



THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

Spring 2021

Protecting the North Branch for Over 75 Years



Photo by Audrey Blough

From the Chairman's Desk

Like many of you, I have been reading these North Branch Foundation newsletters the moment they are delivered. I hope you find them as interesting and informative as I do. Along with our increasingly robust website, these newsletters are our effort to keep our donor-members informed of our efforts to protect our beautiful River.

This issue has an article about our stepped up efforts to eradicate the invasive Purple Loosestrife, information about our winter Riverkeeper activities, announcement of our combined annual dinner and meeting and much more. Board member and Secretary Bob Weed is the lead on the newsletter and the website.

We are teaming with Huron Pines for the Purple Loosestrife program for their expertise. For years our volunteers have worked hard and effectively to control the PLS. Board member and Vice Chair, Bill Anderson is coordinating with HP in an effort at eradication.

Soon you will learn about our investment with the Anglers of the AuSable to expand by three the monitors of the North Branch (temperature, flow and stage (height), so that we can better understand our River. The Anglers are planning the first of annual summits for this fall to review with scientists and others the monitoring data along with other studies, to put information into action. As it happens the three Anglers creating this are all North Branch board members – Glen Eberly, Tom Wessels and me.

This last winter when a new riverfront property owner violated the restrictions on tree elimination, the Foundation was involved in reporting it and encouraging significant remediation. But the key player in the remediation effort was Foundation Board member and Lovells Township Supervisor, Gary Neumann. And as a result, new Board member Greg Beirl led a group of our Board members in re-starting the new property owner information packet, which includes community and river information as well as an explanation of the restrictions of the Natural Rivers Act. They also persuaded the townships to get us notice when there is a new riverfront owner.

These details matter, but they show a common theme of the Foundation's work: preserving the River's natural beauty and enhancing everyone's nature experiences on, in, and along the River.

As you can see your Board doesn't just lead these efforts, they are a team, often the first to volunteer even when it means getting their hands and boots dirty.

Have a great summer on the River!
Neil

Finding the North Branch - Harvey's Story

by Heidi Kern

Harvey Kern loves the Au Sable North Branch. But he is a humble and private person and would never think of telling his N. Branch "Story" to the public. I, on the other hand, as his daughter, would love to share a little of his history, with his permission, of course.

He started visiting in 1958 after moving into his newly built home in Frankenmuth with his wife Norine. A neighbor, Herman Krueger, invited him fly-fishing. With a loaned bamboo rod and a stop at Art Neumann's Wanigas for 4-5 flies, they drove *Up North* to Kellogg's Bridge to fish the Au Sable's North Branch. He believes this was a fishless trip.

On his second trip, he recalls this scenario: he waded upstream from Kellogg's, his line dragging downstream as he worked to light his pipe, when a brookie struck. It was a 10 incher. He likes to say the fish was hooked, and so was he.

Over the years, he spent many weekends driving Up North to his favorite stream for a day or two of fly fishing. He never got up early to go because the fish didn't feed until much later in the day. He spent the night in his station wagon at Kellogg's or at the old campground known as Sheep Pasture above Jackson Hole. This sleeping arrangement changed when his wife and children accompanied him and cabin, motel, or camper rentals ensued. It was a given that after the annual Frankenmuth Insurance policy holder/director meeting in early May, he'd head Up for a week's vacation.

A memorable trip included wading/hiking upstream from Kellogg's Bridge to above the little old cabin known as Swallow's Nest near our current place (K-17) and "the fish were feeding like crazy". He caught, and kept, his limit that day. Those were the days when we ate our catch... And his Biggest Trout from the river was hooked during a rainy day with Norine waiting in the car and he thought "he'd better hurry up" and then it struck.

He remembers one day, after returning from a trip to Yellowstone (cutthroat fly-fishing, of course), fishing upstream from Fighting Dear dock, "the fish were feeding like crazy" and thinking "This is better than Yellowstone!" He caught 10 and released 5 "Really Big Trout". Those were the days, right!!

Fourteen years later, a For Sale sign was spotted on Lovell's Road and property was purchased from a Mr. Welch. There was a lot of work to be done at K-17. A driveway was blazed through the woods ("it meanders because I avoided cutting down the largest trees"). A fire pit was built from large river stones, a table was strung between two oaks using straight tamaracks, and oak steps were built into the hill leading down to the river. He cut a WHOLE LOT of wood! We camped here for years until a cabin was built in 1983. Norine was the Project Manager in the cabin's design and decoration.

Harv's first fly-fishing rod came from L.L. Bean: it's tip has since been broken in a door. He shopped for flies, waders and supplies at Wanigas. (That's Saginaw spelled backwards if you didn't know). He never took to fly tying: it looked like it took a lot of time and that was something he was short on.

Harv doesn't fish anymore and at 89 (maybe 90 by the time you see this) years of age, he's content to watch the North Branch from a bench, often with an Irish Whiskey in hand. Since Norine passed, he likes to be catered to by his daughters and son-in-law and he makes a mean camp fire, both a bug-smoker and a meal-griller. He will also help out with a kayak drop off/pick up when needed. We look forward to many more Up North trips with him to K-17. We love you, Harv.

PS: Yes, we call him by his first name. Not sure how that started.

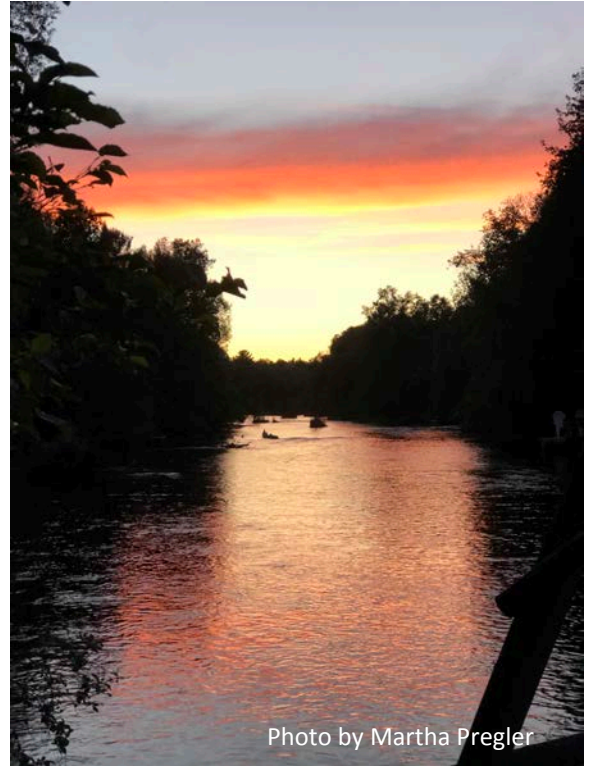


Photo by Martha Pregler

We hope you enjoyed this story about Harvey Kern. If you would like to share a story about yourself, someone you know or anything about the river that you feel is important, we would be happy to include it in our newsletter. Please send the story to Bob Weed (northbranchphotos@gmail.com)

New Date and Format for Annual Dinner

After being forced to cancel our Annual Dinner last year, we are making some changes that we hope will make the event this year even more enjoyable. We are combining our Annual Meeting with our Annual Dinner. The event will be held on **Saturday, September 4** at the Lovells Township Hall. There will be a cocktail/social hour at 6:00 p.m. followed by the dinner at 7:00 p.m.

In addition to a delicious meal, we will provide you with an update on our projects and achievements in 2021, award prizes for the photo contest and give away the cedar tree centerpieces.

The cost will be \$30 per person. Please RSVP by email, text or phone to Sue Inman: inmansue2@gmail.com 312-446-7225 (cell).



2021 Photo Contest

Good news! We received so many outstanding photos last year that we are holding another photo contest this year! We have made a few changes that, hopefully, make it more fun. We are keeping the two categories, **Wildlife** and **Scenery** (which is basically everything that isn't Wildlife).

However, we are asking contestants to submit no more than two photos per category. We have also started a new **Youth** category. The **Youth** category is open to anyone 18 years old or younger in 2021.

We will be awarding prizes in all three categories (\$100 gift certificate to Gates Lodge & Fly Shop).

Please send your entries to Northbranchphotos@gmail.com.

All entries must be received by August 1, 2021. We will announce winners and award prizes at our Annual Dinner (see above). Watch our next newsletter, or our web site, for information about when photos will be posted and when voting will commence.

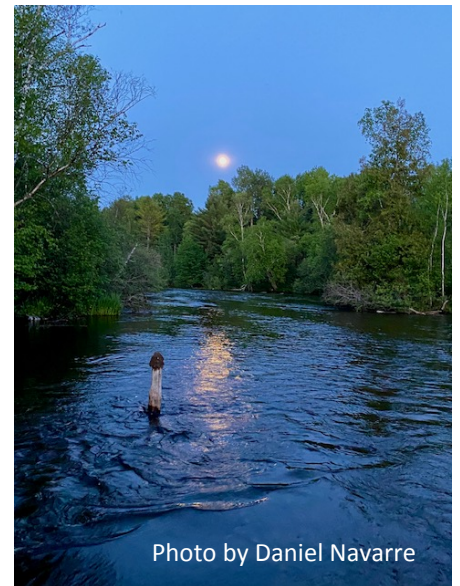


Photo by Daniel Navarre

We appreciate your tax deductible donations that make our work possible. We can also accept credit card donations on the web site. Please use the form below to help us maintain and improve our North Branch

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

www.ausablenorthbranch.org

Here is my (our) contribution to support the Foundation:

Name: _____

Contribution Amount: _____

Address: _____

In Memory/Honor of: _____

E-mail: _____

Please return to:

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation - c/o Marjie Warner P.O. Box 2524 Grayling, MI 49738

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 not for profit.

Purple Loosestrife by Bill Anderson

The Invasive Species committee continues to explore and find ways to control the spread of Purple Loosestrife (PLS) and to work with other organizations to assist us in these efforts. If not removed, PLS will crowd out native species of vegetation and reduce biological diversity and healthy ecosystem. This change in diversity of plant species threatens plants, birds, mammals, reptiles, insects, fish and amphibians that rely on healthy wetland habitat for their survival. The dense loosestrife roots also clog water channels where fish come to spawn, ducks feed, and insects hide and feed.



For the past dozen or so years many North Branch volunteers, including the River Keepers who manage each reach, have spent countless hours detasseling, pulling, and killing PLS along the North Branch from above Lovells to the confluence with the mainstream. This has been at times a herculean effort especially when the PLS is found on the other side of a silty and soft patch of shoreline that requires tremendous effort to reach while sinking up past one's knees in the silt. But you will be happy to know that these battle hardened volunteers entered the fray with good spirit and determination to eradicate and control the amount of PLS on our beloved river.

At times we thought we completely conquered it, only to find a larger and denser crop of PLS the following year. One mature PLS plant may develop over 2 million seeds and if that plant is not removed during or before it drops its seeds, well you can imagine the follow up work we have to do.

As hard as these volunteers have worked, and there have been many of us over the years, we seem to be losing ground in some reaches of the river. Because of that we have entered into a joint effort with Huron Pines to have a two day blitz in mid-August to remove or kill as many PLS plants as we can. The work days will be August 16 and 17, with August 18 as a backup if needed due to weather or other delays.

Huron Pines will be contacting all riverfront property owners to request permission to come on their property to kill and remove the PLS. Please return the signed Permission Forms as quickly as possible.

We are also looking for six volunteers, 2-3 each day to assist Huron Pines with this effort. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Bill Anderson (waanderson49@gmail.com).

Upcoming Events

Purple Loosestrife Removal (with Huron Pines)

Monday, Aug. 16 & Aug. 17, 2021

Foundation Annual Meeting and Annual Dinner

Saturday, Sep. 3, 2021 Lovells Twp. Hall 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Officers

Neil Wallace, Chairman
248-891-5446
Bill Anderson, Vice Chairman
219-771-9178
Marjie Warner, Treasurer
313-663-1331
Bob Weed, Secretary
248-310-6884

Directors

Greg Bierl 616-843-5277
Eric Bankhead 989-348-6704
Glen Eberly 989-348-3084
Andy Grant 989-545-2137
Mike Inman 312-446-7244
Steve Johnson 989-344-1053
Gary Neumann 989-348-9848
John Porteous 317-403-2891
Tom Wessels 231-271-6151

Mission Statement: To preserve, protect and enhance the natural endowments of the watershed of the North Branch of the Au Sable River for the benefit of wild fish and game and public enjoyment and appreciation.

