Michigan Nature Association to Lead Field Trips in the Keweenaw

The Michigan Nature Association will host a Fall Weekend in the Keweenaw on Saturday-Sunday, September 24-25. Events include a guided exploration of five of the eighteen Michigan Nature Association (MNA) sanctuaries in the Keweenaw Peninsula: Estivant Pines, Redwyn’s Dunes, Gratiot Lake, Brockway Mountain, and the Robert T. Brown Teaching Sanctuary, and an Open House & Silent Auction on Saturday evening at the Keweenaw Community Foundation at 326 Sheldon Avenue in Houghton.

The Saturday evening open house will feature great food, presentations about the MNA’s sanctuaries and on-going land protection efforts in the Keweenaw, plus a silent auction to help establish MNA’s new endowment fund with the Keweenaw Community Foundation, and help purchase a 128-acre addition to the 377-acre Estivant Pines sanctuary near Copper Harbor and complete the purchase of the Brown Teaching Sanctuary near Painesdale. Many items have been donated for the silent auction: a beautiful maple cutting board from Birds’ Eye Connection of L’Anse (Alberta), beautiful picture books of Lake Superior from Grandpa’s Attic of Copper Harbor and Northwind Books of Hancock, the Great Lakes Wetland Flora and Plants of the Copper Country from Pocketflora Press in Laurium, beautiful framed photographs from local photographers Charlie Eshbach and Anne Collins, and much, much more.

On Saturday, participants may choose one of two field trips that will be offered. One field trip will visit Estivant Pines Nature Sanctuary near Copper Harbor and the Redwyn’s Dunes Nature Sanctuary located east of Keweenaw’s Great Sand Bay along M-26 north of Eagle River. The Estivant Pines, MNA’s first sanctuary in the Keweenaw, is one of the largest tracts of old-growth white pine in the United States, east of the Mississippi River! In addition to the 500 year-old white pines which tower 100 feet above the ground, the Estivant Pines sanctuary boasts eighty-five species of birds, and a variety of northern boreal plants. The Redwyn’s Dunes Nature Sanctuary has a new one-mile trail along two dune ponds and out to the shore of Lake Superior.

The second Saturday field trip will visit the Gratiot Lake Nature Sanctuary and the Brockway Nature Sanctuary near Copper Harbor. The trail at MNA’s Gratiot Lake sanctuary climbs nearly 400 ft. to the top of a bluff overlooking Gratiot Lake, and includes a beautiful cascading waterfall hidden within the 100-acre sanctuary. The lower portion of the Brockway Mountain Nature Sanctuary has a half-mile trail along Garden Brook. The upper portion of the Brockway Mountain sanctuary offers an overlook of Copper Harbor, Lake Superior, and a spectacular view of the fall colors along Brockway Mountain Drive. The MNA will rename this sanctuary the “James Dorion Rooks Brockway Mountain Memorial Nature Sanctuary” in honor of long-time member Jim Rooks of Copper Harbor who recently passed away.

On Sunday morning, participants will visit the Robert T. Brown Teaching Sanctuary near Painesdale. This 18-acre wetland site is named in honor of the late Robert Thorson Brown, a beloved Michigan
Technological University professor of Biological Sciences who took his classes there to learn about wetland ecology. This site offers a rich variety of plant and animal species.

The Michigan Nature Association (MNA), established in 1952, is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting examples of Michigan’s unique natural habitats and rare or endangered species. In addition, MNA conducts education programs and scientific study. The Michigan Nature Association's presence in the Keweenaw Peninsula began in the 1970s with the purchase of the Estivant Pines Nature Sanctuary. Since then, MNA has acquired over 18 sanctuaries in the Keweenaw, resulting in the protection of more than 1,500 acres of land.

Statewide, through the help of its members, the MNA now has 162 nature sanctuaries totaling more than 8200 acres. In April 2005, Governor Granholm honored the Michigan Nature Association and the organization’s 89-year-old founder, Bertha Daubendiek, for establishing Michigan’s first land preservation organization in 1952 to carry on a program of conservation education and habitat preservation. MNA’s nature sanctuaries are open to the public for hiking, nature-viewing, and educational purposes. To learn more, visit www.michigannature.org

To register for the Fall Weekend in the Keweenaw, contact Jeremy Emmi at the MNA office at (517) 655-5655, or send an e-mail to michigannature@michigannature.org by Friday, September 16. The cost for all Saturday and Sunday events is $50 per person. For more information, contact Joan Chadde at 487-3341 in Houghton or visit: http://wupcenter.mtu.edu/education/Nature/index.html

SCHEDULE

Saturday, Sept. 24
8:15 AM – Guided Field Trips of Four Nature Sanctuaries in the Keweenaw leaving from Super 8 Motel, 1220 E. Lakeshore Dr., Tel: 906-482-2240. Choose ONE: (1) Estivant Pines and Redwyn’s Dunes Nature Sanctuaries, or (2) Gratiot Lake and Brockway Mountain Nature Sanctuaries. Estimated return time to Houghton is 6 pm.

7:30-9:30 PM - Keweenaw Celebration & Silent Auction at Keweenaw Community Foundation’s Office, 326 Sheldon Ave., in Houghton. Tel: 482-9673.

Sunday, Sept. 25
8:15 AM – Guided Field Trips of R.T. Brown Teaching Sanctuary leaving from the Super 8 Motel, 1220 E. Lakeside Dr., Houghton. Tel: 906-482-2240.