



THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

Summer 2023

Protecting the North Branch for Over 78 Years

Photo by Hal White

From the Chairman's Desk

One of my college professors expressed a theory that anglers and hunters progress through several "stages" as they pursue their avocation. Obviously, this isn't precisely true for everyone. But there seems a certain logic to it.

During the first, or "shooting" stage, we just want to get out and toss a line (or shoot our gun). In the second, "harvest" stage, the goal is to "limit out", taking as many of our quarry as we can. The third, or "trophy" stage finds us pursuing that elusive 20+ inch trout, or 10+ point buck. During the fourth, or "method" stage, we're more concerned with HOW we pursue fish and game - e.g. using only dry flies, split bamboo, or recurve bows. Eventually we become more focused on the broader aspects of the sport - the friends who accompany us, and the beautiful, unique surroundings that welcome us each time we venture out.

Author Robert Traver has said, "I fish because ... I love the environs where trout are found, which are invariably beautiful...". I'm finding as I get older, my enjoyment of fishing often has very little to do with the actual fish. Perhaps the same is also true for you. Among the things I really enjoy are the birds along the river. I love hearing the "witchity-witchity" of a yellowthroat or the melodious song of a rose-breasted grosbeak (which someone once described as sounding like "a robin who's had voice lessons"). And who hasn't been arrested by the majesty of an eagle gliding downstream? I can even tip my hat to the osprey perched atop a dead tree, brown trout dangling from his talons letting me know I'm merely an interloping competitor in his territory.

And then there are encounters of the four-legged variety, in particular the ubiquitous white-tails. You begin to learn, as they've learned long ago, the shallow stretches they regularly use to ford the river. I once watched a deer, standing knee-deep in the river, dip her head all the way underwater (moose-like) and come up munching a mouthful of greens. Until then, I never knew they did that.

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From the Chairman's Desk

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The deer in my neighborhood apparently know - through intelligence or instinct - that the islands upstream of our cabin are safe places to drop their fawns in late spring. I've sat in the grass on the edge of an island, taking a fishing break, and had a spindly-legged fawn rustle through the grass and poke its head out, looking expectedly at me, obviously disappointed when he saw I wasn't mom. Another time, a buddy and I put in the river off a bluff and - sploosh, sploosh! - pushed a doe off an island. A bit later, as I stepped into the river, the doe's fawn gamely followed suit. The little fawn, who'd likely never ventured off the island during its brief lifetime, quickly found itself swept downstream, the current flowing over its back. The fawn bleated in panic as it bounded toward the bank, his mother patiently waiting on the shore. I was relieved when he finally made it safely back to mom's side.

Many of my wildlife encounters have happened after dark and were, at least initially, unseen. One dark night, I'd just lost a rather nice brown. My thoughts were preoccupied replaying the long fight, so I didn't notice the beaver swimming beside me. A loud "ker-ploosh!" buckled my knees, issued a cry from my throat, and sent me dejectedly back to the cabin. Then there's the time I heard loud chattering on the bank. I turned on my headlamp to see five pairs of eyes glowing back at me - a family of raccoons in a tag alder.

I once casted a fly out through the darkness only to have it nabbed mid-air by a bat. Bat and fly both fluttered down to the surface and floated back toward me. Thankfully, the bat managed to free himself and escape before reaching me. I still have no idea how to "catch and release" a bat! On another evening, unbeknownst to me, a bat apparently got tangled up in my landing net. Of course, I didn't become aware of this until I'd hiked back to the cabin and went to bed. I was awakened in the darkness to hear the now-extricated bat fluttering tiny laps around my bedroom. A swipe of said landing net, and he was quickly ushered back outside.

These episodes may seem inconsequential. But they always fascinate me, and they're the kinds of things I'd never see sitting on a couch playing a video game. And they continue to motivate me to get outside - you never know what you're going to see out there! Perhaps you've got a similar story or two. Let me know. I'd love to swap tales with you.

Donor Appreciation Reception

Our Donor Appreciation Reception was held July 8 at the Lovells Township Pavilion. An outstanding buffet was provided by Chef Kaytie from MIBrew, cedar seedlings were donated by Cedars for the Au Sable, and our speaker was Patrick Ertel, from Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, who provided an interesting and informative discussion on our North Branch. We look forward to doing this again next year and hope that you will join us.



Photo by Lyle Kearns

HeadWaters Land Conservancy

by Julie Rubsam

The mission of HeadWaters is to protect the natural beauty of northeastern Michigan by preserving significant land and scenic areas, advancing stewardship of land held as preserves and in conservation easements, and fostering appreciation and understanding of the environment.

I think a lot about our mission and how we are working each day to fulfill the objectives it outlines and why the work we do is so important. So many of us have stories to tell of a special place lost to the engine of development that never seems to slow. When explaining to family and friends the role HeadWaters fulfills for conservation in Michigan,

we ask them to think of places they loved that are now lost. It often helps give perspective to the important work we do. I, personally, try to focus on every acre successfully protected and use it to help fuel my optimism for the future.

HeadWaters recently completed our 96th and 97th conservation easement bringing the number of acres we protect to over 13,000 acres. We are helping preserve the landscape of northeast Michigan by protecting the conservation values on these acres thereby positively impacting our watershed, wildlife, and preserving the scenic landscape we cherish so much.

Across our nature preserves, we are completing restoration projects to return these spaces to native habitats for our local wildlife while also working to make these spaces more accessible for the communities we serve. To this end, we have installed and expanded trails, are working to place benches on our preserves, and recently completed a new boardwalk installation at our Hess Nature Preserve, giving visitors access to the shore without impacting the fragile dune and swale ecosystem.

Our youth outreach activities like our Forest School and Junior Naturalist program are educating and inspiring the next generation. We are helping cultivate a generation who loves the natural world and has a deeper understanding of our environment and the components of our Michigan ecosystems.

Land is the one thing that connects us all - past, present, and future. HeadWaters Land Conservancy, our supporters, and volunteers are fulfilling our mission by working to make sure our precious Michigan landscape is here for future generations. We are grateful to you, the Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation, for helping make this work possible.

In Crawford County, HeadWaters holds 18 Conservation Easements, more than any other county across our 11-county service area. All these easements are along waterways with 16 located on the AuSable River. If you are interested in learning more about conservation easements and how you can use this as a tool to protect the features of your property you care about, please contact our Land Protection Specialist, Susanna Glass, at SGlass@HeadWatersConservancy.org or (989) 731-0573 ext. 15.

Julie Rubsam is the Executive Director of HeadWaters Land Conservancy and can be contacted at: JRubsam@HeadWatersConservancy.org or (989) 731-0573 ext. 13



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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: _____

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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.

Introducing Our Two New Directors

We are fortunate to have added two new directors to the foundation board. Here, in their own words, is a brief introduction to these two valuable additions to the Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation.

Leonora Bender

My name is Leonora (Lee) Bender and I was born and raised in Detroit. Growing up, I attended Detroit public schools and graduated from Regina High School, a Catholic girls' school. I then attended Michigan State University and graduated with a BS degree in Criminalistics (Forensic Science). I worked for the Michigan State Police for approximately 13 years and then went to work for the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Maryland. I stayed with the Bureau for the next 13 years, all as a Forensic Scientist in the area of Trace Evidence Analysis and retired in 2015.

My husband and I lived in Pennsylvania and purchased our cabin on the North Branch in 2008. Unfortunately, my husband passed in 2020 and I decided to move here permanently to the North Branch in 2021. Currently my cabin is full of my furry kids, Gracie and Sadie: very active Chocolate Labs, Leo: a 3-legged Yorkie, and a sassy cat named Esther!



Kenneth Frazee

In April of 2023, Kenneth Frazee was confirmed as a director for ASNBAF. Ken's career has been devoted to public service in the field of law. His private energies are directed towards family and enjoying outdoor pursuits. For more than 40 years a significant measure of his outdoor recreation has been appreciated in northern Michigan.

Prior to this position, Ken has retained membership in several conservation organizations. He is a strong proponent of protecting cold water resources in conjunction with promoting land conservation by environmentally focused stewardship.

Ken is an avid fly fisherman, upland hunter and enthusiast of exploring the environs where these pursuits take him. Serving our organization he aims to offer sage judgment, warm memory, honest effort and occasionally, dry wit.



Annual Meeting

We will hold our Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 2, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon. The meeting will take place at the Lovells Township Hall (8405 Twin Bridge Road). This will provide another opportunity to meet the directors and discuss issues concerning the North Branch. We will be announcing our Photo Contest winners and we will have Josh Greenberg from Gates Au Sable Lodge as our featured speaker. Please come join us for what should be a fun and interesting meeting. Light refreshments will be provided.



Photo by Aliecia Hulka

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

32nd Annual Bridge Walk - Lovells

Saturday, **August 19**, 2023 Lovells Township Pavilion

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

ASNBAF Annual Meeting (public welcome and encouraged to attend)

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

Annual River Clean-up with Anglers of the Au Sable

Saturday, **September 9**, 2023 Gates Au Sable Lodge 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

For additional information: <https://gateslodge.com/events>

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Neil Wallace, Vice Chairman
248-891-5446
Marjie Warner, Treasurer
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Bob Weed, Secretary
248-310-6884

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717-825-5367
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989-348-3084

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Mike Inman
312-446-7244
Dave Jankowski
231-392-3753

Steve Johnson
989-344-8766
Gary Neumann
989-348-9848
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.*

