

ROCKET  
LAUNCH  
SITE AT  
GRANOT  
LOMA?  
*See page 4.*

THE



HOWL

## YDWP VIDEO COMPILATION.

*Tell Your Story! See page 11.*

Spring/Summer 2021

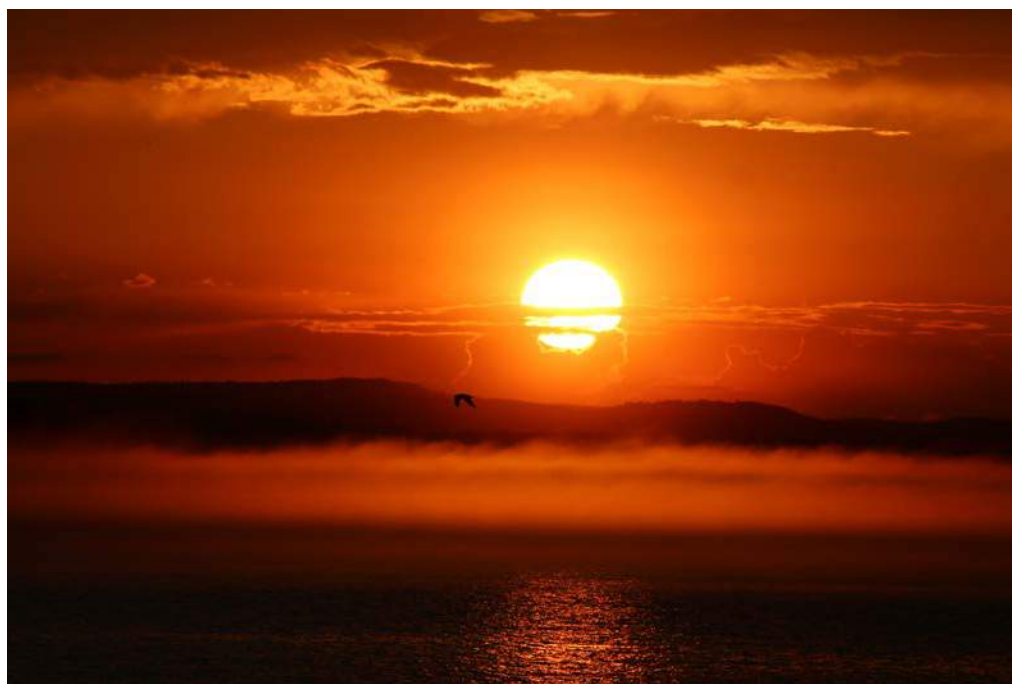
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Bi-annual Newsletter  
Volume 25, Issue 1

Preserving the Yellow Dog Watershed in its most natural state for the use of the public, now, and for the benefit of future generations.

### EXPANDING HORIZONS: *2021 Photo Contest Winners and Runners-up*

### PLANNED GIVING MADE EASY *By Rochelle Dale, Administrator*



From Ketchikan to the Keweenaw, New Zealand to Wisconsin...on the Salmon Trout, The Dead, The Fox, The Nash, and The Ford...in Pelkie and L'Anse, Sands, Seney, and Shingleton... at Eagle Rock, Jasper Knob, and Piers Gorge. On the banks of Trout, Strawberry, Silver, and Hidden Lakes and, of course, at the Yellow Dog Falls in all seasons. The photographers who submitted images to our 2021 contest frame this issue of *The Howl*. After a year of looking inward, we are once again scanning the horizon, tentatively venturing forth, finding opportunities and challenges on wild lands and waters both near and far.

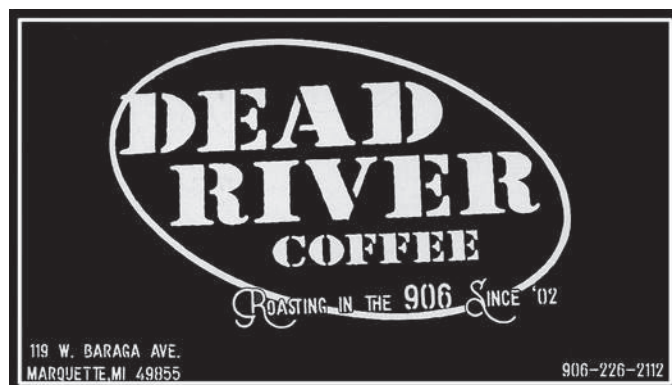
Photographers know the value of patience and perseverance. Dave Poppe submitted the winning shot in the Landscape category (above), of a glorious early-June sunset at Presque Isle, just north of Marquette. He writes that he and his wife had gone to the park as the sun was going down, and he took his camera just in case:

*It was not looking like a good picturesque evening, and we almost started leaving; and then the sunset changed to this beautiful coloring. I learned from past experiences to hang around a little longer, and this time it paid off.*

I often wish I could do more or give more to my favorite charitable organization, without complicating my life or severely restricting my current activities, spending plans, or my ability to help family members whenever needed. Happily, I recently found a solution that fits my needs. Life insurance policy beneficiaries can be changed to include your charitable gift at whatever percentage amount desired. For instance, I could have my spouse be the beneficiary for 90% of the policy and YDWP 10%, or it could be 50/50: whatever the owner of the policy decides. And there is no charge to make these changes, just a few papers to sign.

Making a charitable contribution of securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, exchange-traded funds) is also easy these days. To make a gift to YDWP, one can simply call our office to have us put you in touch with our financial advisor, who can then facilitate the transfer. There is no need to liquidate anything; therefore, the donor will not have to pay capital gains on the sale, and in addition, may be able to receive a charitable deduction for income tax purposes.

Donors may want to consult with a financial advisor, accountant, tax preparer, or estate planner before deciding on the best way to contribute, and feel free to contact the Yellow Dog office for additional information: 906-345-9223.



## RUNNER-UP: LANDSCAPE

Teague Whalen  
"Moonset over Dude Mountain"

Possibilities emerge out of the seemingly inauspicious. Teague Whalen submitted this shot of the moon over Dude Mountain in the Tongass National Forest in Alaska, a runner-up in the Landscape category.

Teague echoes Dave Poppe's insight about the virtue of patience in a photographer:

*We had an incredibly rainy summer that really limited photography opportunities...When we finally had a couple of days of sunshine, I packed up my camera gear and sleeping bag and drove my Suburban to the Tongass National Forest and up Brown Mountain Road's unpaved switchbacks. I pulled off at its highest point halfway up Dude Mountain, where I was hoping to get a clear shot of the Neowise Comet. I arrived before sunset and so brought out my binoculars and chanced on glassing a black bear romping around in Dude Mountain's alpine. That night, Dude Mountain blocked Ketchikan's light pollution, which made for a great night of astrophotography. Took some shots of the comet, the Milky Way over Dude Mountain, and the moon. Was even joined by another photographer I knew who was looking to shoot the comet that night too. Then I slept in my truck and in the morning woke up to a brilliant sunrise... Was an epic night and morning photo session. Needless to say, well worth the wait.*



## 'Say It' in *The Howl*

The Yellow Dog *Howl* is published bi-annually by The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve for its members and friends. We welcome your thoughts on environmental issues, stories of the history and legacy of the watershed, or anything you feel is related to our mission. Creative expressions are welcome too: art, poetry, photos, lyrics, etc.

Any comments, suggestions, articles, or artistic statements can be shared with Sarah Heuer at:

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve  
PO Box 5, Big Bay, MI 49808.

Phone: (906)345-9223

Email: [sarah@yellowdogwatershed.org](mailto:sarah@yellowdogwatershed.org)

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Front page: 'Howling Wolf', hand drawn by Nancy Moran.



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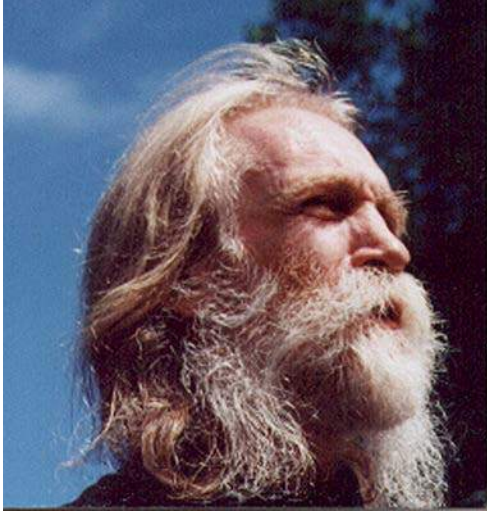
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## FROM THE CHAIR

By Chauncey Moran



## YELLOW DOG WATERSHED PRESERVE REMAINS VIBRANT

Many conservation organizations are immersed in protection, sustainability, remediation, and litigation. But even with dedicated personnel and adequate funding, without determination and an achievable action plan, there tends to be more dialogue than results.

We at the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve are an action group with dedication and passion to carry out our mission of keeping the watershed in its most natural state for people now and for future generations. In this edition, you will discover some amazing photographs from our photo contest winners and others. You will read about current and future projects being carried out by staff, board members, and volunteers as well as updates on current challenges. As an inspiration to life's adventures, you will be taken into a time machine by Kalil Zender, who was raised on the banks of the Yellow Dog River during the 1990s and early 2000s.

Two new board members, John Anderson and Dan Rydholm, with decades of experience between them in local history, guiding words, letter writing, and building projects, have been very active in board affairs. As you read through these pages, imagine you are an active participant, whether physically, spiritually, emotionally, financially, or all the aforementioned. We welcome you to the water's edge of the Yellow Dog River to find that place in your heart where peace resides. We remain humbly grateful for your sincere support.

May the Creator guide our passionate stewardship for seven generations and beyond. Hope to see you on the River.

## THE FUTURE OF BIG BAY

By Rochelle Dale



*Aerial view of Big Bay, Lake Independence, the Huron Mountains, and Lake Superior.  
Photo by Chauncey Moran.*

The summer of 2020 marked the beginning of the Big Bay Stewardship Council (BBSC), a necessary outcome of the previously completed Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) study that assessed the assets of Powell Township and examined ways to plan for the future. The study confirmed what many of us already suspected: the future of Powell Township's economic growth and stability would lie in sustainable tourism. However, the study also recognized that there was no structure within the township to work toward a common goal, or as Sven Gonstead, BBSC co-chairman, put it, "the study identified the need to create a better line of communication within the community, a conduit for people to express their concerns." Thus, the BBSC was formed.

The council began with a small group of passionate volunteers and has grown to include residents, second homeowners, business owners, and nonprofits such as YDWP. The goal of the BBSC is to facilitate the protection of the unique nature of Powell Township and promote scaled economic development and community improvements while promoting stewardship of the natural resources and cultural enrichment. The council is open to anyone concerned about the future of Powell Township, and interested parties should contact Sven at [bigbaypathway@gmail.com](mailto:bigbaypathway@gmail.com) or [Discoverbigbay@gmail.com](mailto:Discoverbigbay@gmail.com).

Promoting economic growth while maintaining natural resources and cultural integrity is always a delicate balance, and for this reason, YDWP lends its voice to the BBSC. The council and YDWP encourage any and all conservation minded individuals or groups to participate.



## blacksmith

Gordon E. Gearhart III

*Architectural, Sculptural  
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[gearhartblacksmithing@gmail.com](mailto:gearhartblacksmithing@gmail.com)  
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P.O. Box 755  
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# MAMA'S PROPOSED ROCKET LAUNCH SITE AT GRANOT LOMA & GROWING OPPOSITION

*By Brian Noell, Administrative Assistant*

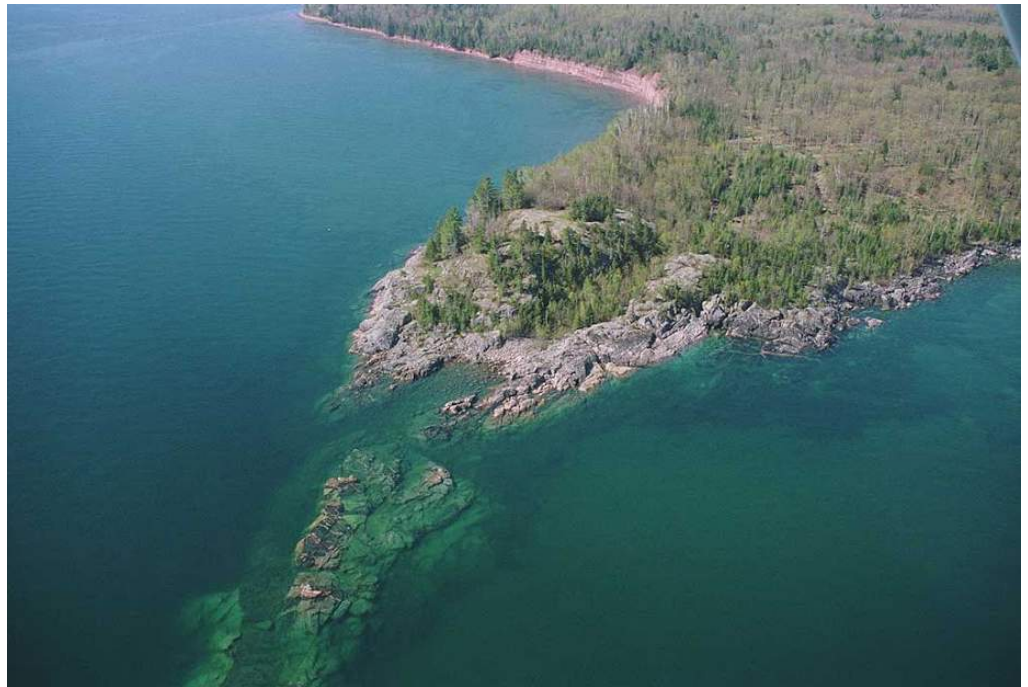
Michigan Launch Initiative, a public-private partnership developed by Michigan Aerospace Manufacturers Association (MAMA), has proposed a new project to develop a commercial rocket launch site in Marquette County. The initial plan was for a "horizontal" launch site at KI Sawyer Airport in Gwinn, from which rockets would have been deployed from airborne planes. However, in July 2020 the county announced that MAMA had shifted its attention to the historic Granot Loma estate on the south shore of Lake Superior between Marquette and Big Bay. If approved, rockets would take off directly from the ground at this vulnerable and pristine location, carrying satellites for the direction of driverless vehicles.

The proposal's shift from a horizontal launch site at Sawyer to a "vertical" launch site on the undeveloped Lake Superior coastline met with rapid and stiff opposition from, among others, Citizens for a Safe and Clean Lake Superior (CSCLS), a non-profit organization founded by local residents concerned about such land use at Granot Loma. CSCLS cites an array of environmental, public safety, recreational, and quality of life concerns in their opposition to the project.

The footprint of the proposed launch site is such that 45 acres or more of forest, much of it on a scenic promontory jutting into Lake Superior, would have to be clear cut. The impacts on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems surrounding the location, which include endangered and threatened species, as well as species of concern, would be palpable. In particular, there could be effects on bald eagles often seen nesting along Marquette County's Lake Superior shoreline. The Granot Loma site also is within two miles of what the Michigan DNR has identified as a key spawning area for prized coaster brook trout.

At every launch there is significant danger of explosion or misdirection. Rockets similar to those lifting off at Granot Loma have a failure rate of 21%. Such risk would require an exclusion zone of 7300 feet (around 1 1/4 mile), meaning at least 6 local families would need to evacuate at every launch. Launch thrusts also send shock waves which require thousands of gallons of water to be poured on the rocket, water that would have to be drawn from the lake or from nearby wetlands. Then there is the question of debris from 2 stages of launch as well as the jettisoning of nose cones and battery packs, all of which would fall to earth or into Lake Superior, threatening public safety and polluting both land and water.

The noise from these launches would be heard for miles along open water and on the beaches of Lake Superior, as well as at an array of recreational areas including Echo Lake, Sauks Head, Harlow Lake, and popular fishing destinations on the Little Garlic River. The shoreline between Marquette and



*Aerial view of Thoney Point area at Granot Loma. Photo courtesy Great Lakes Shoreviewer.*

and Big Bay also encompasses part of the Noquemenon Trail Network's Hiawatha Water Trail, plied by kayakers and canoe enthusiasts throughout the summer season. The proposed spaceport would be situated on Thoney Point (also visible from Hogsback Mountain), whose natural beauty would be defiled by clear cutting and erection of 3 structures at least 100 feet high as well as a large water tower.

MAMA and Marquette County have claimed that the spaceport project would bring needed high-tech jobs to the area. However, since both the horizontal launch site and the command and control center will be located elsewhere in the UP, few if any permanent jobs will come to the county. A site at Kodiak Island in Alaska, which deploys similar rockets, requires only 5 to 6 employees at each launch, and these are brought in temporarily from out of state. Once clear cutting is complete and construction of the launch pad and towers is done, there is likely to be no increase in employment from the project.

Such a large industrial development along the Superior lakeshore will require Powell Township (in which the proposed launch site is located) to rezone the area. Failure to attain rezoning would be a definitive barrier to this project, so CSCLS encourages everyone concerned about the issue, especially those who own property in Powell Township, to express their opposition to local officials. They suggest sending an email addressed jointly to Township Board Supervisor Darlene Turner ([supervisor@powelltownship.org](mailto:supervisor@powelltownship.org)), Chairman of the Planning Commission Phil Moran ([phijomo@yahoo.com](mailto:phijomo@yahoo.com)), and Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Committee Sven Gonstead

([bigbaypathway@gmail.com](mailto:bigbaypathway@gmail.com)). Ask that your correspondence be made public at the next meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Planning Committee, and Parks and Recreation Committee.

If you want to get involved with CSCLS, you can find their website at [everybodysbackyard.com](http://everybodysbackyard.com). YDWP has already lent its endorsement to the organization and encourages members and donors, whether within or outside of Powell Township, to investigate the spaceport issue for themselves. In a 2005 decision, the Michigan Supreme Court determined that the shore of any of the Great Lakes between the waterline and high-water mark is a "public trust zone", on which anyone has the right to walk and recreate. So, this is not just a local issue. It really is everybody's backyard.



*Water view, looking north at Thoney Point, about 1 1/2 miles away. Photo by Dennis Ferraro.*





## RUNNER-UP: LANDSCAPE

*Sue Kartman*

**“Double Rainbow Delight over Lake Superior”**

Sometimes dramatic climatic events make for photographic magic. Sue Kartman's late-summer 2018 shot of a double rainbow after a thunderstorm over Lake Superior near Big Bay (looking toward Granite Point lighthouse), was one of the runners-up in the Landscape category.

## DENIZENS OF THE JACK PINE

*By Nancy Moran*



***Spruce grouse on the Yellow Dog Plains. Photo by Nancy Moran.***

Springtime migration is on and soon the Yellow Dog Plains will resound with the bright song of the Nashville Warbler and other summer residents of the Yellow Dog Watershed: the floating voice of hermit thrush, the daybreak litany of winter wren, and our faithful robin! As we hike the trails of the river and plains, happy to hear the birds we depend on returning to their nesting grounds, their own land, we take heart. Take time this season to enjoy the many species found on the Yellow Dog, especially the fiercely singing warbler warriors, defending their territory with dazzling flashes of color!

Nesting season on the Yellow Dog can be chilly or unseasonably warm and buggy. There are late, bright spring evenings and early sunrises throughout the Solstice. This can leave the avid birder exhausted by July; however, the new discoveries make it well worth the effort.

This June we will once again survey for singing Kirtland's Warblers on the Yellow Dog Plains. Most of this survey is done by vehicle, with hiking in jack pine plantations at points where we have found KWs. Also in the works are plans for a birding camp hosted by YDWP, which would involve surveying for singing birds on the river and plains, and may also include a night bird survey. This should take place in early June, so stay tuned for further details. If you would consider volunteering in any of these ventures, please contact the Yellow Dog office.

## LAND STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITY IN YDWP COMMUNITY FOREST

The Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve is seeking individuals and service groups to monitor the Community Forest entrance and hiking trails, located near the Yellow Dog River bridge on County Road 510. Volunteers can register for one day, one week, or an entire month. The goal is for volunteers to walk the Community Forest trails, collect and dispose of trash, and report any damage along the pathways or at the kiosk. This is a great opportunity for folks to contribute time and a little effort to keep our Community Forest clean so all may enjoy its beauty.

For more information, call 906-345-9223, visit our website, or contact Sarah Heuer, Programs Coordinator, via email at [sarah@yellowdogwatershed.org](mailto:sarah@yellowdogwatershed.org).





# LET THE TONGASS BREATHE

By Teague Whalen, YDWP Member

When I fly in Southeast Alaska and look east on a clear day, all I can see are snowcapped mountains, glaciers, lakes, rivers, forests, and fjords. No towns. No people. No roads. Just the rugged wilderness of the Tongass National Forest, sandwiched between the Pacific and British Columbia and stretching from Ketchikan up to Yakutat, a 550-mile journey by sea. The cultural home of the Haida, Tsimshian, and Tlingit, the Tongass is the United States' largest National Forest at 16.8 million acres and, according to the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC), is "Earth's largest intact temperate rainforest". The Tongass remains one of the last old-growth forests and climate sanctuaries; however, our forest is endangered from a new threat of clear-cut logging due to the former U.S. president's exemption of the Tongass from the federal Roadless Rule, which was designed to protect our national parks' roadless areas from logging. The State of Alaska supports the Tongass exemption, but many of us who live here do not.



**Ward Creek old-growth western red cedar:**  
*The oldest western red cedar on the Ward Creek trail within the Tongass National Forest.*  
Photo by Teague Whalen.

My connection to our Tongass old growth—Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Alaska yellow cedar, and western red cedar—is much deeper than I realized and not as innocent as I had once thought. The house I rent outside of Ketchikan is sided in western red cedar, and my acoustic guitar's one-piece, soundboard top is cut from old-growth Sitka spruce, which is one of the most sought after, quality, resonate woods for acoustic instruments. As a musician, I really appreciate how beautiful this wood sounds. However, I didn't know that buying my guitar twenty years ago in Michigan indirectly supported old-growth logging in the Tongass. I have since learned that the Tongass provides something much more valuable and irreplaceable—the clean air we breathe.

Blown in from the Pacific, our Southeast-Alaskan air filters through the leaves of the Tongass and is charged with the negative ions of rain, which results in a cool and moist, loamy, piney air. Through photosynthesis, the Tongass's old-growth forest becomes a powerful carbon sink that offsets climate change. Like Zen masters who breathe in the suffering of others and breathe out peace and compassion, these ancient trees inhale carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide from our atmosphere, safely storing the carbon inside the trees, and exhale oxygen. According to the US Department of Agriculture, "one large tree can provide a day's supply of oxygen for up to four people". SEACC reports that the Tongass absorbs 8% of US carbon emissions. In just the context of automobiles, that means that the Tongass is capable of absorbing the exhaust of 1 out of every 12 cars. Putting this in perspective, Kara Norton, in her *PBS Nova* article, quotes a scientist who reminds us, "[T]he Tongass is the lungs of North America".

These old-growth trees punctuate my hikes like meditating Buddhas, unique in each of their branched-out postures. I often bow when one catches my attention. Some have been standing for over 800 years; dead ones still stand or have fallen to become the base for new seedlings and animal habitat. Their roots feed upon nutrient-rich soil from salmon carcasses discarded by bears and eagles and lap up our steady rain to sometimes swell their trunks to over seven-feet wide and reach up to 200-feet. "Researchers have found," Norton reports, "that a tree's carbon absorption rate accelerates as the tree ages" and grows more leaves. In *Frontiers in Forests and Global Change*, David Mildrexler and colleagues find that half of the carbon stored in trees globally is found in "the largest 1% of trees". These few remaining giants are our planet's sentinels doing the lion's share of battling our manmade greenhouse gasses that are causing climate change.

One of my favorite trees is a battle-worn yellow cedar. The massive trunk stands straight and twists slightly vertically, like a drill bit, and is covered in



**Teague at the base of a "mother tree" old-growth Alaska yellow cedar.** Photo by Teague Whalen.

ratty vertical-grooved strips of dirty whitewashed bark. The topmost third branches out into drooping leaves; the crown looks like an old woman clinging to her wispy hair. It's a mystery how this "mother tree" survived all the logging, road building, storms, and occasional drought over the last ten centuries. In the *Smithsonian* article, "Do Trees Talk to Each Other," Richard Grant shares how Suzanne Simard, a professor of forest ecology at the University of British Columbia, describes "mother trees" as "the biggest, oldest trees in the forest with the most fungal connections. . . With their deep roots, they draw up water and make it available to shallow-rooted seedlings. They help neighboring trees by sending them nutrients, and when the neighbors are struggling, mother trees detect their distress signals and increase the flow of nutrients accordingly". This is how the Tongass' old-growth raise younger trees, which if left to grow for centuries, could become our next generation of old-growth.

Though the state of Alaska would rather monetize the Tongass as a clear-cut commodity, old-growth forests, when logged, negatively impact climate change by releasing stored carbon back into our atmosphere. Logged trees stop producing oxygen and no longer absorb carbon, and instead of naturally decaying and releasing stored carbon over long periods of time, trees' carbon release accelerates, according to Oregon Wild, due to "fragmentation, accelerated decomposition, and combustion".

(continued on page 13)



# FROM THE YELLOW DOG TO THE PING

By Kalil Zender

For a while, I lived with a family in rural Thailand, about an hour south of Chiang Mai. The land around us was hot, flat, and empty. It was neither farm country, forest, nor village, but more of a half-hearted melding of the three. This was the kind of place that seldom saw rain, that was already ninety degrees when the sun rose and the cicadas started their deafening chorus. The only thing to do here, and the only way to escape the heat, was to go fishing.

As a kid, I fished with my mom in the Yellow Dog almost every day. We would leave the house in the afternoon and hike upstream through the woods for about a mile before cutting down to the water. When we reached the river, we stopped to bait our hooks in the thimbleberry thicket, a spinner for her and a worm for me, before rolling up our shorts and stepping in the current.

When I was very little, my hook seldom reached the water. Usually, it went soaring into the canopy instead, tangling hopelessly around low hanging branches and leaves. When I got a little older, my worm started making it to the water more often. I was too slow to reel it back however, and frequently got snagged on invisible logs and sticks under the surface. This was hardly a problem, because underwater snags could be almost as fun as catching fish. I liked diving under with my eyes open and following the line to my embedded hook, pretending to be a mermaid, or a beaver.



*Kalil, age 9, with her dog Oona on the porch of her Yellow Dog home.*

Our stretch of river changed every year. Each spring brought a flood of snow melt and fallen trees that went ripping through the river valley, carving out deeps, creating new bends, moving boulders, and depositing sandbars. Investigating the new river-scape and discovering new swimming holes became a yearly tradition. In summer, we swam almost every day, sometimes washing our hair in buckets on the beach, or scrubbing our bodies pink with wet sand. The Yellow Dog rarely gets warmer than 60 degrees, but as a kid I never minded. I would swim along with my mouth open, lapping up river water like a thirsty dog. "It's like a wool blanket!" I squealed, taunting the adults who stood shivering on the shore.

I was suspicious of other fishermen though, especially ones who wore waders and bug shirts instead of bathing suits and sun hats. When I saw people walking through my river with their chest-high rubber pants, I narrowed my eyes. Blasphemers, I thought. Weaklings! Isn't the point of being on the river to let the water goosebump your skin? To grit your teeth until your knees turn white and your toes blue? Surely we can all pay this little price, I thought, in exchange for having the best water—and the sweetest little fish—on earth.

The family I lived with in Thailand often took me on fishing expeditions to their own favorite spot. Usually, the whole family came along like it was a trip to the water park. The pond was a man-made square about fifty feet wide and equally long, with tall, steep banks. While the Yellow Dog ripples cold and clear, this water was as warm as forgotten tea and the color of dirty milk. The pond was a murky cesspool of life, though, teeming with fish, frogs, tiny shrimp, mussels, snakes, and a pair of giant water buffalo.

I knelt in the warm water while my five-year-old companion, Minao, splashed and shrieked beside me. Uncle Hua stood on the bank, fishing rod in hand, flanked on either side by his teenage sons, who dove enthusiastically into the water whenever he had something on the line. Occasionally they emerged, spluttering and gasping, with a fish in their hands.

While grandpa sank his homemade shrimp traps, Minao and I collected mussels. We trolled the shallows on our hands and knees, giving the heat-dazed water buffalo a wide birth. Minao showed me how to dig my fingers in the soft clay, turning up handfuls of mud and sometimes mussels the size of quarters, which we tossed into a bucket of clean water. I had never swum in water so warm and murky, and tried not to think about what things might be swimming with us. Minao splashed along beside me, carefree and happy, and I was reminded of being a kid on my own river. For Minao, this stagnant pond was the best and only

water for miles. I doubt she cared that she would have to shower and scrub herself later to wash the mud and parasites out of her hair, because for her this was a paradise, and she embraced it.



*Ping River in Chiang Mai, Thailand.  
Photo by Rochelle Dale.*

When I moved to the city, I lived just a few blocks from the Ping River, which flows wide, slow, and contaminated all the way to the ocean. I often sat on the bank, sipping a beer, watching the sun sink behind the hotels lining the far shore. A wreckage of lost fishing nets, plastic bags, and decaying flip-flops lapped against the bank in a tangle of weeds, and a shirtless man swam through the greenish murk gripping a fishing device in his teeth. Nothing could convince me to get in this river, and I felt sad and lucky knowing the Ping could be to this man what the Yellow Dog is to me. I learned to swim in the Yellow Dog. Being home-schooled, I had time to explore every bend and scramble up and down every steep bank. I faked my way through long division and never did learn algebra, but I knew where to find the biggest trout and where the beavers were working each year.

After I came home from Thailand, I had lost some of my immunity to the cold. I couldn't swim in the Yellow Dog for hours like I used to, and it felt nothing like a wool blanket. I had become one of those adults I used to mock, taking a quick plunge before scurrying out to shiver under a towel. Young Kalil would be ashamed of the weakling I am now, but I try to appease her in small ways. I never wear shoes in the river, although I'm often tempted, and I never, ever, wear waders to walk in my river.





## WINNER: WILDLIFE

*Teague Whalen*

*"Bald Eagle in The Tongass National Forest"*

The endlessly variable patterns of daily and seasonal cycles bring opportunities for the photographer, but also to her/his subjects.

Of the circumstances of his winning photograph in the Wildlife category, Teague Whalen writes:

*The photo was taken the morning of Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at Ward Lake, within the Tongass National Forest just outside of Ketchikan, Alaska, where I live. This was during the end of the fall salmon run, when they run up Ward Creek and into Ward Lake, a nice feast for eagles on the lookout... This is the same place, Ward Lake, that I wrote about in the piece you (YDWP) published last year. Nearly every morning, Monday through Friday, I walk the 1.5-mile trail around the lake, and I take my camera with me in hopes of capturing wildlife opportunities.*



## RUNNER-UP: WILDLIFE

*Matt Schroderus*

*"American Sable:*

*Michigan's Comeback Story"*

Our entries in the Wildlife category also evoke the beauty of other creatures whose habitats we share: bears, snapping turtles, beaver, blue jays, frogs, mourning doves, and, of course, deer.

Matt Schroderus says of the image at right, another Wildlife category runner-up:

*The pine marten was photographed in my backyard in Northern Marquette County. He's one of 3 that visit every now and then. We actually had one spend the winter in my pole barn sleeping on an old wool blanket up on a cabinet.*





## WINNER: PEOPLE IN NATURE

Kaylee Laakso  
“Harmony”



Among the contest winners and runners-up, serendipity emerges as a prominent theme. Kaylee Laakso's spectacular photo of the Mendota Channel on Lac La Belle in the Keweenaw was the winner in the People in Nature category.

Kaylee writes of her image:

*I set out in my kayak while it was still dark in hopes of catching the sunrise over the water. The magnificent views only became dreamier with each paddle stroke and passing minute. Finally, finding myself in the channel with mirror-like reflections, a glowing rising sun, and a treasure-worthy sliver of the moon, I sat awestruck by the natural beauty of our incredible planet and slice of heaven, here, in the UP.*



## RUNNER-UP: PEOPLE IN NATURE

Matt Schroderus  
“A Night with Aurora Borealis”

Matt Schroderus' 2016 photo, a runner-up in the People in Nature category, was also made possible by fortuitous conditions.

Of the image, Matt says:

*I had no idea that there were going to be northern lights that night. The weather looked perfect, so I told my wife I was going to tent overnight on Silver Lake. I took my small tent, my kayak, and my camera gear and left in the afternoon. That night I was just mesmerized by the aurora. I had the entire lake to myself and I set my tripod up so that my tent site would also be in the picture. I triggered the shutter remotely and had a great night. I took over 200 photographs that night and didn't hit the sleeping bag until 4am, a night I will never forget.*





# VOLUNTEER LAND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM: BUILDING TEAM DESPITE THE PANDEMIC

By Kristi Mills, YDWP Secretary



What follows are field notes from recent visits to YDWP parcels:

**NAWCA (North American Wetland Conservation Act Property)-** A small team set out on skis and snowshoes in early February to track the perimeter of this 160-acre remote wetland, facing demanding terrain, fatigue, and short daylight hours. Even under several feet of snow, the team identified the unique visible features of this diverse ecosystem.

*Dave Kadell (above left) on snowshoes in one of several marshes within the NAWCA property.*

*Photo by Sarah Heuer.*

One of YDWP's most important and successful programs, the Land Protection Program, identifies areas of the watershed that are threatened and/or of high value for ecological, recreational, or cultural reasons. Strategies for protecting land include advocacy of sound public policy, working with landowners to restrict development through conservation easements, and outright ownership of land. Through hard work, determination, and a little luck, YDWP has been able to secure and protect nearly 2400 acres of land across nine parcels, with the bulk of the acreage acquired just in the last five years. The purchase of the 688-acre Yellow Dog River Community Forest in 2016, the addition of 240 acres to the 40-acre Pinnacle Falls Preserve in 2017, and the remarkable 1000-acre Mudjekewis Wildlife Refuge donation in 2019 have catapulted the program to a new level, with new opportunities always on the horizon.

With land ownership comes great responsibility, and with that in mind, YDWP developed the Volunteer Land Stewardship Program in 2018. Since then, we have trained 12 volunteers to observe, collect, and report key information via field surveys on all land parcels, twice per year. The watershed is also digitally captured via fair weather aerial flights. These surveys provide a baseline for future management of the parcels and expansion of the stewardship program.

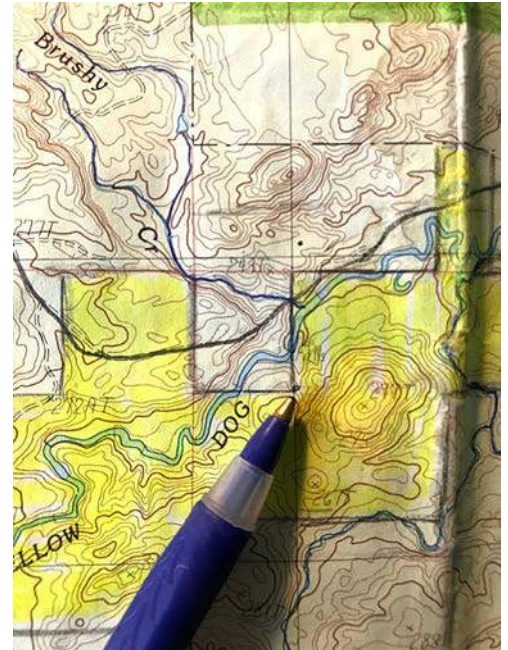
During the spring of 2020, when public gatherings were limited, the Land Stewardship Program was temporarily joined with the Volunteer Water Monitoring Program. Small teams spent extended days in the field collecting water quality data and doing land parcel surveys. When the pandemic extended into the winter months of 2021, teams took advantage of mild temperatures and modest snowfall to ski or snowshoe to remote parcels, visiting typically inaccessible wetlands and avoiding clouds of black flies.

**Jean Farwell Wilderness-** Impenetrable and buggy most of the year, a blanket of ice and snow allowed for smooth travel by skis. From Lake Independence (The Stumps), a group of 9 forced their way through thick tag alders before reaching Yellow Dog acreage studded with impressive cedars and black ash. Reaching and identifying the main branch of the river was a goal met with a little help from GPS technology.

**Yellow Dog River Community Forest-** Entering the parcel near the Remington Rd (formerly Mike Davis' property), a team of 4 skied the dramatic ridgeline overlooking the Yellow Dog River and navigated the 40-acre gap between the easterly 160-acre parcel and the westerly bulk of the Community Forest, noting property boundaries, existing trails, and forest composition.

**Mudjekewis Wildlife Refuge-** Entering this most eastern parcel of the refuge just off the AAA near the Clowry Trail, a team of 3 travelled by skis, noting historical trail roads, property lines and forest health, eventually navigating south onto state land, and looping back to AAA after a sunny lunch along the Yellow Dog River.

The future success of the Land Protection and Stewardship Programs will depend on the inspired vision of our members, supporters, staff, and the broader environmental community, benefiting all who visit the watershed. On the Yellow Dog website, we pose the question, "Do you appreciate our land as much as we do? Become a part of the solution by staying informed". This can mean becoming a member and receiving our emails and newsletters, attending YDWP events and fundraisers, or volunteering for our programs, including



*Finding a remote property boundary using a topographic map.*

the Land Protection Program and Land Stewardship Program. Let the river guide your spirit!

I would like to remember the award-winning author and naturalist, Barry Lopez, who died on December 25, 2020, shortly after his home of 50 years burned in Oregon's Holiday Fire this past September. Bob Shacochis wrote of Lopez in *Outdoor Magazine*, "He loved the wind in his face—subzero was just fine with him. He loved to watch, observe, witness, listen, report, struggle to see, struggle to understand". Let us be more like Barry Lopez.



*Abe Turner & Clare Fastiggi in the Jean Farwell Wilderness. Photo by Sarah Heuer.*



## TELL YOUR YELLOW DOG STORY: COMMUNITY-SOURCED VIDEO PROJECT



YDWP invites you to participate in a collaborative video project in which we weave together images and stories of our contributors. We will showcase the final product at our annual meeting and on our website. You may share your Yellow Dog story in video or audio form. We purposely have left the guidelines loose to allow free rein to the imagination, but, if you are able to get out on the river, we encourage you to film or share the sounds of the sites that inspire you.

The trick will be to keep your account brief and powerful. If you are producing a video, it should be 3 minutes or less (25mb max) so you can send it via email. The same 25mb maximum applies to sending audio files by email. Audio pieces should be 5 minutes or less.

We hope you will be able to revisit the site of your narrative so that it may animate your memories and help you illustrate them to others with sight and sound. It's OK, though, if you can't reach the river banks. Send us your story with whatever background is best for you; share your account wherever you are! Your story will help us create a portrait of a community that loves this river and has been shaped by encounters with it.

Please submit your video or audio files by September 15 to [ydwp@yellowdogwatershed.org](mailto:ydwp@yellowdogwatershed.org) so that we may complete the project in time to present it at our annual meeting in the fall. All those who contribute a piece will receive a free annual membership in YDWP. For more information contact Brian Noell at [brian@yellowdogwatershed.org](mailto:brian@yellowdogwatershed.org).

Thank you, and may the Yellow Dog continue to shape our lives, as well as those of our children and their children, for generations to come!

## RIVER ADVOCATES

*By Rochelle Dale*

Freshwater Future, a collaborative and entrepreneurial organization based in lower Michigan, has been a long-time supporter of the Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve. This year they have awarded us a \$3,000 grant to provide watershed landowners with educational information about creating buffer strips and implementing other erosion prevention measures. In addition, we will be presenting at Michigamme, Champion, Ishpeming, and Powell Township board meetings (the four townships through which the river flows).

Through our many years of monitoring the river, the need for zoning revisions has become obvious. In one case, a cabin's front porch support extends over the cliff edge, soon to collapse into the water below. Other landowners will lose ancient white pines due to lack of buffer strips and activity, such as mowing at the water's edge. Fishermen and women and hikers along certain stretches of river are confronted with large white, non-native boulders lining the banks to hold back the erosion caused by building too close on such sandy soil. Erosion is not just about losing trees, houses, or yards; sediment into the river is detrimental to brook trout. It buries the gravel beds that they require for spawning. In certain townships, building setbacks are only thirty feet, and this is just not enough distance for a river that moves and changes with every spring.

There are so many things that landowners can do to help prevent erosion, create wildlife corridors, and help keep our river wild and scenic. If you would like to help, contact us for more information.



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## RUNNER-UP: PEOPLE IN NATURE

Ann McPhail

"Falling in Love at Okere Falls NZ"

So much about great photography is timing, being there at the right moment, camera in hand.

Ann McPhail contributed the image at right, a runner-up in the People in Nature category, from the most distant location represented among our entries. She says:

*The photo was taken on January 17, 2020 at Okere Falls on the Kaituna River, North Island of New Zealand. I was walking the trail and spotted the rafters coming down the Tutea Falls at just the right time. Several rafts plunged down the seven-meter-tall waterfall one after the other. It was exhilarating to watch. Tutea is a class 4 rapids. The giant ferns in the foreground are typical of the lushness of New Zealand forests.*



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## RUNNER-UP: WILDLIFE

Tim Oatley  
"A Moment In-time"



Tim Oatley reached his destination in time to capture the image at left, a runner-up in the Wildlife category.

Tim relates:

*This image was taken in February 2021 at Trout Lake over by Trenary, MI. There had been a bird sighting report in The Mining Journal regarding a large flock of swans wintering on Trout Lake, which we investigated and found to be true.*

Whether near or distant, the natural world offers us its beauty and variability, sometimes because we show patience and perseverance, and sometimes as a spontaneous offering when we are at the right place at the right time. The photographers who submitted entries in our contest remind us that we must extend ourselves to see clearly and with vividness.

## LET THE TONGASS BREATHE

(continued from page 6)

The Tongass, SEACC reveals, is "the last National Forest to allow large-scale clearcut logging of ancient old-growth trees," which "now contributes less than 1% to Southeast Alaska's regional economy". The Tongass documentary, *Understory*, adds that a logged forest can take 200 years to recapture released carbon. Unfortunately, we don't have that kind of time.

So, please help fight climate change and preserve old-growth forests. Write your senator and house of representatives to support Congress's proposed Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2021, which protects against logging in roadless areas in all our National Forests, including the Tongass. Sign this petition: "<https://act.wilderness.org/a/protect-tongassnational-forest>." Because, if we can lose our ancient forests here, it can happen in your backyard too, if it hasn't already. So, spread the word. Save our lungs.

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## EYE ON THE KIRTLAND'S

By Nancy Moran

This spring's unseasonably warm weather has brought migratory birds in waves to the area, including one rare summer resident. A Kirtland's Warbler has been seen and heard singing in the jack pine on the Yellow Dog Plains! Great news for this rare bird, and also all the past efforts and science that have supported it!

Of course the story of the Kirtland's on the Yellow Dog has some history, with sightings of the warblers every now and then, starting in the late 90's, with at least one follow up by the DNR, which yielded no results. Then, in 2003, after seeing a KW while driving to the Yellow Dog on a fishing trip, my husband and I decided to get more involved. By 2005, with a few volunteers from various agencies, we did the first survey.

The spring of 2006 we found the first KW ever counted in a census on corporate land in the Yellow Dog Plains. In an arrangement between the land owner, Plum Creek, and US Fish & Wildlife, agency biologist Christie DeLoria planted a KW specific habitat in an area where the then endangered warblers had been seen for two seasons.



*Kirtland's Warbler in jack pine on the Yellow Dog Plains. Photo by Nancy Moran, May 2021.*

These blue-gray birds with a lemon yellow breast favor a nesting ground of young, thickly growing jack pine in a glacial outwash as is found in Marquette County, and also in the Lower Peninsula near Grayling (where the greater part of this species is found). Several more sightings of the KW have been made in the past years on the Yellow Dog Plains, keeping us hopeful that they may establish a nesting community in this area.

Fifty years ago or so, the population of KWs was only thirty birds. An effort was begun to build habitat. This developed over the years and brought the KW back from the brink of extinction, and the science of all the many involved researchers, biologists, and foresters became a model of how to save a species. All of this comes to my mind as I hear the Kirtland's song, bright and clear in the jack pine, even on the windiest spring days. In 2020 the Kirtland's was delisted from Endangered, as the numbers are now estimated to be over 2,300 pairs, which is more than double the numerical recovery goals. With the delisting comes a plan to continue monitoring and conservation to make sure the species maintains growth and does not have to be listed as endangered again. There are new partners with the KW Conservation Team and Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, including Huron Pines, a grassroots organization in lower Michigan. The post-delisting monitoring plan calls for a full census in 2021, a follow up in 4 years, with survey sampling in the years between.

We will be out again from June 6 through June 27, searching the jack pine of the Yellow Dog Plains, hopeful that this rare bird will build a nesting colony, their song resounding among the heat, black flies and blueberries, and all the things of summer!

### THE BOOK NOOK

*A YDWP Recommended Read*

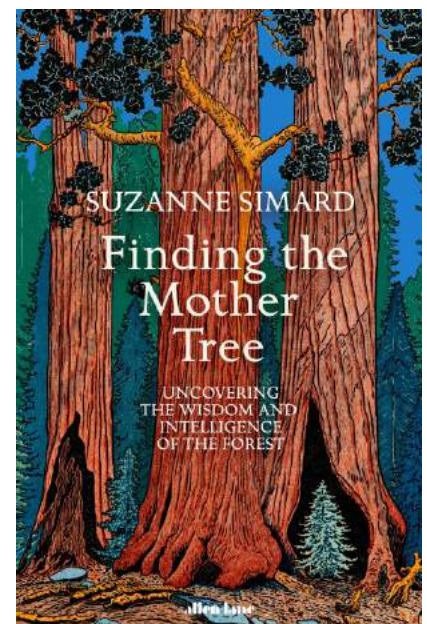
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Suzanne Simard

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If we have accidentally omitted your name, or you find an error, we apologize. Please contact Brian Noell at (906)345-9223 or email [brian@yellowdogwatershed.org](mailto:brian@yellowdogwatershed.org).

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## The Target Circle results are in!

*Guests in Northern Michigan stores cast*

*44,320 votes for YDWP.*

*We earned a donation of \$2,115.*

**circle**

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Les Milligan (pictured at left) is donating the use of his pontoon boat this summer for our Cooperative Lake Monitoring Program on Lake Independence.

We would like to thank Les as well for donation of plow services, keeping our office parking area accessible last winter.

Tom Nartker & Sergey are also seen in the photo.





## Yellow Dog Watershed Preserve

PO Box 5

Big Bay, MI 49808

(906)345-9223

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*Crystal Cooper, Brian Noell, and Sergey after a day's work of macroinvertebrate sampling on the Salmon Trout West Branch, off the Northwestern Road, May 29, 2021. Photo by Kristi Mills.*



*Sergey, Sarah Heuer, and Dave Kadell on a mountain top during a hike in search of property boundaries in the Community Forest, April 2021. Photo by Krisit Mills.*



*Moose rub found along the Bentley Trail within the McCormick Wilderness Area during the latest quest to retrace the Trail from the Yellow Dog Falls West to Bulldog Lake, May 21, 2021. Photo by Chauncey Moran.*



*New volunteer Amelia Vasquez-Collins identifying macroinvertebrates on the Yellow Dog River in the Community Forest, May 16, 2021. Photo by Kristi Mills.*