

Freak snow storm buries Birch Lake!



Kids dig out skates while parents just dig out from blizzard

VANDALIA (UP) — The area around Birch Lake in Cass County was hit by a freak snowstorm last week that dumped seven inches of new snow, froze the lake overnight

and left residents and vacationers in a state of frozen disbelief. "I don't think it will hurt the fish or the herons," said water-quality expert Gert Temple. "It

may even do some good by freezing out the zebra mussels and meet the CLMP parameters and improve our secchi disk readings." (Continued on Page 13)

Barker photo courtesy of the Troegers

Ok, so maybe we made up the stuff about the snow (and there is no page 13)...but as the thermometer pushes

90 and the humidity closes in on Dog-Day-Damp, it doesn't hurt to reflect on the weather of the past winter and

give thanks once again for sunshine and blue skies that have blessed Birch Lake for most of July.

What a relaxing weekend. I hope everyone enjoyed our beautiful lake!

Now is the time to sign up for the Men's Golf Outing on July 27th. Contact John Ball and get your entry fees in to him.

Next, get your ticket to the Ladies Luncheon that will be on August 1st, from Maryann O'Neill, Helen Toth or Darlene Troyer.

The Ladies Golf Outing and luncheon are scheduled for August 3rd, so get your reservations in to Mardy Miller or Betsy Custard. Some of the proceeds of the sweatshirt sale will

COMMODORE'S COMMENTS

be used for prizes, so we'd love to see a great turnout.

KIDS Science will take place on July 28th from 12:30 PM to 2 PM at the Yacht Club. So there's something for everyone in the next few weeks!

We've received our 2nd shipment of "The Four Seasons of Birch Lake" video. We have extras, so if you want another one or if you forgot to order, it's not too late.

Call Buzz or Mike.

Your Commodore
-Mike Machalleck

The Birch Lake Calendar

7/21 - BLYC Board Meeting 9am	8/11 - Kids Regatta 1 pm
Birch Lake Garage Sale 8-2	8/18 - Corn & Sausage Roast
7/27 - Men's Golf & Dinner	BLYC Board Meeting 9am
7/28 - KIDS Science	Homeowners Assn. Meeting
8/1 - Ladies Luncheon, 12:30	8/25 - Fall Dinner
8/3 - Ladies Golf & Lunch	9/3 - Labor Day Regatta
8/4 - Jimmy Buffett Party	11/22 - Turkey Day Regatta
KIDS Olympics 10:30 am	

BIRCH LAKE GARAGE SALE

Plan to make your way around the lake on Saturday, July 21 from 8 am to 2 pm for some great treasures. There will be housewares, appliances, furniture, sporting goods, children's clothing and more. The participants include D. Weesner, Bender, Greenig/Weaver, Harlan, Witchie, Dobosiewicz, Klimek, Wozniak, Flora, Miller and Tudor.

KIDS Craft a Success! More KIDS events planned

On Saturday, July 14th, approximately 30 Birch Lake KIDS gathered at the yacht club to enjoy KIDS Craft. Many Birch Lake cottages now proudly display Fish tic-tac-toe, Fish key chains, and insect bobby head bands.

Thanks to Amy and Holly Troeger, Elizabeth Parkinson, and all the helpers for their excellent participation in this activity.

The next KIDS event will be KIDS Science. Future scientists should meet at the Yacht Club on Saturday, July 28th between 12:30-2 pm.

KIDS Olympics will be on August 4th, from 10:30 am to Noon at the Yacht Club.

Please join us for fun and refreshments!

We are also hoping to plan a TEENS event later in the year (more to come).

And don't miss the KIDS Regatta will August 11 at 1 pm. All sailors should plan on meeting at the Harman's pier on the East Shore prior to 1 pm.

Please be sure everyone has their own approved flotation device.



If you have items for the BARKER, please put the materials in the Barker box at 63174 Birch Rd. (East Shore) by 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, or e-mail the info to me at sailorphil@philvital.com by Monday at Noon. If you must, mail (10 days prior to desired publication date) to Phil Vitale, 122 So. Michigan, So. Bend, IN 46601, or fax your items to (219) 232-3853. To contact me, call Phil at 476-1680 or (219) 232-3735.

Birch Lake Notes

Message from the Millers

We've enjoyed and appreciated for 3 years now, our great neighbors at Birch Lake. Even then, we were really touched and thrilled when everybody on our street came out to help unload our rental truck on July 3rd. **THANK YOU** to the Tudors, Habichs, Jeff Walls, Quinlans, Custards, Rasmussens, Aaron Minglin & friend - mint juleps are coming! (Sorry Aaron & friend).
-Jack & Mardy Miller

Wedding bells are ringing

Long time Birch Lake resident, Major O'Brien, has convinced the elusive Ms Karen Lonstrom of South Bend to marry him. Her unexpected acceptance has stunned lake residents who know the couple. Mr. O'Brien has resided, on and off, at cottage 250 for all of his 45 years. Ms. Lonstrom has been enjoying the lake since her days at Camp Tanadoonah some few years ago. She was overheard to say, "I can't wait to get my drivers license so I can really enjoy the Birch Lake scene." When Mr. O'Brien was asked about his impending wedding, he responded, "What? Who? — When?"

The nuptials will be held at Camp Tanadoonah on September 15th and invitations are said to be scarce and much sought after.

Ms. Lonstrom is a graduate of the University of Texas and received her Nursing degree from Bethel College. She is a Registered Nurse in South Bend. Mr. O'Brien is a bum and is rumored to enjoy a cocktail now and again.

News From The Cove

and outlying areas

By Sunny Waters

For Jack
*"The lake laps gently against the shore,
 sailboat skims through
 white cloud reflections,
 overhead a hawk circles.
 In this place peace reigns."*

The following is 100% non fiction.
 Loretta Drolet, in a mad dash to drop off her contribution to the Saint Ann's bake sale which was to take place the following day, found the church locked and deserted, pardon the pun. Being the resourceful person she is, Loretta jiggled the sacristy door and found it unlocked, however the alarm had been activated. Sirens blared and police officers converged on the sweet lady clutching her still warm coffee cake. The problem was quickly resolved and Madame Drolet, a bit shaken, returned home greatly relieved that she wouldn't be spending the night in the clink for Baking and Entering.
 Having won an all-expenses-paid eyelash implant for entering the AARP Modern Maturity centerfold contest, NFTC will be covered next week by my identical twin, Sandi Beach. You may remember Sandi from a few years ago when she alienated everyone on the lake. Since then, thankfully, she has had a personality transplant is considerably less caustic.
 TaTa — I'm off to get implanted!
— Sunny

I've never been inebriated, just overserved.

Birthdays: Ernest Hemingway, Don Knotts, Isaac Stern, Cat Stevens, Robin Williams and John Erhardt.

July 22nd celebration: Rat Catchers Day
 What does one wear on such a prestigious occasion? B.S. feels that tails would be quite appropriate. Clever devil, that guy.

The couple plans to spend their summers at Birch Lake and the rest of the year in Mexico living in a grass shack.

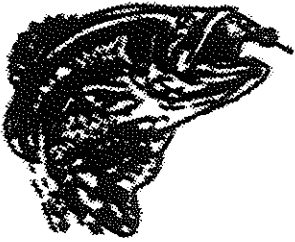

I know we all will be wishing them the best of luck.

News from Camp

Miss Toody and Mr. Dug are enjoying

having some of the lake people over for dinner and tours of Camp Tannadoonah. We certainly appreciate all the continued support from our Birch Lake friends!

There are two weeks left of our camping season and we still have a few openings available so send those grandkids !!!!!

 <p style="text-align: center;">Open Daily 6-6 616-641-2304</p> <h2 style="text-align: center;">Hall's Bait & Tackle</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">15573 U.S. 12 Union, MI 49130</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Insurance Agency, Inc.</i> Since 1945</p> </div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>For the Help You Need When You Need It Most</i></p> <p style="font-size: small;">219 S. 3rd St. P.O. Box 1828 Elkhart, IN 46515 219/ 293-9571 FAX 219/ 294-8937</p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Ball, Jr., C.I.C. <i>Registered Representative</i></p>																
<h1 style="font-style: italic;">J.G. Storage</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">Owner - John Gableman</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Self storage</td> <td>Sizes available: 10 x 10 ft.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Home</td> <td>10 x 15 ft.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Boat</td> <td>10 x 20 ft.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Auto</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>• Trailer</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p style="text-align: center;">Corner of M-60 and Lewis Lake Rd. (616) 476-2132</p>	Self storage	Sizes available: 10 x 10 ft.	• Home	10 x 15 ft.	• Boat	10 x 20 ft.	• Auto		• Trailer		<h2 style="text-align: center;">Shop UNION MARKET</h2> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">15940 US 12 West, Union, MI (616) 641-5861</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Open Daily: 7am-10pm MI, 6am-9pm IN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FEATURING:</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Deli Selections</td> <td>Fresh Meats</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Fresh Produce</td> <td>Cold Beer</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Picnic Needs</td> <td>Videos</td> </tr> </table>	Deli Selections	Fresh Meats	Fresh Produce	Cold Beer	Picnic Needs	Videos
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Birch Lake Notes

"Peaceful Waters of Birch Lake"
August 1, 2001
12:30 Indiana Time
\$9 per person

This year's luncheon is planned around the theme "Peaceful Waters of Birch Lake." The lake may not always be peaceful but it is where we all come to seek peace and unwind. The committee has great plans for decorating the Yacht Club with this theme and we hope you will be able to attend this relaxing afternoon for women. You will not be disappointed!

While you munch on an array of appetizers you will have plenty of time to enjoy the craft items that will be on display. A variety of hand-made

items by several Birch Lake crafters will be on sale, so don't forget your checkbook! Visit with old friends, take time to make new friends and meet your Birch Lake neighbors before lunch is served.

Make sure you leave room for lunch, as a tasty menu has been planned. Shish Kabobs will be grilled to perfection by some of the finest grilling experts around, the men of the East Side!

Don't be late, you don't want to miss out on any of the fun, fellowship, crafts, food or the door prizes that will be given away!

There are a limited number of tickets for the Ladies Luncheon and they are flying

out the door! If you haven't got yours yet, call now so you won't be disappointed because you waited too long.

Call: Darlene Troyer 476-2639 or Helen Toth 476-2877. Tickets will not be sold at the door, reserved seating only.

says personal water craft must be off the water one hour BEFORE SUNSET. This person was in violation of the law. If you do not abide by this, you are subject to receiving a citation. Let us have some peace in the evening.

-Phyllis Davis

Noise Pollution

Sunday evening was beautiful. The temperature was perfect, and the sky and water were lovely. The epitome of tranquility? NO! There was a single personal water craft circling round and round at top speed for over 45 minutes. The noise shattered our peaceful scene as we sat on our deck trying to visit with a neighbor.

Reminder! Michigan law

A Thank You for KIDS Crafts

Thank you to Elizabeth Parkinson, Amy Troeger and Paula Russell for a wonderful Saturday morning. Everything was well planned and the projects that were made will be enjoyed for many days to come.

-Sean O'Neill, Liam O'Neill and their Grandmother



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Have A Safe and Fun Summer!

Tom's Garage: The Everything Store

By Amy Troeger
Ace Barker Reporter

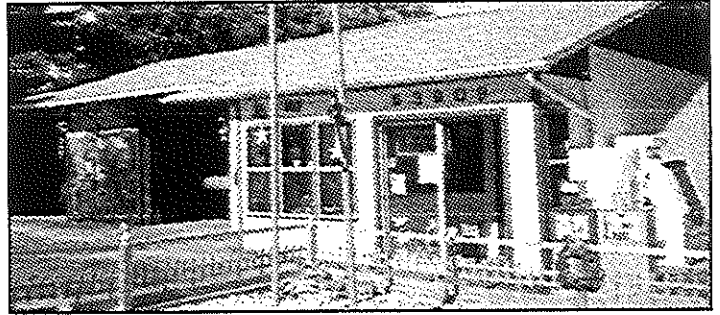
Boat gas. Candy. Hamburger buns. Three seemingly unrelated items, right?

Not when you're shopping at Tom's Garage. Tom's is only a short bike ride away, and it provides a lot of convenience.

Tom's Garage started 32 years ago as just that: a car garage. Later the gas pumps were added, and the rest is history. Tom's still provides car work, but now you can buy

everything from chips to ice cream to bread, and if you're not interested in spending, at least have a look at the pig hat or Becky's giant keychain collection. The garage used to rent out videos, too.

Kids on the lake really enjoy bicycling up to Tom's to buy candy. Tom's Garage still supplies penny candy, and most sweets are under a dollar. A lot of Birch Lake parents agree that biking up to Tom's is a big step in independence for their children: kids get a chance to travel



Barker photo by Tory Troeger

away from home on their own to spend their own money. And while your son or daughter is off purchasing Tootsie Rolls and candy lipstick, why not have them pick you up some hot dog buns and a bag of potato chips for your cookout tomorrow? We don't mind, as long as the extra

purchase is not out of our wallet.

Tom, Betty, and Becky are always at their posts with a smile, ready to bag candy or fix cars. Tom's, though not directly on the lake, is a convenient, inexpensive place helping supply more fun for Birch Lake.

Men's Golf Outing

41ST ANNUAL BIRCH LAKE OPEN

Park Shores Golf Course, Cassopolis, MI

Friday, July 27, 11 am (IST)

Shotgun start & scramble

\$55/man entry fee — covers golf, cart, favor, door prizes, refreshments and prime rib dinner (5:30 pm IST) \$20 for dinner only

Registration deadline July 23

First 60 golfers are in

Contact John Ball (9775) & drop off entry

Name/phone _____

Name _____

Name _____

Name _____

Ladies' Golf Outing

Park Shores Golf Course, Cassopolis

Friday, August 3, 9 am (IST)

Best-ball scramble

\$25/man entry fee — covers 9 holes of golf, cart, and fabulous prizes

Luncheon follows at Noon at Lindy's

Contact Mardy Miller 476-9226 or

Betsy Custard 476-9835 or 219-255-8894

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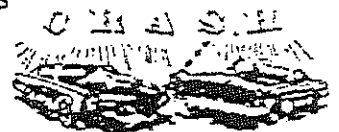
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219-233-6498
mumm3@rtcol.com
LISA, ROSS & KRIS &
ERIC | 773-227-2520 | 3115 Rue Voltaire Apt. 1001
So. Bend, IN 46615
219-233-6387 | C292 ROGERS, TOM & VICKI
62712 Woodland Dr.
476-2383 |
| S005 GOTSTEIN, MIKE & MARGE
15208 Birch Lakeshore Dr.
476-2123

The Villages
2122 Zaragoza
Lady Lake, FL 32159
352-259-5496 | S073 BARBOUR, DOUG & TAMMY
14826 Walden St. | E127 OLSON, DAVE & JUDY
63486 Birch Rd.
476-2125 | 25940 Hickory Blvd.
Apt. B-103
Bonita Springs, FL 34136
941-495-1638 | C298 DROLET, LORETTA
62698 Woodland Dr.
476-2706
JOE & MARIE |
| S022 TROEGER, EARL JR. & CONNIE
15100 Birch Lakeshore Dr.
476-2237

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etroeger@webtv.net | S076 RUSSELL, MICHAEL & PAULA (TOTH)
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MEGHAN | E140 GOLLATZ, CHARLES & PATRICIA
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Osceola, IN 46561
219-522-6901 | N0259 MULLIN, RICH & PAM
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63174 Birch Rd.
sailorphil@beanstalk.net
sailorphil@philvitale.com
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BENJAMIN, JOHN M. (son)
63346 Storey Hill Ct.
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63490 Birch Rd.

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Understanding Birch Lake Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data

Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program (CLMP)

The program was put together by Pearl Bonnell, Don Winne, Michigan Lake & Stream Associations (ML&SA) and Ralph Bednarz, Department Environmental Quality.(DEQ). CLMP was designed to provide data on parameters that are indicators of the lake's health.

Thank you Pearl, and Don and Ralph for giving Birch Lake the opportunity to participate in the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program.

CLMP Parameters

Secchi Disk Readings: June 2001 Report #5

Spring Overturn and Summer Phosphorus: June 2001 report #6

Chlorophyll: July 2001 Report #8

CLMP targeted a 4th parameter

Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature pilot study - 2000

The program was limited to a small group taking part in the full CLMP

Birch Lake was chosen to take part in the pilot study.

On site training was required. Training for the DO temperature pilot study was held on April 28, 2000 at the CLMP training sessions during the Michigan Lake and Stream Associations 39th Annual Conference. Ralph Bednarz instructed Bob Temple and the other volunteer monitors. Ralph took them through all the procedures, demonstrated the DO temperature, measurement and data recording techniques.

CLMP equipment and supplies support 4 monitoring groups. Each group includes 4 to 6 lakes. An electronic DO meter that incorporates a thermistor (provides temperature readout) is used to obtain the DO/temperature profiles. The meter is shared on a rotating basis. Measurements are made every 2 weeks from mid-May to mid-September.

Sampling location for each of the 4 parameters: Birch Lake 95-foot Deep Basin DO/temperature profile measurements

The boat is anchored. DO meter calibration is checked. Cable/probe is placed 1 foot below the *epilimnion* (warm surface layer). Measurements continue at 5-foot intervals in the upper *epilimnion*.

Measurements are continued at each 2 1/2-foot intervals through the *thermocline* (mid-depth 20 to 40 feet) in the *metalimnion* (middle layer with decreasing temperature)

Below the *thermocline*, measurements are made at 5-foot intervals in the *hypolimnion* (cold bottom layer). To avoid damage to the probe membrane, the last measurement is taken 3 feet above the bottom sediments of the lake (92-foot depth).

2000 CLMP Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Results

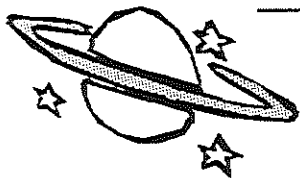
Birch Lake in Cass County is an oligotrophic/mesotrophic lake with a large *hypolimnion*. It produces minor amounts of organic material that must be decomposed. Its *hypolimnion* has a *substantial oxygen supply* that is gradually depleted by the decomposition of the organic material. *Dissolved oxygen levels remain high in the hypolimnion into mid-summer*. By August oxygen is gone in the deepest waters, but the *upper hypolimnion retains some oxygen even into late summer (September)*. Also, note that oxygen concentrations at mid-depth (20 to 40 feet) are higher than at the surface. This is due to a layer of deep algae producing oxygen in the colder water, which can hold more dissolved oxygen.

(Birch Lake was chosen to participate in the DO/temperature Project - 2001)

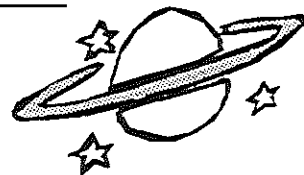
And now a word from Birch Lake: *If you continue to fertilize with phosphorus, plants will get greener, die, sink to the bottom and add more nutrients. Increased weeds and algae will decrease oxygen.*

*Your Water Quality Committee, Reynolds, Temple, Russwurm
will be happy to sell you LAKESIDE - 0 phosphorus!!!!!!!!!!!!*

-g. temple



Stu's Star Stuff Moons and meteors



The Moon, New on Friday afternoon, reenters the evening sky tonight. The trees around the lake make it difficult to see objects near the horizon, but look for a hairline crescent very low in the WNW 45 minutes after sunset. Use binoculars. Don't be tardy because the Moon sets about 20 minutes later.

No moonlight means dark skies all night long. It should be easy to trace the glimmering path of the Milky Way across the sky. If the night is quite clear use binoculars to explore the various star clusters and gas

clouds near the southern horizon. The Lagoon Nebula, a famous stellar birthplace, sits just above the "spout" of the "teapot" pattern of Sagittarius.

The young crescent Moon will be easier to see on Sunday evening. It sets an hour and 45 minutes after sunset. Regulus, the brightest star in Leo, the Lion, is 4 degrees (8 moon diameters) below Luna. Leo, one of the first celestial signs of spring, is now giving way to the stars of summer, found high in the southern sky, and autumn, now just rising in the east. Leo is easy to spot because of the distinctive star pattern known as the sickle, a backwards question

mark punctuated at the bottom by Regulus. The sickle represents the lion's mane. To locate Leo, imagine the bottom falling out of the Big Dipper. The water would pour right on the lion's back.

Later in the week I've scheduled a special treat. Friday morning the Delta Aquarid meteor shower reaches its predicted peak of one meteor every 3 or 4 minutes. While the number of meteors is not substantial, the peak is broad, so activity continues at nearly the same rate for a number of days. Don't fear getting pelted by meteorites. Meteor showers rarely contain pieces of material

large enough to reach Earth's surface before disintegrating. Typically they are the size of a grain of sand. Viewing is usually best after midnight, when we're facing forward in Earth's orbit around the Sun. That's when we're likely to encounter most meteors head-on, as they sprinkle into Earth's atmosphere like a gentle rain on the windshield of a speeding car. Find yourself a sweater or a blanket, a comfortable lawn chair and a dark, unobstructed view of the sky and enjoy the show. It's free.

-Stewart Spratt

Best of Beck's Bistro



Chocolate Mousse Pie

- 1 & 1/2 cups Rice Krispies
- 4 Tlbs Peanut Butter
- 4 tsp Honey
- 1 cup Cool Whip
- 1 pkg Weight Watchers Chocolate Mousse

prepared according to directions (or you could use regular pudding).

Combine rice krispies, peanut butter, and honey. Press into a pie plate, sprayed with Pam. Freeze. Spread cool whip over crust, then pour prepared pudding. Chill until ready to

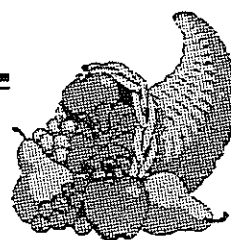
serve. Spread cool whip BEFORE pudding.

Makes 4 servings

All Nighter

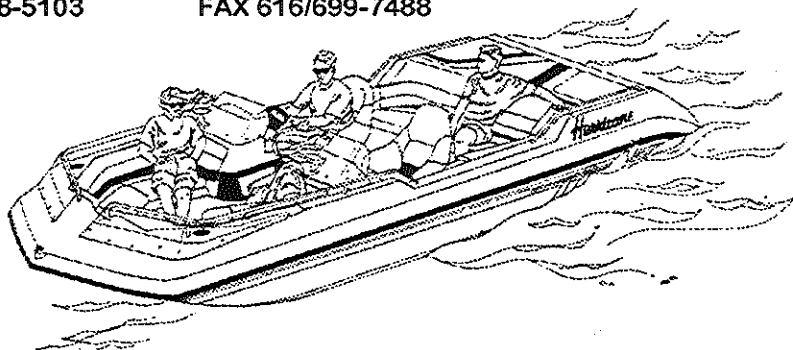
- 2 oz Galliano
- 1 oz White Creme de Cacao
- 1 oz Cream

Mix ingredients with ice in a blender and strain into a cocktail glass.



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Eagle Lake Marine

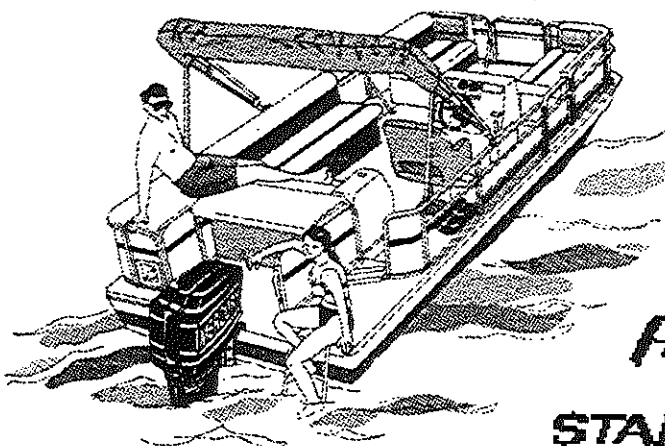
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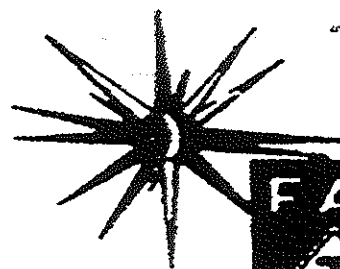
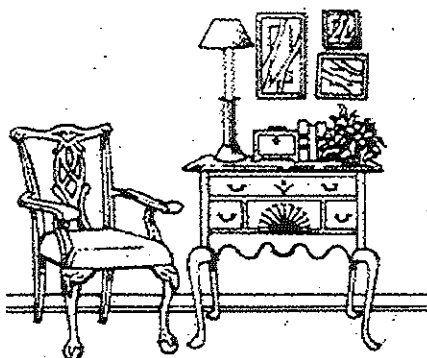
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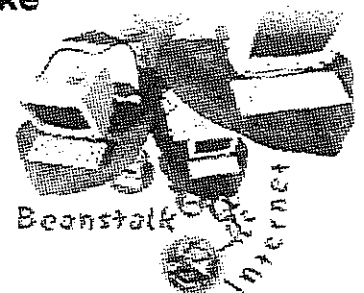
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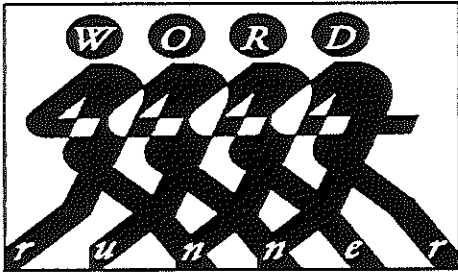
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Finding Your Own Way

At least twice a month, someone stops me during a run to ask me about running. The conversation often begins with "How far are you going today?" or "How long have you been doing this?" but talk almost always progresses to the point where the other person declares wistfully that either he once did some running but had to let it go, or that he wishes he could find a way to "get started."

I've been loping along these and hundreds of other roads for more than twenty-five years. A couple of dozen times I've run in races, 10K's and 20K's and even a handful of 25K's (16 1/2 miles).

However, most of the time running is a private activity for me. Unless Shirley Anne can come along, I prefer to go out by myself with time alone to think and to feel my body working hard at something I enjoy. It's not always fun and it is occasionally difficult and uncomfortable, but it has brought me a great more joy and satisfaction than pain.

The great American novelist, Joseph Heller, who ran a three mile route near his home for many years, once said he ran only three miles at a time because he feared running longer will kill him, not from exertion,

but from boredom. If I felt that way I'm sure I wouldn't run at all, because I'm convinced that exercise should be a first cousin to play.

My wife, Shirley Anne, who is a better athlete than I am, could be an outstanding runner if she chose to do so. She has the build for it and the constitution, but she is the quintessential eclectic exercise buff who needs variety to keep her energized and engaged. She can run on Monday, but Wednesday she'll want to do step aerobics or ride a bicycle. Sameness puts her to sleep.

Running, for those who are drawn to it, is more than exercise. The long distance runner is usually moving along two planes. She or he is constantly aware of the demands on her body, focused on her breathing, and on the movement of her legs and arms, but she is also following a trail in her mind, gliding and jumping from place to place, discovering "truths" and "facts" and "ideas" she has never had before. Many times, I've gone out for a run and solved a month-old problem, or developed a short story, or come up with a new product idea before I returned home. It's an amazing experience, and I have no idea how it hap-

pens.

Nevertheless, running, and even vigorous exercise is not for everyone. Many folks hate it and at least as many others can't do it.

That's all right. I can't see how working out could be of much benefit to anyone who despises every minute of the effort, or who suffers from overtaxing themselves.

The secret is to find something physical to do that resonates in your head or your heart. You don't have to become a world-class athlete or plan on trying out for the next Olympics. Some folks I know pour their energy into gardening and others love to pick berries or hunt mushrooms in the woods.

You can ride a bike at little more than a walking pace, or you can walk at three miles per hour, talking to neighbors and friends, and smelling the flowers along the way. The important thing is to find your own way.

As that wise philosopher of the South Shore, Chuck LePierre, has said, "You don't have to do much, you just need to do something. It sure beats sitting on your butt all day."

Sailing News

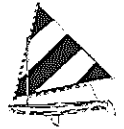
Well, once again as last Sunday, Mother Nature did not provide wind for our sailors. At 11 am the lake was basically flat and stayed that way most of the day. So, needless to say, there is no sailing news to report. Lets hope for "some" wind next weekend.



Again, I'd like to remind you of the Kidzgatta, Saturday Aug 11 at 1 pm (Indiana time).

We hope to have a good turnout this year. All sailors are to meet at Harmans pier (East Shore) prior to 1

-Jim Beck, fleet captain 2001



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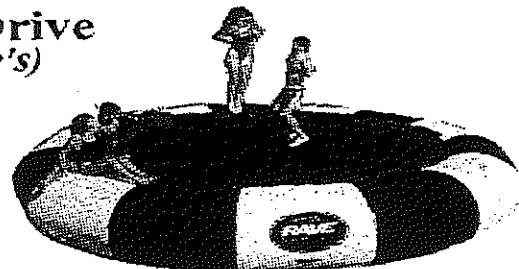
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Birch Lake "Wildlife" — Soft-Shell Turtles

by Darlene Troyer

I love turtles. Always have! So, when springtime rolls around I can't wait to see those slow moving sleepy turtles come back to life. Our boat lift, once it's in the water, becomes a turtle lounge. I prefer to think of the boat lift as the "turtle flotilla." My family patiently waits to put the boat in knowing that this will drastically cut down on the lounging space available for "my" turtles.

Counting the turtles is part of my morning routine. Upward of 22 turtles have delicately balanced along the beams. I have become quiet attached to "my" turtles and we have named several of them. Painter turtles usually line up on the lift but this year is the first time we have had soft-shelled turtles climb on board the turtle flotilla. Their huge soft shells seem to drape over the sides of the beam and I wondered just what their shells were made of. I decided to research more about these huge giants living in Birch Lake and here is what I learned.

They have been around for at least 100 million years and about 300 fossil species have been named. There are 22 or 23 living

species currently recognized.

The soft-shells truly have soft shells. Their shells are mostly thickened skin. They are flattened like pancakes and have a cartilaginous rather than scaly covering to the shell. The edges of the shell are soft and floppy. They have a long, tubular snout, on a long skull that is attached to a long and mobile neck.

They are much more vulnerable to injuries from rocks and bites than are hard-shelled turtles because of their soft shells. They spend most of their time under water, often buried under the lake bottoms with only their long proboscis topping the surface. Soft-shells respire through their skin as well, thus are particularly susceptible to impurities in the water.

Soft-shells are found in a variety of waters: lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, even ditches. Some species are quite aggressive. They are carnivores and as such are able to render some very painful bites should they be so inclined.

Soft-shells feed primarily on invertebrates and crayfish, and can be found scavenging on fish, as well as a variety of aquat-

ic vegetation. Some larger species snag ducks and other small aquatic birds by grabbing them from below. Other species may feed on frogs, tadpoles, and snails.

Like most aquatic turtles, soft-shells must be able to haul themselves out of the water onto a warm and dry basking area. Basking temperatures of 85 F are required during the day. Water temperatures can range from 70-80 degrees.

Each mature female can lay about a dozen eggs each time. A healthy female can lay eggs once a month for a period of about 4 to 5 years. Baby tortoise hatch in about 60 days.

Now that the boat is on the lift these huge giants have moved down the shoreline to lay on the sand. The hard-shell turtles have taken over lounging on the remaining openings on the boat lift. I miss seeing those huge, floppy turtles each morning as I drink my morning tea.

Take time to enjoy the wildlife Birch Lake has to offer, and respect them so that they will be around for generations to come!

Catching up...

The following names should be added to the list of contributors of the Birch Lake Yacht Club (all are dues and fireworks):

Toth, Joe & Helen
Carroll, Dave & Terry
Kesmodel, Charles &
Annie

Also, Roberta Minix
contributed for
fireworks

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