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September 2, 2026
Supplement to the Iosco County News-Herald and Oscoda Press

FALL GUIDE



LUMBERJACK SHOWS – The Jack Pine Lumberjack Shows held many shows throughout last year’s festival. These involved two competitive lumberjacks competing against each other in different skills, such as chopping a small log of wood in half and rolling a log across the water while trying to make their opponent fall off, as seen in the photos here.

Oscoda marks the beginning of fall with annual Paul Bunyan Days

OSCODA – An annual fall time tradition in Oscoda Township – which has been entertaining event goers for more than 46 years now – will make its way back to the community with the 2026 rendition of the Paul Bunyan Days Festival. Put on by the Oscoda-AuS-able Chamber of Commerce (OACC), this year’s celebration is slated for Friday through Sunday, Sept. 18-20. The event will be open from 4-10 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 18, from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 19 and then from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 20. To take part in the festivities, crowds will again be converging at Furtaw Field, which is situated along US-23 in down-

town Oscoda. Admission will be in the form of a commemorative Paul Bunyan button, which can be purchased in advance from the OACC office, located at 4440 US-23 in Oscoda. The buttons cost \$10 apiece, and are good for all three days.

See Bunyan, Page 5



CHAINSAW CARVING – Gregory Hood of Hood’s Wood, seen in the larger photo, participated in the chainsaw carving competition. He and his other competitors spent the entire day carving their big showpiece, which was then judged. The smaller photo shows one of the quick carves that Emil Szkipala of the Chainsaw Men of Michigan group did.



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FALL GUIDE

An autumn afternoon at Iosco County’s Lumberman’s Monument



ANOTHER VIEW – A short, but scenic side path from the Lumberman’s Monument overlook offers another scenic view of Cook Pond.



A FALL VIEW AWAITS – Once down the 280 steps at Lumber’s Monument, this fall picture-perfect view of Cooke Pond awaits at the Wanigan. The Wanigan is a replica of a floating cook shack that followed the AuSable River logging drives.



DOWN THE STEPS – It’s 280 steps down to Cooke Pond at Lumberman’s Monument along the River Road National Scenic Byway in Oscoda Township. The fun part is the 280 steps back up.

Photos by
John Morris

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FALL GUIDE

Monarchs attracting attention in the Tawas area community

by Sandy McPhee

EAST TAWAS – They travel more than 3,000 miles to escape the winter, and their journey takes them here to the shores of the Tawas Bay – they’re colorful monarch butterflies.

Thanks to the Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce (TACC), the Tawas area is now recognized as a Monarch City, a geographic area that is committed to protect the monarch butterfly and help in a nationwide effort to restore its native habitat.

Suzan Nemeth, executive director of the TACC, is passionate about the monarch project. “There’s something magical about butterflies,” she said.

The Chamber, along with the Friends of Tawas Point Lighthouse and State Park, applied for and received a grant of \$3,847 from the Cooper Charitable Fund, to become a Monarch City.

The money is being used to support education and a habitat restoration initiative. Since receiving the grant, the TACC has sponsored speakers and educational programs and has found creative new ways to get the community involved, starting with a colorful new downtown mural.

Aimee O’Connor, owner of O’Connors on Newman Street in East Tawas, shared that for the past three or four years, she and her husband, Mark, had been looking for the right image for the outdoor wall of their store; so, when Nemeth and artist Ted Davies approached them about a monarch mural, O’Connor said it all just came together.

The mural, featuring multiple monarchs with the Tawas Point Lighthouse in the background, was completed on May 31 and has quickly become a favorite stop for visitors.

“It looks amazing,” said O’Connor. “You can see the excitement on people’s faces when they walk by.”

According to O’Connor, it’s an added attraction in an area which also includes new murals at the nearby Marion’s Dairy Bar business. “Marion’s has done some murals already; they look great, and it was attracting people, so you can just see happiness off of it and that’s the best part.”

Davies, of Ted Davies Artistry, worked with Nemeth on the idea for the mural.

Davies said that the sun, wind and changing temperature were challenges while he was creating the 18- by 20-foot painting. He adds that it’s the largest outdoor artwork he’s created and, although the mural is new, it’s already gotten a lot of attention.

According to Davies, he has had more than 20,000 views of one social media video he posted, while he was creating the mural.

“It’s a destination spot now by Marion’s,” he pointed out. “People go there, it’s taken off,



MONARCH MURAL – Young visitors Addison and Ava Bellfy, from Brooklyn, Mich., pose for photos in front of the new monarch mural on the O’Connors building in East Tawas.

my Instagram has exploded, people have been all over the place with this, it’s been awesome.”

The mural is interactive, Davies described, and designed so that people can place themselves in the picture. “To have people from all different age groups interacting with it is exactly what I wanted.”

He also said that he was hoping people of all ages would be inspired to find their own creativity.

“Inspiration is the main thing,” Davies conveyed. “I did the drawing in a way that if kids looked at it, they can take a crayon and they could draw something that would be, if you wanted to call it, acceptable. It’s not supposed to be photo realistic, it’s supposed to be inspirational... anybody can try it.”

The Chamber also enlisted the help of welding students at Iosco Regional Educational Service Agency (IRESA) in Tawas City, who created butterfly habitat sculptures that are currently on display in the gallery garden at the Tawas Bay Art Gallery.

The exhibit includes a large, four-foot monarch, a flower garden and other butterflies. The pieces are for sale, with all proceeds benefitting IRESA’s welding program, and the gallery is located at 302 Newman St.

Welding instructor Paul Billeter said that every student contributed something to the project and, while training the students for industry is the goal, giving back to the community is also an important part of their program.

“Any project that we can do

that can get our students making something for the community, that can help the community and them, I jump at the chance,” said Billeter.

Monarch butterflies travel from Mexico to Canada, but a single butterfly never actually completes the round trip alone – its descendants do. It can take a monarch three years and several generations to complete the migration. Along the journey, they make their way through the Tawas area in the fall.

According to the National Wildlife Federation, monarchs play a crucial role in our ecosystems, but they are currently facing a population decline due to habitat loss, climate change and the use of pesticides.

The Tawas area’s efforts in

the Monarch City project include creating public awareness, developing butterfly-friendly habitats and developing educational experiences for students and visitors. They are also encouraging people to create their own

butterfly-friendly habitat that includes milkweed plants, which are the only plants that monarch caterpillars can eat.

“When you read about the

See Monarchs, Page 5A

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FALL GUIDE

BUNYAN

Continued from Page 2

This year’s festival features a Chainsaw Carving Village, Bunyan Marketplace, carnival rides and games, the Lumber Camp Beer Tent, food trucks, Paul Bunyan Team Challenge, Best Beard Contest, kids activities and games, jams and jellies contest, a cornhole tournament and the Ultimate Air Dogs “When Dogs Fly” contests.

Paul Bunyan Days will take place rain or shine, and more information is available by visiting oscodachamber.com, calling 989-739-7322, stopping into the OACC office or checking out the Chamber’s Facebook page at facebook.com/OAC-Cvibe.



File photos by Kaitlyn Campbell

CARNIVAL RIDES – There are many carnival rides that children and adults alike can enjoy during Paul Bunyan Days on Furtaw Field.



Photo by Sandy McPhee

MONARCH SCULPTURE GARDEN – Welding students from Iosco Regional Educational Service Agency created the monarch garden sculptures shown here, which are on display at the Tawas Bay Art Gallery in East Tawas.

MONARCHS

Continued from Page 4A

journey of the butterflies and to know that we can even have just a little bit of help with their journey and be a part of it, it’s amazing,” said Nemeth.

The Chamber has plans to encourage tourism in the future,

as well, with a Monarch Migration Trail. It would take visitors through a scavenger hunt that would include a pollinator park at the TACC office, complete with native and pollinator friendly plants, a butterfly bench and a

library box.

According to Nemeth, anyone can help create, conserve and protect monarch habitats by creating their own monarch waystation. For more information, go to monarchwatch.org.

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FALL GUIDE

File photo by John Morris

NATURE’S PALETTE – Although our region is called the Sunrise Side, we have some pretty awesome sunsets too! This photo was taken during a recent spectacular October evening while fishing for walleye on the East Tawas State Dock.

Labor Day Arts and Crafts Show is set

TAWAS CITY – The Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce will host its annual Labor Day Arts and Crafts Show Saturday, Sept. 5 and Sunday, Sept. 6 at Shoreline Park in Tawas City.

Now in its 34th year, the show traditionally hosts more than 100 booths of handmade arts and crafts. Whatever your interests – from paintings, photography, leather goods, and home décor items to jewelry, clothing, furniture and delicious food items such as salsa, fudge, spices, nuts and kettle corn, you are certain to find it at this year’s show in Tawas City.

Show hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 5 and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 6.

Women’s softball tourney slated

EAST TAWAS – The 55th annual Tawas Women’s Invitational Softball Tournament will be held Sept. 12-13, the weekend after Labor Day.

Also known as the Bill Walsh Memorial Tournament, it will be held at Dewey Durant Park in East Tawas. Using a double elimination slow pitch format, the event is an Amateur Softball Association open-class tournament and has attracted teams from not only Michigan, but the Great Lakes area and Canada. Proceeds from concession go toward Special Olympics.

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FALL GUIDE

Of Tawas Point Lighthouse keepers and birdwatchers

by Lucy Baker
Michigan Department
of Natural Resources

EAST TAWAS – The sun was already perched high above Lake Huron when I stepped through the mayfly-covered screen door of the keepers’ quarters, down three creaky steps and into my first day as lighthouse keeper at Tawas Point in Iosco County.

My keeper duties were not set to begin until noon, so I decided to spend my first free hours exploring my new temporary home on foot.

I knew what to expect going into my two-week-long shift as keeper. I am a student in the Great Lakes Writers Corps at the University of Michigan.

I would be giving lighthouse tours to upwards of 50 visitors a day, doing research about the Great Lakes for one of my college classes, and hopefully spending some time recovering from and reflecting on my sophomore year of college, which had ended only a week before this new adventure began.

What I didn’t expect, though, were the birdwatchers. The biggest tourism season along Great Lakes beaches unofficially begins on Memorial Day.

With it being two weeks prior to that, I was surprised to see hundreds of people already walking past the lighthouse and strolling the beaches that morning.

Birdwatchers, or “birders,” flocked by the thousands to Tawas Point during the whole month of May, many traveling from out of state to attend the annual Tawas Birding Festival. The peak of bird migration typically occurs during the third week of May, my first week as keeper.

Although the water’s edge of the fourth-largest lake in the world, Lake Huron, was over 200 yards to my left, I could still hear the waves clearly. Their rhythmic crashing and the early summer sun reminded me of some of my most pleasant memories of childhood, where I would spend all day in Lake Michigan swimming and surfing almost every warm summer day.

The other, more visible body of water – Tawas Bay – sat quietly and calmly only a few yards to my right. The point is technically surrounded by the same body of water, but the east and west sides have completely different temperaments.

The path I planned to walk split Tawas Point down the middle, and it conveniently began only a few steps away from the back door of the lighthouse.

The point itself extends south out into Lake Huron for about 2 miles and marks the northern edge of Saginaw Bay. The southernmost half of the point is a state park managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The Sandy Hook Nature Trail, which I was set to explore, winds through the state park and is carved by the feet of thousands of visitors from all over the world every year.

“STOP — PLEASE READ.” I tend to not be a sign reader, but this sign that sat at the start of the trail seemed to have an important message. It also had manners. I obliged.

The land that the Sandy Hook Nature Trail sits on is defined by the DNR as Primitive Zone – an underdeveloped recreational experience. “Pets, bicycles and unauthorized vehicles are NOT permitted beyond this point.”

I began to walk. Young cottonwood and birch lay ahead of me, lining the trail. Through the thinnest parts of the wooded areas there were small visible patches of wetlands and

beautiful beaches.

It turns out I was a few days late for the actual birding festival, but right on time for peak bird migration.

Historically, birdsong has only served as background noise to me anytime I’ve gone outside or heard it faintly through my bedroom window as the sun rises. This is just something you get used to as a Michigander.

But, as I passed the entry signs to the trail and continued my walk, birdsong became all I could hear. I became aware of the sound of my own footsteps on the soft, dirt trail. Heads turned as I accidentally stepped on

small sticks, creating obviously unwanted noise. My dad, an avid outdoorsman, has always watched birds. His binoculars and red leather-bound bird identification book have sat on the same shelf in our living room for as long as I can remember.

He has always kept the bird feeders on our back deck stocked full of bird seed and simple syrup (for the hummingbirds – his favorite). His email address and social media handles are all different iterations of the phrase “finch master.”

All this, yet I’ve never really considered him a birdwatcher. These people on the point,

though, were birdwatchers.

Many of them would say that birdwatching is not a mere hobby, but a lifestyle. Many of their vacations to Tawas were planned with the intent to catch a glimpse of a Cape May warbler

or a white-crowned sparrow.

In athletic shorts and a University of Michigan T-shirt (an outfit that would usually allow me to blend in), I felt like I stood

See Lighthouse, Page 8

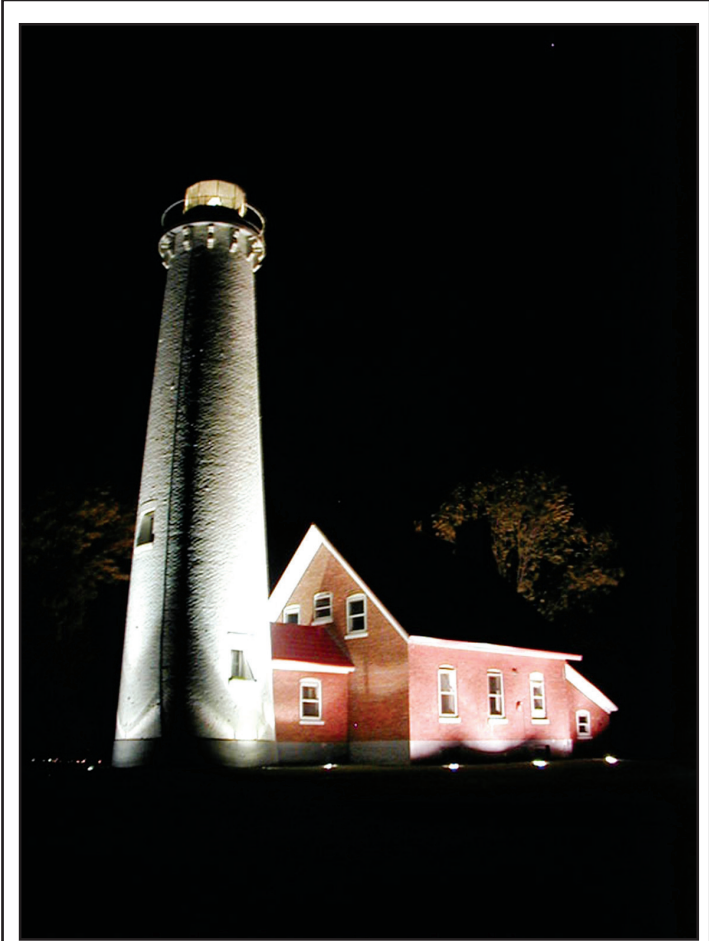


Photo by John Morris

HISTORIC STRUCTURE – Built in 1876, the historic Tawas Point Lighthouse exterior was renovated by the state in 2002. The lighthouse tower is 67 feet tall and is 16 feet diameter at its base. There’s 85 steps to get to the top of the tower. This photograph was taken Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2002, the first night the lighthouse was uplighted by the State of Michigan, which held a dedication ceremony earlier that day.

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FALL GUIDE

LIGHTHOUSE

Continued from Page 7

out. The people around me wore camouflage, countless shades of tan and binoculars around their necks.

Some of them walked slowly, but most of them stood still, their necks craned and their eyes peering through spotting scopes or cameras.

With my naked, non-bird-watcher eyes, it was hard to spot any birds nestled in the dense trees. Barely audible whispers, points toward rustles in leaves or a set of wings above, and a few helpful tips from some kind birders on the trail helped me identify a few birds, though.

I learned to identify a magnolia warbler by its yellow belly, a piping plover by the distinct black mark on its forehead, and a double-crested cormorant by its size and matte black appearance. “Monarchs of the Marsh.” Again, I’m not a sign reader, but at the leisurely pace I was traveling, this sign about halfway down the trail seemed like a good place to pause the interruptions my footsteps were causing the birders.

The point, it turns out, provides a perfect home for monarch butterflies. The fragrant flowers of the common milkweed, which find a home on the marshy point, are the only sources of food for monarchs.

This rugged, sun-bleached sign was the first thing that helped me understand that this mere 200-acre chunk of land is more ecologically important than I ever could have imagined.

It also serves as a refuge for white-tailed deer, red foxes, snakes and countless more creatures that call Michigan home.

By the time I reached the end of the point, which looked out into the vibrant blue waters of Saginaw Bay, I understood why Tawas Point is nicknamed the Cape Cod of the Midwest.

I also passed at least 300 people who were there just to watch birds. Some of them traveled in groups, some alone, but they rarely talked. They just admired the birds, and I admired them for their commitment.

With each step, I questioned their lifestyle less and less.

Being out on the point was immersive – a brief, indescribable escape from the worries of life. I felt as much a part of

nature out there as I’m sure a cottonwood does. I realized, as I sat on a weathered bench half-way buried in sand, that maybe birdwatching is actually not just about looking at birds. It’s more about feeling connected, whether it be to the birds, to nature or to one another.

“In 2007, Tawas Point was designated by BirdLife International and the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area,” a sign at the end of the trail read.

This small yet mighty piece of land is part of a global network of key sites used to protect bird biodiversity. It’s just a small

link in an immense chain of interconnectedness, acting as an important corridor for migrating songbirds, shorebirds and water-fowl each spring.

Around noon, after I had walked the trail back to the lighthouse and done some light cleaning of the lighthouse museum, it was time for the first visitors to arrive and time for me to host my first tour.

My keeper nametag, Tawas Point Lighthouse T-shirt, and walkie-talkie strapped to my waistband let everyone know I was an expert.

All I knew so far, though, was that the lighthouse was built

in 1876. The rest of my facts I would read out of a binder provided by the DNR. However, over the next few days, I was quickly able to answer even the most obscure questions about the lighthouse and point.

I was told in training to expect around 15-20 people per group, that each tour would start on the hour and that the last tour would begin at 4 p.m.

That Wednesday, only eight people came to tour the lighthouse.

They were all birders. Learn more about Tawas Point State Park and Lighthouse at Michigan.gov/TawasPoint.

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Hello Autumn

SEPTEMBER

10 Quarterly Develop Iosco Community Meeting

12 Tawas Vintage Market, Brugger’s Plaza

12 Princess Tea Party - Tawas Bay Art Gallery

14 Tawas City Library Book Sale

25 Tawas-Whitemore-Hale United Fund Kick-off

OCTOBER

2-4 ETBA Customer Appreciation Days

3 Fall Into Art, Tawas Bay Art Gallery

9-10 Tawas Point Harvest Festival

12 Tawas Community Fall Concert Band

24 Pumpkin Carving Event, Downtown East Tawas

24 Holy Family Bazaar

31 Halloween Parade & Downtown Trick or Treating

NOVEMBER

7 Quota Trivia Night, The Collective

7 Empty Bowls, Tawas Bay Art Gallery

7 Tawas High School Band Bazaar

7 Cider in the City, Downtown East Tawas

14 Rotary Family Fair, The Collective

21-22 Holiday Open House - Tawas Bay Art Gallery

26 Turkey Trot

28 Miracle on Newman Street (Parade & Tree Lighting)

35th Annual Labor Day Weekend Arts & Craft Show

Shoreline Park, Tawas City

Saturday, Sept. 5th

10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 6th

10 a.m. - 4 p.m

Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce Golf Outing

Red Hawk Golf Club

September 24

Tawas Bay Players Presents:

My Summer at Camp-O Che-Mo

October 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18

WE Players Presents:

The Holiday Channel Christmas Movie Marathon

Dec. 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 13

Northeast Michigan Regional Farm Market

Saturdays - Tawas City

Wednesdays - AuSable/Oscoda

Until the End of October • Weather Permitting

Visit www.Tawas.com for more details and a full calendar of events



