

# DNR Shares Guidelines for Handling Birds with Cases of Suspected Botulism

Information for safely handling birds suspected of dying from Type E botulism have been announced by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), in conjunction with the Michigan Departments of Agriculture and Community Health and the Michigan Sea Grant Extension.

"For the past two years on Lake Michigan, we have had a number of waterfowl and other shore birds die due to Type E botulism," said Tom Cooley, DNR Wildlife Biologist. "We now have protocols in place for the public that explain what to do if they find a dead bird washed up on shore. We also will be providing information to waterfowl hunters this year who might be hunting in these areas."

In 2007 in the Upper Peninsula, the die-off occurred in Delta, Schoolcraft, and Mackinac counties and involved common loons, long-tailed ducks, horned grebes, white-winged scoters, herring gulls, and red-necked grebes. In the Lower Peninsula, the die-off occurred in Leelanau, Benzie, Emmet, Charlevoix (including Beaver Island), and Antrim counties. DNR wildlife biologists also heard reports of other counties involved, but received no birds to examine.

There were at least 17 species of waterbirds involved. The estimated mortality for the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, which was highly monitored, was 1,135 birds. The total mortality for both Peninsulas was 7,500 birds, including birds from the Sleeping Bear Dunes.

The numbers were much greater in 2007 in the U.P. than they were in 2006.

In 2006 in the Upper Peninsula, the die-off occurred in Menominee, Delta, and Schoolcraft counties, with an estimated mortality of 600 birds. The species involved were

## Safely Handling of Dead Birds Found on Beaches

Lake Michigan homeowners who may find dead water birds on the beaches are advised to take the following precautions:

- Bird carcasses should not be handled with bare hands. Wear gloves or use a garbage bag over your hand to collect bird carcasses.
- Bird carcasses should be placed in garbage bags.
- Carcasses can be disposed of either by including them with household trash or by burying them. If you bury carcasses, do so away from the shoreline, removing them from the garbage bag and burying them at least two feet deep. Burying them to this depth will discourage other animals from unearthing them. Do not place them in compost.
- You can bury animal carcasses on your property only, unless you receive permission from the property owners to remove carcasses from their land.
- Once you finish handling the carcasses, you should dispose of your gloves in a garbage bag and place them in trash that is going to a landfill.

The agencies also have established protocols for collection of carcasses for examination. These include:

- Any bird collected for submission for a necropsy or botulism testing must be freshly

dead. Presence of a bad smell or maggots is evidence that the bird has been dead longer than 24 hours and is not acceptable for testing. Decomposed carcasses can cause false positive results.

• Submission of birds for examination and testing needs to be limited to two individuals per species per county. Once the disease is confirmed in a species in a county, no additional testing will be needed on that species.

• Individuals handling dead birds should wear rubber, plastic, or disposable gloves. Place the carcasses in a garbage bag and seal the bag. For testing, collected specimens need to be bagged individually or by species, and a history provided. The history should include date collected, location (county, township, range, and section if possible), the numbers and species involved in the die-off, and a contact name and address.

• The nearest DNR office should be contacted and arrangements made to deliver the specimens to the office. It may be possible for DNR personnel to pick up specimens, or it may be necessary to deliver them. DNR field personnel will forward the specimens to the DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory in Lansing for necropsy and botulism testing.

double-crested cormorants, ring-billed gulls, horned grebes, common loons, red-breasted mergansers, and red-necked grebes. In the Lower Peninsula, the die-off

occurred in Leelanau, Mason, Benzie, and Grand Traverse counties, with an estimated mortality of nearly 3,000 birds. The species involved were grebes, double-crested cormorants, gulls, mergansers, and common loons.

The majority of the die-off began in late August and extended

into the middle of November. There was a small die-off in June along the Sleeping Bear Dunes area, and that is when Caspian terns and piping plovers died.

Wildlife biologists believe the likely route of transmission of Type E Botulism in Lake Michigan, as well as in Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, probably includes Cladophora algae, zebra and quagga mussels, and the round goby. The algae establish anaerobic conditions in which the botulism bacterium, found in the bottom sediments of the Great Lakes, proliferates. The bacteria, and the toxin it produces, are ingested by the mussels, and the mussels are in turn eaten by the gobies. Birds can become infected either by eating the mussels directly, eating gobies or other fish that may be involved that are sick due to the botulism toxin, or by scavenging carcasses of birds or fish that have died from botulism.

Property owners along Lake Michigan who come across dead water birds should take precautions, Mr. Cooley said, such as making

## Guidelines for Waterfowl Hunters

Guidelines for waterfowl hunters in the northern Lower Peninsula and the eastern Upper Peninsula also were developed. The guidelines will be printed in the 2008 Michigan Waterfowl Guide. They include:

- Birds with Type E botulism may be lethargic, have difficulty holding their heads out of the water, or be unable to fly.
- Hunters should harvest only waterfowl that act and look healthy.
- Hunters should wear rubber, plastic, or disposable gloves while field dressing,

skinning, or butchering waterfowl.

- Remove and discard intestines soon after harvesting and avoid direct contact with the intestinal contents.
- Wash hands, utensils, and work surfaces before and after handling any meat.
- Keep waterfowl cool (either with ice or refrigerated) below 45°F until butchered, then refrigerate or freeze.
- Cook waterfowl to an internal temperature of 165°F. Cooking may not destroy Type E botulism toxin.

sure pets do not come in contact with wildlife carcasses. It may be necessary to have pets on leashes in areas where fish and bird die-offs are occurring. He added that no Type E botulism illnesses have been associated with swimming along the lakeshore where fish and bird die-offs have occurred. Pets

and humans can become sick if they ingest the botulism toxin by eating a contaminated bird or fish.

More information on Type E botulism and the protocols developed for handling or collecting dead birds is available on the DNR Web site at [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr).

## Measure Extends Unemployment Benefits

A measure to extend unemployment benefits in states with high unemployment has been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and awaits action by the Senate.

The U.S. House of Representatives Thursday, June 12, passed legislation to extend unemployment benefits by up to 13 weeks in all states and up to 26 weeks in states such as Michigan, with an unemployment rate of 6% or higher.

U.S. Congressman Bart Stupak said the legislation will benefit the 3.8 million Americans struggling to find work.

"With costs rising for food, gas, and health care," he said, "these individuals need our help while they look for work or retrain for a

new career path."

The Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act (H.R. 5479), if adopted, would double the length of time that unemployed workers in Michigan would be eligible for benefits. Under current law, workers in every state are eligible for 26 weeks of benefits. Based on Michigan's unemployment rate of 7.2%, Michigan workers would be eligible for 52 weeks of benefits

through March 2009.

According to Mr. Stupak, independent estimates have found that extending unemployment benefits is one of the most immediate and cost-effective ways to stimulate the economy, because the money is spent quickly. Every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits, he said, generates \$1.64 in new economic demand.

The bill was passed in the House by a vote of 274-137.

**MAC Attack Youth Wrestling Camp**  
 Friday, July 11 & Saturday, July 12  
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 \$40 Registration  
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**Battle the Bridge Wrestling Tournament**  
 Sunday, July 13  
 Little Bear East  
 \$20 Pre-Registration (Postmarked by July 3)  
 Registration Forms and additional information for either Event available at  
 Little Bear East Recreation Office  
 (906) 643-8676

**Artist of the Week**  
 at the Les Cheneaux Historical Museum in Cedarville

<b>WEDNESDAY, JULY 2<sup>ND</sup></b> Noon to 3 p.m. <i>Ron Paquin</i> Native American Crafts	<b>WEDNESDAY, JULY 9<sup>TH</sup></b> Noon to 3 p.m. <i>Carol Hubbard</i> Oil Painting
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Sponsored in part by a grant from Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs.

**Smith Earns Principal's Award**



Jacob Smith received the Principal's Award for Engadine Elementary School. He was recognized for his kindness and willingness to help anyone in need.  
 (Photographs courtesy of Angie McArthur)

**MARINA PUB**  
 AT THE ST. IGNACE YACHT CLUB

Stop in for Our Daily & Nightly Chef Perry Specials...  
**Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July!**  
 Join us on the Deck for a Great View of the Fireworks!  
 BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND - WEDNESDAY, JULY 2<sup>ND</sup>:  
**BRETT MITCHELL & THE GIANT GHOST**  
 TUESDAY, JULY 8<sup>TH</sup>:  
**MARY-OKE**  
 EVERY WEDNESDAY FROM 4-6p.m.  
 FREE HORS D'OEUVRES  
 Daily Happy Hour:  
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ST. IGNACE: W366 West US-2 • 643-8138 located next to Burger King Open Mon. - Fri. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CEDARVILLE: 507 West Hwy. M-134 • 484-3099 located across from Car Wash Open Mon. - Fri. 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Zion Evangelical Lutheran Day Camp**  
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 9 to 11:30 a.m.  
 Come join us for... games, stories, movies, and snacks  
 Open to all children 3 years old through 4th grade  
 Transportation can be provided  
 Register by calling (906) 643-7870  
 999 South State Street, St. Ignace

**KID'S FREEDOM PARTY**  
 at the Straits Evangelical Free Church  
 324 First Street, St. Ignace  
 Corner of First and Portage Street  
 Thursday, July 3, 1-3 p.m.  
 For 6<sup>th</sup> grade and under  
 Meet the servicemen, write to and pray for the troops, Bible story, outdoor games, sing Patriotic songs and enjoy cake and ice cream.

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For Other Visiting Physicians Call 906-643-0466