

No 138 April, 2020

Calendar

BBLA Board Meeting 4/18/20 **BBLA Board Meeting** 5/16/20 Annual Ladies Luncheon 6/13/19 **BBLA Board Meeting** 6/20/20 Annual BBL Golf Outing 6/26/20 11th Annual Clean Up Day 6/20/20 **BBLA Board Meeting** 7/18/20 **BBLA Annual Meeting** 8/15/20

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President's Letter

The BBLA Board of Directors met March 14 to get a jumpstart on many projects planned for the summer of 2020 and beyond.

Since several board members haven't returned from winter locations, the technology in the building allowed several board members to join the meeting online.

Once again the top priority of the association will be keeping aquatic invasive species (AIS) out of the lake. The AIS Committee sought additional training during the winter and will engage in an additional training seminar this spring.

Volunteer Missy Kotzer is working with the association on its financial planning. She works for Schlenner and Wenner in St. Cloud and has reorganized the association's bookkeeping system, so you will see just one balance sheet published in the newsletter each month.

The association's goals for 2020 and beyond are to stay focused on AIS, to develop budgets for each committee and to have each committee set goals and plans for one to five years.

The building committee will take a look at the shed behind the community building and determine its use, and it will work to improve the water testing area in the building.

The board of directors is beginning to look at fundraising for specific projects such as AIS efforts, fish habitat and fish stocking options. Most likely the board will target one area a year.

Preliminary analysis of the membership drive this year looks good. The board thanks everyone for joining and for the additional funds that people donate beyond the \$30 dues.

Be sure to notice the sign-up for the two social events that happen in June—the annual ladies luncheon and the annual golf outing. For both events, participant may register online. See the details on the back page of the newsletter. Also note the ad for the annual cleanup day.

The board thanks volunteer Leroy Blommel for shoveling snow from the building sidewalk and back step this past winter.

Thanks, Ben Ellering BBLA President

Volunteers prepare nests for spring loon return

By Robert Kutter

As Big Birch Lake waits the return of the loons for the spring mating season, BBLA board member, Grant Niehaus has worked on lining up people to place the loon nests once the ice is gone. He has put together a map of locations for the nests and the people responsible for placing the nests.

The artificial nests improve the survival rate of loon eggs because predators have a more difficult time reaching the nests than those on shore

In other efforts to improve loon survival, "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released more that \$1.2 million to the Minnesota

Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to educate anglers about the environmental benefits of using nontoxic fishing tackle to prevent lead poison in loons," according to Tony Kennedy, a reporter for the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

Lost sinkers and jigs ingested by loons and other waterfowl when they skim the bottom of the lakes for grit is how waterfowl ingest harmful material.

The funds came from the U.S. settlement with British Petroleum over the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 which impacted Minnesota loons wintering in the Gulf. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources **Nests** continues on page 4

Volunteers pick up winter trash around the lake

Board member Grant Niehaus and BBLA member Alex Beste picked up trash on the ice and at a few of the accesses around the lake in mid-March. (See photos below of collected trash.)

Niehaus said at the last BBLA Board meeting, "I'm hoping to get more of a formalized plan put in place where one or two individuals would be assigned to each access to pick up trash throughout the entire year."

Niehaus is also looking at putting together an annual cleanup effort that would have multiple people help pick up trash on the ice and road ditches during late winter and early spring.

Other times members could help cleanup is after the Bob show on the sand bar and the fireworks show. Niehaus will present more ideas about keeping the lake area clean at the April board meeting.





Gene Waldorf obituary, BBLA volunteer for 27 years

Eugene T. "Gene" Waldorf, age 84 of Grey Eagle, passed away peacefully on Saturday, February 29, 2020.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held March 6 at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Freeport with Rev. Daniel Walz officiating. Interment was at Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery in Little Falls.

Gene was born in St. Cloud, MN to Frederick and Erma Waldorf on February 25, 1936. He graduated from St. Cloud Cathedral High School in 1954. He married Bernadine Riemer on April 25, 1959 in Little Falls, MN. He was a 1964 graduate of the University of Minnesota Institute of Technology and spent most of his career as an engineering specialist, designing automated manufacturing equipment for the 3M Company. In his early work at Honeywell Corporation, he worked on the guidance system for an Apollo Space Mission.

Gene served twelve years as State Senator for District 66 in St. Paul and in the Minnesota House of Representatives from 1976 to 1980. He completed his service in the legislature in 1992. He was a Korean War era veteran, serving in the Army.

Gene loved adventures and enjoyed sailing, gardening, woodworking, putting out loon nests each spring, checking for invasive species on the lake, piano playing, golfing, reading, and running in 5 marathons.

He cherished time with family, especially when he could whip up some of "Grandma's pancakes" on a Sunday morning. He had a keen sense of direction and, with Bernie, took the family on many road trips, including a memorable trip from Minnesota to El Salvador. He was an active member in the Catholic Church, serving as lector, choir member, Eucharistic Minister, Trustee, driver for monthly Masses for the Handicapped, speaker for Sacrificial Giving, and presid-

er at word and communion services. Gene's community service included serving as a Trustee and Board Chair of the Initiative Foundation, member of the St. Cloud Diocese Catholic Community Foundation Board of Directors, and the Advisory Board of the Sauk River Watershed District. Gene was an active member of the Big Birch Lake Association (BBLA), serving as its President from 1995-2007. In 2019, he and Bernie received the BBLA Friends of the Lake Award for their 27 years of service to the organization.

Gene was preceded in death by his parents, Frederick and Erma Waldorf; brother, Ron and his wife, Marie Waldorf; sister, Margie and her husband, Ron Skelton; and other beloved extended family members.

Gene is survived by his wife of sixty **Obituary** *continues on page 5*

History of BBL recalled through childhood memories

Record memories in words, photos and videos for future generations

In the waning days of March, the snow is mostly gone except for patches shadowed by buildings and trees. Ever so slowly, the ice is melting away from the shore. The quietness of spring is exaggerated by the lack of human activity amid the danger of Covid-19. Only the redwing blackbirds and robins have made a return to their routine of preparations for nesting. The unusual solace helped me recall a time of youth at Big Birch Lake.

I grew up on a dairy farm across the road from Big Birch Lake in the 1950's and 60's. Early on I believed it was the best of both worlds. I had the freedom of living on a farm near a lake and the vicarious knowledge of those who lived in cities and came to the lake for summer residence.

The farm attracted every child along the north shore. They loved visiting to see the farm animals and watch the process of milking cows. I, likewise, enjoyed crossing the road to swim, boat and get involved in all sorts of creative summer play. At one time there were 11 of us "summer friends" who were near the same age. Many of our child handprints are in the cement retaining wall at board member Bob Hughes home.

Like all coming of age stories, we grew up, went our separate ways and for the most part few ever returned to Big Birch Lake other than an occasional visit. The last names of those summer kids were Hart, Thiss, DuFrene, and Root.

On the farm, the summer kids experienced the electric fence, being squirted with fresh milk from a cow's udder, throwing corn to the hogs, and the birth of calves, pigs, chickens and ducks.

On the lakeside, I enjoyed hours of

swimming and diving from a raft, going for rides in Dr. Hart's wooden Chris Craft inboard and with his sons' wild riding little woody Larson runabout, learning to waterski and surfboard. When we weren't in the water, board games and theater created by the older kids entertained everyone.

The Grey Eagle Commercial Club sponsored swimming lessons at the public beach on the North Shore in the 1940's, 50's and 60's. Janet Alderman, a certified Red Cross swim instructor



This majestic oak tree has stood on the North Shore of Big Birch Lake for generations. What stories it could tell of years gone by. Photo by Robert Kutter

taught lesson to area children for many years. There were four levels of abilities: beginners, intermediates, swimmers and junior life savers. By the time one made it to junior life saver, the number of participants was small, so we had the advantage of much individual instruction.

Fortunately, we were all raised in a setting teeming with the wondrous treasures of life at the lake. We had the free time to explore nature and learn the magic of our relationship to it.

Further down the North Shore beach



Kutter's Column

were summer cabins owned by families from Kansas: Snowden, Bolman, Jackson and Mize. Those families stayed for much of the summer and some brought with them their African American help or they hired local high school girls for live-in housework. They came to the farm to get fresh eggs and garden vegetables. Others from Kansas on the North

Shore were Brown and Hird.

Lake cabins did not have telephones in the early 1950's. If owners needed to make a call, they would go to the telephone office in Grey Eagle. If a call came into the telephone office for them, the local operator, Rose Harris, would call our house and my mother would send me running down the beach to inform residents of important phone calls. Harris was my Grandmother.

With few exceptions those cabins are gone now replaced with homes that could be occupied year around. Few places on the lake today hold the key to what life was like at the lake 70 years ago.

These memories are part of the power of storytelling from which we make meaning of the world. They are the stories we pass from generation to generation and reveal who we are in the civilization. Let us all remember to tell our families the

stories of our time at Big Birch Lake, record our memories in words, photos and videos so that future generations will understand what we experienced here at this place where heaven seems closer in a house beside the water.

Nests continued from page 1

is re-launching the Loon Watcher survey program for 2020 which will be the 40th year. What began modestly in 1979 with 56 volunteers on 73 lakes has grown to over 300 volunteers encompassing almost 400 Minnesota lakes.

In late fall, volunteer Jim Kleumpke will submit the required forms with a detailed map of upper and lower BBL where the nests are located, natural or platform nest, the total number of adult loons, chicks hatched and number of juvenile loons at the end of the season to the DNR nongame wildlife program in Brainerd.

Fishing/Wildlife Committee seeks ways to improve BBL walleye fishing

The BBLA Fishing/Wildlife Committee met in January with Eric Altena (DNR Fisheries Manager) to discuss what opportunities are available to improve the walleye fishing in BBL. Privately stocking fingerlings in the lake was something that Altena was open to as long as the walleye sampling numbers show a need.

The DNR just started a new strategy (electrofishing) last year on BBL to determine walleye sampling numbers, and those numbers are below expectations for two consecutive years in a row. The DNR will additionally stock fingerlings after that second year on top of the normal fry that are stocked every year. If the walleye sampling numbers are at or above expectations, then the DNR won't stock any fingerlings. Last fall the DNR stocked about 15,000 walleye fingerlings into BBL as the survey numbers were below the expected threshold level for 2018 and 2019.

Since the BBLA wants the DNR to continue to stock the fingerlings whenever possible; the fishing committee believes the BBLA should still raise funds for walleye fingerling stocking but only use the funds to stock during off years, when the DNR wouldn't stock fingerlings, if the walleye sampling for that year proves to be below expectations. Therefore, the BBLA may purchase fingerlings for some years and not for others.

The committee asked Altena about bait fish, and he said there are not a lot of large perch in BBL. Their maturity size has changed. Mature adults are now as small as 1.5 inches in many lakes across **Walleye fishing** *continues on page 5*

11th Annual BBL Clean Up Day

9 am to 12 noon, Sat., June 20, 2020 Lake Country Storage Parking Lot (intersection of Todd County 2 & 47) Provided by Tom's Refuse & Lake Country Storage

Miscellaneous junk, old appliances, etc. Individuals responsible for fees for large items. Call ahead for details 320-836-2206

No chemicals, paint or oils accepted.

Big Birch Lake Association Board of Directors

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Kevin Costello, V Pres.	Area C Director		320-249-0472
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The Big Birch Lake Newsletter is an official publication of the Big Birch Lake Association, Inc.

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Mission Statement: The purpose of the Big Birch Lake Association shall be to improve and protect water quality, to advance the propagation and habitat of fish and to protect the welfare of all wildlife in Big Birch Lake and adjacent areas.

Walleye fishing continued from page 4 the state. Adult perch, which are normally 6 inches and larger, are being eaten by larger fish causing a predation effect which causes the perch to spawn at an earlier age thus stunting their growth. The DNR's only suggestion is to reduce the number of northern pike.

According to Altena, bait fish are the most difficult to change without changing the influence of the largest predator. "Technically, if we influence the largest predator influence, we positively impact the forage. In this case the pike are one of the largest influences on perch and tullibee."

Walleye reproduce naturally in five feet or less of water on rocky and gravel shorelines. Big Birch has ample structure for reproduction but usually the water warms too quickly, and the eggs succumb to fungus and slime and don't hatch.

There is an abundance of northern in the lake, and Alterna encourages anglers to take northern that are less than 22 inches. The DNR could net and remove the northern but it is difficult to find a lake to take them.

A committee goal is to protect the walleye in the 16-inch size, but Altena said slot limits aren't as effective at bag limits. The 2020 legislature is looking at reducing the overall bag limit of walleye to four fish. Even if the legislature does not pass such legislation, a bag limit could be imposed on Big Birch.

Zebra mussels do impact walleye fishing. More clear water, increased vegetation and different nutrient cy-

Obituary continued from page 2 years, Bernie Waldorf; his six children, Jeanne (Dean) Peterson of Upsala, Paul (Barb) Waldorf of Oakdale, Sr. Bridget Waldorf, SSND of Dallas, TX, Renee (Jody) King of Albany, John (Katie) Waldorf of Sunrise, and David Waldorf of Sartell: grandchildren, Curt (Lisa) Peterson, Matt (Lauren) Peterson, Christy (Adam) Wehlage, Anna (Tyler) Wolbeck, Amy Waldorf, Greg Waldorf, Megan Waldorf, Elizabeth Waldorf, Joshua Waldorf, Joanna Waldorf, Benjamin Waldorf, Anthony King, Zacharv King, and Samantha King; greatgrandchildren, Jack, Rohan, Charlie, Luetta, Addie, Phoebe, Oliver, and Charles; and many other relatives. Memorials are preferred to Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life (MCCL).

BBLA Financial Report

Eab 20 20

	Feb 29, 20
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1005 · Checking-CMCU	1,334.30
1010 · Share Account-CMCU	35.90
1015 · My Goal Savings	1,606.54
1020 · Money Markey-CMCU	14,455.86
1050 · Cert of Deposit-12 Month #1	108,872.26
1055 · Cert of Deposit-12 Month #2	10,434.22
Total Checking/Savings	136,739.08
Other Current Assets	,
1080 · Initiative Foundation Fund	41,056.43
1499 · Undeposited Funds	755.00
Total Other Current Assets	41,811.43
Total Current Assets	178,550.51
Fixed Assets	
1200 · Building & Land	35,300.00
Total Fixed Assets	35,300.00
TOTAL ASSETS	213,850.51
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Long Term Liabilities	
2500 · Buffer Obligations-Strip Agreem	5,949.05
2550 · Reserve	
2551 · Aquatic-Invasive Species	100,000.00
2552 · Future Buffer Strips	14,495.72
Total 2550 · Reserve	114,495.72
Total Long Term Liabilities	120,444.77
Total Liabilities	120,444.77
Equity	
3990 · Unrestricted Net Assets	87,101.96
Net Income	6,303.78
Total Equity	93,405.74
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	213,850.51

cling does impact lower zooplankton which reduces the survival rate of stocked walleye.

On average only three percent of stocked fry survive compared with a 50 percent survival rate for fingerlings. The DNR stocked 15,000 fingerlings this past fall in Big Birch. The DNR does electrofishing to determine the walleye count in a lake. If it finds less than 30 walleye per hour of any year, it will stock fingerlings. If the count is over 30 per hour, it won't stock fingerlings in the fall but will stock fry in the spring. Altena is okay with the committee raising funds to stock BBL in years when the DNR does not stock fingerlings if electrofishing is less that 30 fish per hour. The DNR will perform a complete survey of BBL in 2022.

The permit to stock fish is free. The cost of fingerlings is in a range of \$15 to \$35 per pound. The lake has 642 literal acres, so the association can stock up to

1200 pounds of fingerlings. The ideal time to stock is in the fall when the water temperature is 45-55 degrees. The DNR will stock two million fry in the middle of the upper and lower basin and fingerlings in five different locations: Cow Point, Hunter's Bay, the state forest campground, St. Rosa access and the North Shore.

The sunfish family are over-achievers according to Altena when it comes to reproduction and survival to adulthood. Angler should not keep the largest in this family because they are the strength of reproduction.

Members of the Fishing/Wildlife Committee are Grant Niehaus (chair), Ralph Mehr, Barry Meyer, Steve Thelen, Peter Rutherford and Chuck Barth. The mission of the committee is to promote and improve the fisheries and habitat for wildlife in and around Big Birch Lake.

SPONSORSHIP AS OF MARCH 25TH 2020









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Thielen, Marvin & Judy
Thompson, Rod & Sally
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Tschida, Wayne & JoAnn Tweedale, Craig & Mary Lou

Uphoff, Jim & Lee

VanDrehle, Donald & Helen VanHavermaet, Paul & Amanda

Vener, Mike & Kim Viere, Kevin & Ann Waldvogel, Dennis Walker, Tom Walters George & Si

Walters, George & Sue Wander, Dave & Joan Warnert, Ron & Lee Meyer

Weber, Tom
Weitzel, John & Mary
Weitzel, Michael & Jean
Weitzel, Michele
Welle, Larry & Rose
Wiebolt, Bernard
Wolters, Ronald & Kathy
Zaborski, Tom & Julia
Zachman, Jeff & Linda

Zaczkowski, Marie Zenzen, Art & Marilyn Zimmer, Chris & Sarah Zimmerman, Lowell & Kris



PRSRT STD U.S. POSTAGE PAID MAILED FROM CODE 56352 PERMIT NO. 15



- SOCIAL HOUR AT 10 A.M. & BRUNCH AT 11 A.M. -

Loaded egg bake, fresh fruit, yogurt parfaits, donuts & coffee.

\$15 Gratuities & Taxes Included CASH BAR AVAILABLE

Please dress for outdoor patio Brunch is planned for patio and lower level area



Please use easy registration online **www.bigbirchlakeassociation.org** or make check payable to **Big Birch Lake Association**. Return registration with payment by **June 8th** to: Big Birch Lake Association P.O. Box 342

Grey Eagle, MN 56336

Enter name(s) of whom you are paying for:

Name:	_Name:
Name:	_Name:

FRIDAY JUNE 26, 2020 23RD ANNUAL BIG BIRCH LAKE

RESIDENTS GOLF OUTING

MEADOWLARK COUNTRY CLUB 837 COUNTRY CLUB DR, MELROSE, MN 56352

\$40 ENTRY FEE • MELROSE GOLF OUTING

Entry fee includes GOLF, CART and DINNER.

Burgers & brats at the turn.

DON'T WANT TO GOLF?

\$12 Entry fee includes
DINNER ONLY, NO GOLF &
is non-refundable for no-shows.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

12:30 pm Sign in

1:30 pm Tee off

5:30 pm Attitude Adjustment

6:00 pm Dinner

LIMIT 90 GOLFERS.

Please use easy registration online www.bigbirchlakeassociation.org or make check payable to Big Birch Lake Association.

Return registration & payment by **June 12th** to: Big Birch Lake Association P.O. Box 342

Grey Eagle, MN 56336

Please	indi	icate your	go	lfing abi	lity	for team balance:
A Very Good	٠	B Good	•	C Fair	•	D Golf a few times a year

Name:	\$40 Golf	□\$12 Dinner	Golf Ability
Name:	\$40 Golf	□\$12 Dinner	Golf Ability
Name:	\$40 Golf	□\$12 Dinner	Golf Ability
Name:	\$40 Golf	□\$12 Dinner	Golf Ability