ford test track along Oakwood Boulevard when he was a kid. A Ford history buff, Jack initiated a number of restoration projects at the Henry Ford Estate - Fair Lane while a student at U of M-Dearborn. In the 1970s, he also successfully worked to stop the extension of Hines Drive through the Ford Estate and is now a proud stockholder of Ford Motor Company.

Do chickens make good pets?

YES! THEY MAKE GREAT PETS

By Kay Williams

We have had Buff Orpington chickens for years but only one became a much-loved pet for our daughter when she was about seven. One of the chicks was injured so Grandpa Williams told her that she had to nurse the hen back to health. Henny-penny was handled and cared for and became our daughter's very own chicken. When she went into the chicken pen, Henny-penny would run to her to be picked up and loved.

If you want to have chickens as pets, make sure you get at least two as chickens are flock animals and want to be part of a flock. Let your child learn how to be gentle with an animal and how to care for it. There are advantages with chickens that dogs and cats don't have. Does a cat give you an egg every day? Can a dog's poop be used in your flower beds for fertilizer? A hen doesn't crow, only clucks softly; no loud barking that disturbs the neighbors. Do you have table scraps and veggie waste that goes into the landfill? Chickens love to eat any organic waste except citrus. They will even eat the egg shells if you smash them up. In fact they need shell to make strong shells for the eggs they give you.

The educational advantages for caring for a chicken are many. Henny-penny was an unusual hen, maybe because of her injuries, but she would lay her egg at 10:00 o'clock every day. So she went to school and about five minutes before ten, the children would gather around and watch her lay her egg. Have you ever held a newly-laid egg? It is soft and then hardens quickly, but not before each child could hold it. Your hen probably won't be as predictable as that, but she will offer many life processes that help children explore their world.

So, yes, get two or three hens when they are chicks for your little ones (assuming that your municipality approves) and have the advantages of having chickens for pets. I recommend Buff Orpingtons as they are so gentle and beautiful. Enjoy!



A Debate!

NO! DON'T RAISE CHICKENS

By Karl Williams

There has been a fad among city dwellers for the last couple of years of raising chickens in their back yard. Village councils have had a great deal of trouble accommodating these people. Fortunately this fad now appears to be diminishing. People are coming to their senses, or in some cases have learned that chicken raising is fraught with difficulty. Let me enlighten you.

There are two types of chickens; roosters and hens, and they are divided into different categories such as Rhode Island Red, Silver Penciled Rocks, Lakenvelders, and Golden Laced Wyandottes. Presumably these names have some sort of meaning but most seem irrational, perhaps created during a period of chicken raising frustration.

One of the justifications for raising chickens is the eggs that the hens produce. Everybody likes fresh eggs. However, the problem is that they are not production dated. When one finds an egg in the chicken coop or elsewhere, there is no indication as to how old it is or how long it will remain good. I understand the USDA is very concerned about this but as yet has not come up with a practical solution.

A second aspect of egg production is that no one has ever determined what the cost of a personally raised egg is. If you factor in the expense of feed, maintenance of the chicken living quarters if in a dwelling separate from one's house, and the value of the labor in keeping the chicken's living conditions up to government standards, one would probably find that the cost of one of these eggs exceeds two dollars each, and that does not factor in the cost of the egg carton.

Perhaps another consideration is the impact that chicken raising has on young children, particularly if roosters, or a single rooster, and hens are housed in the same facility. That old saw, 'The Birds and the Bees' is nothing compared to the rooster/hen relationship. Watching a rooster "join" with a hen can only set young minds wondering. Certainly this will promote questions that one would just as soon avoid.

Schroeter Park

by Juan Bradford

After being hired by Superior Township I quickly realized the impact that land preservation and conservation can have on the surrounding communities. Not only from the immediate ecological standpoint but also the future generations that will benefit from the work that is being done today. The friendliness and willingness to share information among fellow conservation enthusiasts has also been very apparent.



One thing that I would like to share with you is the work going on in Schroeter Park in Superior Township. If you are not familiar with Schroeter Park it is a 38 acre passive use park located at the corner of Warren Road & Berry Road that you can access from Warren Road (a passive use park is one with green space used for walking relaxing, hiking, etc., but without swings, ball fields, etc.) This great park offers both open and wooded walking/hiking trails which are marked, open meadow areas, and benches to sit and enjoy the beautiful fall colors. One of the other things that it offers is that it is the only park in the area where you can ride horses off road on public land.

This past spring a prescribed burn was carried out to control invasive species and enhance the native landscape of the meadows, and this fall we will be working to open up additional walking/hiking trails on the wooded west side of the park along Berry Road. I hope you have the opportunity to get out and see it for yourself. While you are out there you can also visit Weatherbee Woods Nature Preserve which is adjacent to Schroeter Park. Weatherbee Woods is 84 acres of gently rolling landscape and oak forests that also contains marked walking/hiking trails. If that's not enough area for you to explore there are several conservation groups currently working together to obtain the 80 acre parcel at the corner of Ford Road and Berry Road. That would create a continuous 198 acres of protected park and preserve land that could be enjoyed for years to come.

Now wouldn't that be Superior!

About the author: Juan has been the Superior Township Parks and Recreation Commission Administrator for three years.

Polyphemus moth

by John Copley

While kicking through leaf litter in my backyard last spring, I saw lying on the ground what appeared to be a large cocoon. I picked it up and shook it gently to determine if there was a pupa inside, which there was. I put the cocoon in a hatching cage I had made out of screening and waited. Weeks went by and I was pretty sure the pupa was not viable. Then one morning, while tending to the plants on the deck, I happened to look in the cage and there she was! Polyphemus! Named for Poseidon's son- a one eyed giant of Greek mythology; a strange name to be given to this huge beautiful golden moth who has not one, but 2 eye spots on its wings. I took her out of the cage and found a comfortable spot for her on one of the plants. I could tell she was a female by the relatively small feathery antennae. Males have much larger and elaborate antennae, the better to pick up the pheromones she broadcasts to attract a mate. She had also adorned the screening with her eggs. Because she was caged, and no males could get to her, it was unlikely any of the eggs were fertile.



We have several large silk moths in our area: Cecropia, Polyphemus, Prometheus and Luna are large and beautiful and because they, as most moths, are nocturnal we seldom are treated to the sight of them, and only rarely do we have the privilege of handling them and seeing them up close. If you learn what the cocoons of these moths look like, and are observant enough to find one, the hatching of a giant silk moth is an experience you will not soon forget.



Polyphemus cocoon

