



# THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

Summer 2020

## Protecting the North Branch for over 75 years

### From the Chairman's Desk

These days there is plenty of time for personal reflection. I was kayaking on the NB recently, floating past all the great old cabins and homes that are so familiar to many of you and that tell so many stories. As I floated by the Stahl cabin down river from the Lovells Bridge I started contemplating my own story and my connection to Lovells, MI. This is my story of "How I Got Here" and "My First Float – Almost".

My paternal grandparents, Lawrence and Bernice Inman, lived in Sanford, MI. Grandpa owned his own grocery store there and later a store in Saginaw, MI. In his early days Grandpa enjoyed deer hunting. He wasn't a fly fisherman yet. He and his buddies had been going on yearly three-week deer camp hunting trips initially in the UP but later on in the Lovells and Lewiston areas. In 1949 my grandparents bought a newer eight hundred square foot cabin eleven feet off the river on North Branch Trail just downstream of the now famous Lovells Bridge.

Grandpa had done well at his grocery stores and had impressed a salesman from the Sunshine Biscuit Company with his homemade sales displays. He was eventually hired by the company and became their Midwest Sales Representative. Grandma settled in at their new cabin and Grandpa would travel to and from the cabin to make his sales calls. There they both became avid fly fishers. They were so proud of their Lovells residency that they put decals on their station wagon driver and passenger car doors that read "Inmans of the North Branch of the Au Sable". They had their names stenciled just below their respective side view mirrors.

I first started visiting Grandpa and Grandma's cabin in the 1950s with my parents, my two younger brothers and my baby sister. One of the visits that I recall was the time I spent at the cabin at age five, without my parents, joining grandma and my two older cousins, Danny and Clay Inman. This is the "My First Float – Almost" part of my story.

I was born with bilateral club feet and underwent three operations to correct the condition. My third and last surgery was performed when I was five.

*Continued on page 4*

## Kirtland's Warbler Alliance

by Bill Rapai

Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Bill Rapai, the interim executive director of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance. My organization was founded in 2013 as a project of Huron Pines. Today we are an independent organization and our mission is to help conserve the Kirtland's Warbler, a rare bird that spends its summers primarily in northern Michigan, in the area of the Au Sable River.

So, you might be asking, if my primary concern is a bird, why am I writing for the newsletter for an organization whose primary concern is a river? It's because our mutual interests don't end at the riverbank. If we look at the region as a whole, a healthy jack pine ecosystem is in the best interests of both our organizations.

As you know, a healthy jack pine ecosystem helps keep the Au Sable River and its tributaries healthy by providing the inflow of clean water and shade that keeps the river cool and the trout happy. A healthy jack pine ecosystem also provides nesting areas for the Kirtland's Warbler, Black Bear, Badger, game animals and other rare plants and animals.

The North Branch of the Au Sable River flows through the heart of the Kirtland's Warbler nesting area in Crawford, Oscoda, and Otsego Counties. Jack Pine forests in those counties, along with several other surrounding counties, are managed by the Michigan DNR and the U.S. Forest Service to provide nesting areas for the Kirtland's Warbler. As recently as 1987 there were fewer than 400 Kirtland's Warblers in the entire population. Through a lot of hard work, a few educated guesses, and a little bit of luck, the Kirtland's Warbler population is now estimated at about 4,000 individuals. And with good management practices going forward, the population will continue to grow.



Historically, Kirtland's Warbler breeding habitat was created by fires that would regularly sweep across the landscape. The northern Michigan outwash plains ecosystem is fire dependent and everything in it is built to burn. The jack pines in particular are adapted to fire; their seeds are sealed inside cones that open primarily from the intense heat of a wildfire. Since we no longer allow fire to run across the landscape, we are forced to harvest mature trees and replant young ones to renew the ecosystem and provide nesting places for the warbler.

Jack Pine management has direct benefits for the Au Sable River. Wildfires historically had a dramatic negative impact on the health of the Au Sable River. Fires caused sections of the river to fill with ash and sediment from runoff, filling in low areas where fish would normally breed. And because fires are indiscriminate, they can burn everything in its path right up to the riverbank. As you know, trees help to regulate the temperature of the North Branch by blocking direct sunshine. Even a minor increase in water temperature can prevent trout and other fish from spawning.

Despite years of teamwork and collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organizations and individuals, there's one impediment to Kirtland's Warbler conservation that should not surprise anyone. That is, of course, finding the money to pay for the continuing conservation work. The Endangered Species Act mandates post-delisting funding that pays for some conservation and monitoring efforts. Knowing that that federal money is going to be cut off soon, the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance is working with its partners to build an endowment that will continue to fund conservation work and research.

The Kirtland's Warbler Alliance looks forward to working with the Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation on projects that will benefit the health of the Jack Pine ecosystem and the Au Sable River. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me at [thekirtlandswarbleralliance@gmail.com](mailto:thekirtlandswarbleralliance@gmail.com). I look forward to hearing your thoughts. More information is available [kirtlandswarbler.org](http://kirtlandswarbler.org). Please "like" us at [facebook.com/Kirtlandswarbleralliance](https://facebook.com/Kirtlandswarbleralliance).

*- Editor's Note: This is a condensed version of Bill's article. The full version appears on our web site [www.ausablenorthbranch.org](http://www.ausablenorthbranch.org). Bill Rapai is interim executive director of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance.*

## Update on Dr. Luttenton's North Branch Projects for 2020

by Glen Eberly

Ready for some good news? Yes, there is some. While so many events and plans are being cancelled due to the Corona Virus, we are fortunate that the projects planned by Dr. Mark Luttenton, of Grand Valley State University (GVSU), for our beloved North Branch are underway. These two projects were explained in our last newsletter but we want to reacquaint you with their purpose.

The first project is to determine the biomass of aquatic invertebrates in the North Branch. While EGLE (formerly DEQ) has stated the insect populations in the North Branch are excellent, their assessment is qualitative and not quantitative. This means there is a good representation of aquatic insects in our stream but we do not know if there is sufficient volume of these insects to support a healthy trout population. Many fishermen and property owners have noticed a significant reduction in insect hatches over the past 10 - 15 years.

The insect collection part of this project has been completed. Paul Dingman and Bert Carey, graduate students at GVSU, collected insects from 5 different substrates (gravel, sand, silt, woody debris and aquatic vegetation) from the Ford, Twin Bridges, the Copper Fisherman, Dam 4 and Kellogg Bridge.

Identification of the insects collected is time-consuming and laborious. Paul advised it will take him the rest of the summer and into the fall to complete the analysis. But, he has finished the woody debris insects and has found 18 different "food stuffs" for our trout. The scientific and common names will be provided in a later report when the work is completed. The biomass of available trout food will be provided at the completion of the study.

The second project is to map the stream bed of the North Branch to identify the makeup of sand, gravel, cobble and silt. Sand is the enemy of a healthy trout stream and many feel the increased sand load over many years has had a serious negative effect on insect production and trout spawning.

This project has been completed to Kellogg Bridge. Huge thanks goes to the 18 volunteers from ASNBAF and Anglers of the AuSable (from Terry Lyons volunteer list) who gave considerable time and effort to this mapping project:

Bill Anderson, Tom Baird, John Dallas, Glen Eberly, Chris Guest, Joe Hemming, Larry Hulka, Mike Inman, Steve Johnson, Gerry Lake, Terry Lyons, Cheryl and Dan McCormick, John Porteous, Carl Saunders, Jim Shiflett, Mike Sumeracki, and Tom Wessels.

Some volunteers worked as many as 4 days on this project. That is real commitment to the resource! Two volunteers were teamed with each graduate student each mapping day. The river width and maximum depth was measured and recorded for distances varying of from 80 to 140 yards. The streambed of each reach was analyzed to estimate the percentage of silt, sand, gravel, cobble, and clay (totaling 100%). additional estimates were made of the percent of streambed covered by woody debris and aquatic vegetation. Each day the teams covered from 3/4 to 2 miles of river, depending on the complexity of the stream in each mapping area.

Bert Carey, M.S. Graduate Assistant and lead for the Mapping Project states, "The objective of the qualitative assessment of in-stream habitat is to establish a base line for a long term monitoring program and the identification of areas that might benefit more from restoration. In addition to this large assessment, quantitative measurements of the river's substrate composition will be taken in stretches of the river that have previously been measured. This will allow for a comparison and show us if there has been a significant change in sand accumulation in these areas. Estimates of volume of sand will be measured where large deposits of sand have accumulated."

Thanks to your continued financial support, our foundation has committed \$12,000 to complete these two important projects. Dr. Luttenton has advised that our contribution along with support from Mason-Griffith TU Founders Chapter and Anglers of the Au Sable has enabled him to secure an additional contribution of \$53,000 from Grand Valley State University.

We look forward to providing you with updated results of these projects.

*- Editor's Note: Due to limited space, we could only print a summary of the total article. For additional information and pictures, please see the full article on our web site: [www.ausablenorthbranch.org](http://www.ausablenorthbranch.org).*



## Update on Invasive Species (Action Plan)

by Bill Anderson

The North Branch has several invasive species but none are as prevalent or pose the immediate concern that Purple Loosestrife (PLS) does. PLS if left unattended will multiply along the river and crowd out native plants and reduce food, shelter, and nesting sites for wildlife, birds, turtles, and frogs. PLS is native to Europe and Asia and was introduced to the US through soil used in ships ballast and as an ornamental.

Removal of the plant can be done by pulling the plant out by the roots but this technique is not as effective as using herbicides as the plant will regenerate if all of the root is not removed. Each plant produces thousands of seeds and caution must be observed when either pulling the plant out by the roots or spraying with herbicides to make certain that the flower is encapsulated to avoid dispersing the seeds.

Over the past dozen or so years your River Keepers have been working diligently in the months of July and August to remove the plants along the banks of the North Branch. We will never completely eradicate PLS but we can control it through the work of volunteers. The Foundation through the Invasive Species Committee (Marjie Warner, Eric Bankhead, Glen Eberly, & Bill Anderson) has established an Action Plan for identifying and eradicating invasives. Among other items, this Plan will recruit volunteers to eradicate invasives for each Reach of the river from Black Hole to the confluence with the Main Stream. In addition, one or two individual volunteers will become certified to apply herbicides and to train others in this method.



We already have individuals who have been involved in eradication measures for years but we need additional help as well as one or two individuals to become trained to apply herbicides. If you or someone you know would be interested in volunteering to help protect the river we all love, please contact one of the committee members (all committee members are on the board and telephone numbers are listed on the last page of this newsletter).

## Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting for the Foundation is scheduled for Saturday, September 5 at the Lovells Township Hall. However, the State of Michigan has already issued revised guidelines for both indoor and outdoor meetings in Northern Michigan. Due to the rapidly changing situation and out of an overriding concern about the health and welfare of our supporters, the meeting is currently listed as "tentative". Unfortunately, this means the meeting is subject to last minute changes and possible cancellation. We will have the latest information posted on our web site.

## Additional Historical Articles

Since we received so many positive comments about our web site article on the CABUS, we have posted another historical article. Glen Eberly has written a fun and interesting article about the Mary Ann Lodge with pictures of Feargus B. Squires and construction of the main cabin. Please visit our web site ([www.ausablenorthbranch.org](http://www.ausablenorthbranch.org)) to see the article and other useful information about the Au Sable North Branch.

## A BIG Thank You to Our 2020 Supporters! (as of June 30, 2020)

Dennis Ahrens  
Eric Bankhead  
John and Diane Blakemore  
Don and Carla Boyes  
Joseph and Emelina Brincat  
Joseph Burroughs  
Richard and Bettie Buss  
Susan Cooper  
John and Jane Dallas  
Ray and Donna Dobleske  
James and Rosemarie Dugdale  
Lidia Fiorka  
Jack Garber  
Scott and Cindy Hill  
Hollis Family Fund  
Carl and Vicky Hueter

Karen and Jim Johnson  
Scott Johnson  
Harvey Kern  
Darby Kuenzel  
Gerald Lake  
Jean B. Lilly  
Terry and Regina Lyons  
Bob and Michaela Malecki  
John and Donna Mangona  
Gary and Marsha Meade  
Thomas Mudd  
Doug and Patti Neal  
Gary Neumann  
John and Barbara Pacella  
PayPal Giving Fund

Jim and Shannon Peters  
Kip Petherick  
Bruce and Debra Pregler  
Virginia M. Reichenbach  
George and Jeanette Roe  
Janet Ross  
Jerry and Fran Rucker  
Keith Scharf  
Bruce Shurtz  
Richard and Erin Swaine  
Jeff Traver  
Neil Wallace  
Larry and Marjie Warner  
Chuck and Janice Wheeker

### Special Donations

Bill and Debi Anderson, in memory of Michael Malbin  
David and Linda Horn-memory Bill Ross; in honor Janet Ross  
Rosemary Malbin, in memory of Michael Malbin  
Susan and Michael Madison, in memory of Larry Stecker  
Susan Miller and Nick Pane, in memory/honor of Erwin and Rada Miller, and Charles and Ruth Robinson  
Terry and David Oeming, in honor/memory of Paul Calkins  
Jim and Janet Remus, in memory of Mike Malbin  
Suzy Rieder, in memory of Gretchen Ferguson  
Jim and Linda Ross, in memory Bill Ross; in honor Janet Ross  
Gerald Simpson, in memory/honor of Marjorie Brandstetter Simpson  
Carl and Sharon Warren, in memory of Jim Wyse  
Ida and Jim Wine, in memory of Bill Ross

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **Annual Meeting (tentative)**

September 5, 2020 Lovells Twp. Hall  
Check our web site for details or changes.

#### **Annual River Clean-Up (tentative)**

September 12, 2020  
Check with Anglers of the Au Sable or Gates Lodge for details.

### Officers

Mike Inman, Chairman  
Cabin: 989-348-2922 Mobile: 312-446-7244  
Neil Wallace, Vice Chairman  
248-891-5446  
Marjie Warner, Treasurer  
313-663-1331  
Bob Weed, Secretary  
248-310-6884

### Directors

Bill Anderson	219-771-9178
Eric Bankhead	989-348-6704
Glen Eberly	989-348-3084
Steve Johnson	989-344-1053
Gary Neumann	989-348-9848
John Porteous	317-403-2891
Jerry Rucker	989-348-8738
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.

