



THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

Spring 2023

Protecting the North Branch for over 78 years

From the Chairman's Desk

"The perfection of life with a gun dog, like the perfection of an Autumn, is disturbing because you know, even as it begins, that it must end. Time bestows the gift and steals it in the process." - George Bird Evans

This one's going out to all you dog owners. My dear friend Bob read me this quote years ago, and it stayed with me. The sad fact is most of us will outlive our dogs. Many of us have outlived a few already. Even as you hold your new pup for the first time, you know that in a few years you're bound to get your heart broken. And yet we continue to pursue that tail-wagging, tongue-dragging jubilation that is dog ownership, ephemeral as it is.

The dog pictured is our English setter, Beecher. She was named in honor of the 19th century abolitionist preacher Henry Ward Beecher, and his sister author Harriet Beecher Stowe. I anticipated - correctly - that she would spend a lot of time at "Uncle Tom's Cabin". She is, without a doubt, the most affectionate dog we've ever had.

And I wouldn't be at all surprised if you were to look up the word "exuberance" in the dictionary and find her picture there.

There's a line from one of my favorite old country songs that says, "old dogs care about you even when you make mistakes." I've certainly made my share of mistakes in Beecher's presence. I'll be the first to admit (and my dog will readily attest) that I will never be numbered among the world's great wing shots! I have whiffed on infinitely more birds than I've ever harvested. For me, carrying a shotgun is just a formality, an excuse to get out and enjoy a cool October walk on a carpet of aspen leaves, listening to the muted nasal call of a nuthatch, or the squeaking honk of overhead geese.

(Continued on page 2)



From the Chairman's Desk (continued from page 1)

Yet at the end of the day, no matter how many wasted shells, or how empty the game bag, Beecher still curls up on the floor between my knees for a belly rub, or gently takes my forearm in her teeth as if to say, "stay nearby, will you?" There's no substitute for that kind of devotion.

On our last grouse hunt, it was actually Beecher who made the mistake, although I can't really blame her.

I discovered too late that her point was neither a grouse nor a woodcock, but actually a porcupine! By the time I called her back, she had a muzzle and tongue full of quills. We spent the rest of what should have been an enjoyable morning hunt at the veterinarian's office.

Even though I hope she's learned her lesson, I still love my dog! So you see that line about old dogs works both ways. Here's to all our four-legged companions!

2023 PLS Removal Project by Bill Anderson

Summer will soon be here and with that comes the return of that purple flowered plant we call Purple Loosestrife (PLS). It's too bad that PLS is identified as an invasive species that if left unattended will crowd out other plant life, because it has blossoms that are so attractive. However, those blossoms will release thousands of tiny seeds that will be dispersed in the wind and float along the shore looking for a place to take root.

For the past 2 years I have been reporting on our work to control the spread of PLS. In 2021 and 2022, volunteers working with and under the expertise of employees of Huron Pines have performed a remarkable job in removing and killing PLS from the banks of the North Branch. However, our job is not finished. PLS may never be completely eliminated from the river but we can control its spread and remove most of what currently exists.

Huron Pines will once again help us control this invasive plant. The dates that we will be performing our PLS blitz in 2023 are August 15 and 16. We have had many volunteers give their time over the past 2 years to assist in controlling the spread of PLS and we will certainly need several volunteers to help in August. If you can volunteer on one or both of those days, please contact me at waanderson49@gmail.com or **219-771-9178**.

As I have reported in past newsletters, we are most successful in eradicating PLS when we have permission to swipe the plant with a glove that has a herbicide applied to it. If you receive a letter asking for permission to do this, we would appreciate your positive response. And if you don't receive a letter but would be willing to allow the application of a herbicide to the PLS on your property, please contact me and I will provide you with a letter of permission for your signature.

Donor Appreciation Reception to be Held Saturday, July 8

Once again, we are hosting a reception for all our donors, friends and neighbors. As we did last year, we will provide beverages, soft drinks and appetizers along with the ability to talk to board members about our activities and plans. There will again be a speaker who will talk about the North Branch, the river we all love and we again will have cedar seedlings (donated by Cedars for the Au Sable) to award as door prizes.

The reception will be held **Saturday, July 8 at 6:00 p.m.** We have reserved both the Lovells Township Hall and the Pavilion, so it should be a comfortable venue regardless of the weather. And, most importantly, the event will be free to attend (although we will gladly accept donations). Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. We really look forward to seeing you there!



Photo by Finola Hewitt

How I Got to the River

by Steve Johnson

I arrived in Lovells in the spring of 1946 being hauled by my mother, father, grandmother and grandfather on the family's annual migration to the north. The trip was to open the "Cabin" for the summer, where my grandparents would live and operate the northern extension of our family business, S&B Oil Co., an oil distributorship.

Mom and Dad would operate the southern extension from Saginaw and come north on weekends. This had been a regular trip for the family since my great grandfather, William Bill, bought a square mile of property along the banks of the West Branch of Big Creek sometime around 1904.

When I was 4 years old, I would spend the summers living in the woods with my grandparents until they moved back to Saginaw for the late winter. It was during this time that I learned to fly fish from my grandfather, spending time on Big Creek bothering the local brook trout. I also learned bird hunting, deer hunting, trapping and canoeing. My sister, Chris, joined me up north for our summers when she was about 4 years old.



When I was old enough to be let out of the sight of my grandmother, I would walk the 2.5 miles to the North Branch and fish around Dam 4. I remember it was a long hot walk in hip boots and awakened in me a desire to drive a car. I was driving for milk at Caid's when I was 10.

When I became old enough to be institutionalized, I would be sent back in the fall to civilization to attend school in Saginaw where I went to Ferbringer elementary, Hemmeter middle and Arthur Hill High school. My academic career to this point was not spectacular because I spent so much time heading north to go fishing or hunting.

As a boy I developed an interest in placing trout structures in Big Creek, helping my grandfather build log structures. I noticed that many of them would not overwinter well and started to build them in different ways to see which designs would hang around. By high school (early 1960s) I had several designs identified that seemed to survive well. The last one washed away in a spring flood in 2012.

I went away to college in the fall of 1964, going to Michigan Tech to study chemistry. The "Cabin" provided a good rest stop on the way back to Saginaw between semesters.

MTU excused me from the University in 1968 with a degree and about this time the Upper Peninsula chapter of TU was being formed with a couple of my good *UP* friends being involved. I became the representative to Michigan TU for the chapter because I was a LOT closer to the MITU board meetings since I was working in Ann Arbor.

I stayed involved in the Jackson then the Ann Arbor chapters of TU until I retired from usefulness in 2011. We moved to the home that my wife and I built (yes, WE built it over 30 years of weekends) in Lovells on the family property and joined the Mason Griffith TU board and Lovells Township Historical Society that year.

I believe it was 2012 when I was invited to join the board of the North Branch Foundation. I have worked on redd surveys, beaver dam removal and river restoration on the North Branch, Main stream and Big Creek since returning to my permanent home.

We hope you have enjoyed Steve's story. If you have your own story about how you arrived on the North Branch, we would be delighted to help you share it in a future newsletter. Please contact Bob Weed (see contact information on back page) or any of the directors.

Winter 2023 Ross Scholarship Recipient - Justice Otterbacher

The William (Bill) Ross Memorial Scholarship was established in memory of Bill Ross from Lovells, Michigan through the generosity of his many friends and the Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation.

This scholarship gives first preference to students residing in Lovells Township and second preference to students living in Crawford County. Many people knew Bill for his love of the Au Sable River and his conservation efforts and it was felt that this scholarship was a perfect way to recognize him for all he did for people in the area. The scholarship recipient for the winter term at Kirtland Community College is Justice Otterbacher

Justice lives in Grayling and is in her final semester at Kirtland Community College. She will graduate in May 2023 with her degree in the Foundations of Art and Design.

After completing her degree, Justice plans on attending Kendall College of Art and Design in the fall. She plans to study Life Science and Pre-medical illustration with the hopes of becoming a medical illustrator in the future.

Justice shared, "I am honored to have been chosen as the recipient of the William (Bill) Ross memorial Scholarship. I want to say thank you for your support and generosity. Because of your support, I am now closer to achieving my goals."



From Janet Ross (Bill's widow):

"We are so grateful that this scholarship has been created in Bill's memory and that this will help individuals from our area to get assistance in pursuing their education that will lead to jobs they will enjoy."

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.

Protecting the North Branch from Contamination

When you head out to the river, the DNR and department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) want to make you aware about the importance of decontamination. The North Branch and other Michigan trout streams are under increasing threat from harmful species that affect habitat and food sources for trout and other fish. Both didymo (rock snot) and New Zealand mudsnail can be moved to new locations on waders, nets, gear and boats.

Didymo

Didymo is a microscopic algae (diatom) that produces stalks that form thick mats on hard surfaces like rocks in stream beds. It looks and feels like white or tan/brown wet wool. It ranges from small cotton ball-sized patches to thick blankets and long ropy strings that flow in currents. Under the right conditions, prolific growth can result in thick mats that can cover river and stream bottoms, reducing habitat for macroinvertebrates including mayfly and caddisfly nymphs, which are important food for fish. Although it is often referred to as "rock snot," didymo is not slimy.



Didymo bloom

Photo courtesy of Michigan DNR

New Zealand mudsnail

New Zealand mudsnails are only about 1/8 inch long and can be difficult to see. However, these snails can change the aquatic habitats they live in by reaching extremely high densities. When that happens, they can outcompete native macroinvertebrates, leaving fish food in short supply. The mudsnails have no nutritional value, which can negatively affect the overall condition of fish that feed on them.

New Zealand mudsnail populations are known to be present in the Au Sable, Boardman, Grass, Pere Marquette, Pine and Upper Manistee rivers in Michigan. Mudsnails can survive out of water for several days. Because of their small size, they are easily transported on boats, anchors and fishing gear such as waders and nets.



New Zealand mudsnails

Photo courtesy of MSU Dept. of Agriculture

Plan to decontaminate

To prevent these damaging species from hitchhiking on your waders and gear, make plans for decontamination before heading to the water. Always clean, drain and dry your waders, boots, boats and other gear between trips or before moving to a new body of water. The State of Michigan recommends using a chemical disinfectant to achieve maximum decontamination for didymo and New Zealand mudsnail. Possible disinfectants with documented effectiveness for these species include: Formula 409 Antibacterial All-Purpose Cleaner applied to waders and gear.

Bleach: Apply a solution of one-half cup (4 fluid ounces) bleach to 5 gallons of water and let stand for 20 minutes.

Virkon Aquatic: Apply a solution of 20 grams per liter of water and let stand for 20 minutes (see manufacturer's label for additional guidance).

Any chemical disinfectants should be applied to waders and gear on land, at a reasonable distance from the water, to avoid accidental discharge into surface waters.



Current sign at Kellogg Bridge

2023 Photo Contest

The photo contest is back again this year! We are keeping the same rules as 2022. Our categories will remain: **Wildlife**, **Scenery** (which is basically everything that isn't Wildlife) and **Youth** (anyone 18 or under in 2023). We will be awarding prizes in all three categories (\$100 gift certificate to Gates Lodge & Fly Shop). We are asking that contestants submit no more than two photos per category. The contest is open to everyone. However, members of the Foundation Board of Directors and their immediate family members are not eligible to win prizes. Please send your entries to Northbranchphotos@gmail.com.

All entries must be received by August 1, 2023. We will announce winners and award prizes at our Annual Meeting, in September. Watch our next newsletter, or our web site, for any additional information.



Photo by Cynthia Infante-Inman

Upcoming Events

Lovells Township Historical Society

"Celebrating Women in Fly Fishing" displays and events May - September at Lovells Historical Museum. Times and details are available on the LTHS website: www.LTHSMuseums.org

ASNBAF Donor Appreciation Reception

Saturday, July 8, 2023 Lovells Twp. Hall, 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

ASNBAF & Huron Pines Invasive Species Removal Project

Tuesday, August 15 and Wednesday, August 16

32nd Annual Bridge Walk - Lovells

Saturday, August 19, 2023

For additional details please visit: www.lovellstownship.com/category/lovelles-bridge-walk

ASNBAF Annual Meeting (public welcome and encouraged to attend)

Saturday, September 2, 2023 Lovells Township Hall, 10:00 a.m. - noon

Officers

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248-891-5446
Marjie Warner, Treasurer
313-663-1331
Bob Weed, Secretary
248-310-6884

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Ken Frazee 248-202-5062	Gary Neumann 989-348-9848
Andy Grant 989-545-2137	John Porteous 317-403-2891

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.*

