

# Big Birch Lake Association NEWSLETTER



No . 153

January, 2024

## Walleye stocking joint venture of BBLA & DNR

By Grant Niehaus

The BBLA Fishing and Wildlife Committee will again be fundraising for walleye fingerling stocking in BBL this fall of 2024.

Recent surveys have indicated an increase in walleye numbers due to previous stocking efforts, but numbers are still below the DNR's goal.

Thus, the BBLA along with the DNR will stock a total of 1300lbs of walleye fingerlings in BBL (DNR will stock 650lbs and BBLA will stock 650lbs).

Please consider donating and encourage others who Walleye fish BBL to donate to this effort to help improve the Walleye fishery of BBL.

Donations can be made either on the BBLA website under the payment/donate portal in the Fishing/Wildlife Category or by mailing a check with "walleye stocking" in the memo line to :

Big Birch Lake Association  
(Attn: Walleye Stocking)  
PO Box 342  
Grey Eagle, MN 56336



### Calendar

BBLA Board Meeting

3/16/24

4/20/24

## New law regarding garbage on ice

By Grant Niehaus

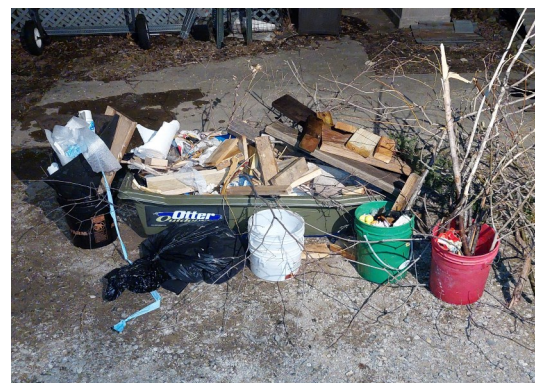
Trash pick up on the ice will happen later this winter/early spring. Keep an eye on Facebook on when this event will occur, and this is very dependent on the weather and ice conditions.

It is noted that a new "Litter Law" has been introduced this year for all Minnesota Lakes.

The new law states:

*"People using an ice shelter, vehicle, or other conveyance on the ice may not deposit "garbage, rubbish, cigarette filters, debris from fireworks, offal, the body of a dead animal, litter, sewage or any other waste outside the shelter, motor vehicle or conveyance, unless the material is placed in a container that is secured to the shelter, motor vehicle or conveyance,*

*and not placed directly on the ice or in state waters."* [www.KeepItCleanMN.org](http://www.KeepItCleanMN.org)



Garbage cleared from the ice in spring 2023.

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## BBLA Board of Directors

## BBLA Financial Report

Names	Areas	Phone
Kevin Costello, Pres.	Area C Director	480-250-3698
Matt Everding, V. Pres.	Area F Director	320-492-5902
Craig Tweedale, Treas.	Area J Director	608-317-6647
Jay Anderson	Area I Director	763-482-1926
Mark Erdmann	Area G Director	612-386-9254
Blake Johnson	Area D Director	612-910-3871
Deb Johnson	Director At Large	320-285-5833
Adrian Johnson	Area A Director	952-939-0939
Brandon Kelly	Area E Director	320-491-6107
Hans Mische	Director At Large	320-250-9002
Grant Niehaus	Director At Large	320-583-4939
Jeanne Niehaus	Director At Large	651-757-7475
Gary Rothstein	Area H Director	320-290-7818
Mike Sadlowsky	Director At Large	612-366-5494
Steve Thelen	Area B Director	320-309-9881

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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.**

## Obituary of lake resident

**Loanne Sorenson** of Arlington went to Heaven on October 31, 2023 after a short but, courageous battle with cancer. Loanne was totally at peace with her diagnosis and only expressed concern for her family, especially her 12 grandchildren, which is her legacy.

Loanne was born Loanne Jeanette Lee in Fosston, Minnesota on May 30, 1942. That being Memorial Day, the band marched right by the hospital!

She married Larry Sorenson of Bagley on September 15, 1962 and from this union came 3 children, Scott, Mark and Beth. Loanne loved her children and grandchildren and she was voted "Grandmother of the Year" every year. She particularly loved wildlife, especially birds, and wanted a lake presence for her family which she enjoyed for 44 years. It was a tradition for the entire family to gather at their home for every major holiday plus enjoy an annual Christmas outing.

Loanne was active in the Methodist Church and enjoyed the women's Bible Study for years as well as participating in adult Sunday School. She and Larry enjoyed God's Word together and were reading through the Bible for the 11th time.

She leaves to mourn, "but not as those who have no hope" (1st Thessalonians 4:13) her husband of 61 years Lar-

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

##### Checking/Savings

1006 · Checking -Stearns Bank	2,501.32	0.00
1060 · Certificate of Deposit	125,381.35	0.00
1005 · Checking-CMCU	958.84	1,803.97
1010 · Share Account-CMCU	35.90	35.90
1015 · My Goal Savings	0.00	400.62
1020 · Money Markey-CMCU	27,763.30	26,588.87
1050 · Cert of Deposit-12 Month #1	0.00	111,663.59
1055 · Cert of Deposit-12 Month #2	0.00	10,656.69

<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<b>156,640.71</b>	<b>151,149.64</b>
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#### Other Current Assets

1080 · Initiative Foundation Fund	44,744.39	42,745.25
1499 · Undeposited Funds	0.00	331.61

<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	<b>44,744.39</b>	<b>43,076.86</b>
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<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>201,385.10</b>	<b>194,226.50</b>
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#### Fixed Assets

1200 · Building & Land	35,300.00	35,300.00
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<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>35,300.00</b>	<b>35,300.00</b>
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### TOTAL ASSETS

<b>236,685.10</b>	<b>229,526.50</b>
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### LIABILITIES & EQUITY

#### Liabilities

##### Long Term Liabilities

##### 2550 · Reserve

2551 · Aquatic-Invasive Species	100,000.00	100,000.00
2552 · Future Buffer Strips	14,495.72	14,495.72

<b>Total 2550 · Reserve</b>	<b>114,495.72</b>	<b>114,495.72</b>
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<b>Total Long Term Liabilities</b>	<b>114,495.72</b>	<b>114,495.72</b>
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<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>114,495.72</b>	<b>114,495.72</b>
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#### Equity

3990 · Unrestricted Net Assets	134,031.55	133,848.96
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<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-11,842.17</b>	<b>-18,818.18</b>
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<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>122,189.38</b>	<b>115,030.78</b>
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<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>236,685.10</b>	<b>229,526.50</b>
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ry, her children Scott (Brenda), Mark (Lyndalou) and Beth, grandchildren Karissa (Phil), Rachel, Joshua, Marisa, Krysta (Bobby), Tyler, Nathan, Hannah, Stephen, David, Aaron (Katie) and Annika, great-grandchildren Timothy and Sienna and many beloved brothers and sisters-in-law.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Morris and Hulda Lee and her brother Norman.

God Bless her memory. Sorenson's owned property on BBL for 44 years.

# Savor the memories of summer during deep winter

## Summer memories of BBL are touchstones of childhood

We want winter to enter softly, gently, and easily, but we know better than to expect such a presentation in Minnesota. We were fooled completely in 2023 because it really didn't arrive until January 2024.

Wilfred Owen captures the entrance we would like but often don't get.

### *Winter Song*

*By Wilfred Owen*

The browns, the olives, and the yellows died,  
And were swept up to heaven; where they glowed  
Each dawn and set of sun till Christmas-tide,  
And when the land lay pale for them, pale-snowed,  
Fell back, and down the snow-drifts flamed and flowed.  
From off your face, into the winds of winter,  
The sun-brown and the summer-gold are blowing;  
But they shall gleam with spiritual glint,  
When paler beauty on your brows falls snowing,  
And through those snows my looks shall be soft-going.

I never imagined BBL would not ice over before the start of a new year. In 2015, ice-in was December 19, and I wondered what the next few years would bring. We nearly had ice coverage at the beginning of this past December, but mild El Nino dominated the remainder of the month. There was no significant snowfall either, so the air temperature was warmer as well.

Of course, we ask the questions, "Will this be the new normal?" "Has climate change impacted Central Minnesota to this extent?" Anyone who has been around for the past 75 years certainly notices the changes in the weather at Big Birch. Winters blend unless they are outstanding due to a blizzard such as those in 1965, (the St. Patrick's Day Blizzard) or 1975, (The Blizzard of the Century). Both are etched in my

memory because of where I was and what I was doing.

It is easier to recollect summers than winters because of the activities in and around open water. Swedish poet Harry Martinson said: "One never finishes with one's memory of summer. It keeps returning—no need to add to it. Summers go on creating poetry on their own. Our encounter with nature is an encounter with life, with what is."

Deep in the heart of winter, memories of summer's past mingle together. How many years ago did I purchase that boat? How hot did it get last summer? Remember the smoke from Canadian fires?

Unless we have photos of grandchildren to remind us, we lose track of what happened in what summer. Martinson suggested as much. Summers go on creating their own life, filled with (hopefully) accurate recollections.

Somehow memories from childhood and young adulthood stand out far more brilliantly than all others combined. Trying to stand on a rectangular piece of wood pulled by a small speed boat. How dangerous was that?

Pulling an old metal oversized canoe that broke loose from the boat pulling it and careened into a dock, causing minor injuries to the passengers. We heard about that misadventure from parents when we sought bandages.

Riding 55 mph through the channel on boat that barely touched the water, wondering if my face would ever return to its normal shape. Circumnavigating the lake on wooden water skis pulled by a 35-horse Evinrude, showoff skiing with one ski and then holding the rope with one foot.

Sailing with others on an evening when the wind died. Equipped with a small five-horse engine, the motor started right off. Unsecured to the sailboat, it pushed the sailboat forward, jumped off the back and sank when gravity pulled it under. (There is something very funny about seeing an unattached motor standing up in the water doing what it was designed to do.) Under the power of two swimmers, we pulled the sailboat to shore.



## Kutter's Column

In later years it was tubing, the knee board, which wasn't as much fun as it was promoted to be. The jet ski took over as the water toy, and while they are fun to ride, there are only so many turns and twists one can do before you realize the machines have limits.

Sailboards, kayaks, paddleboards, wakeboards, and wake skiing took over the later years of water entertainment. I wonder what will be next.

Collect all the toys you can to play in the water, but nothing beats getting in the water to get your feet wet, to gradually immerse the remainder of your body in a cool liquid that sends shivers across the skin until acclimated.

Dog paddle is usually the first learned swim stroke. With the help of swimming lessons, we learned to back float with the scissor kick and the frog kick. Then came the side stroke, the breaststroke, and the overhand crawl.

We swam under the watchful eye of parents except when we went in the water without their approval. One time I went alone and nearly drowned. A neighbor girl gave me crackers and cheese as I sat on the dock recovering and analyzing how I would explain my absence to my mother.

The neighbors had a stationary wood diving platform with a springboard. Knowing nothing about various types of dives, we made up our own names for whatever attempt we made to plunge into the water including the ubiquitous cannonball.

I was fortunate to have a dozen summer youth about the same age with whom to enjoy the many North Shore activities that made summers memorable.

With youth long past, I rest in the memories of growing up at Big Birch Lake. Having lived away from it for over 30 years, I appreciated it much more upon returning to it. I know heaven is closer in a house beside the water.



## MEMBERSHIP AS OF JUNE 2023

Althaus, Kurt & Lori	Flaws, Michael & Marilyn	Lafayette Resort	Rudolph, Jerry & Deb
Anderson, Chadyenne	Fox, Thomas & Laurie	Langer, Denise	Russell, Jim & Mindy
Anderson, Jean	Freeman, Dave & Sue	Larson, Brendan & Debi	Rutherford, Peter & Lourel
Anderson, Stephen & Lisa	Frerichs Frank, Jane	Larson, Maxwell & Brenda	Sadlowsky, Mike & Vicki
Anderson, Todd & Debbie	Froehling, Joseph	Lemieux, BJ & Rachel	Sand, Daniel & Mary
Atkinson, Dan & Jan	Fuchs, Brian & Lori	Lieder, William & Renee	Savage, William & Sharon
Atwood, Duane & Jody Miller	Gagne, Bob & Christine	Lind, James & Maryellen	Schanhaar, Tom & Deb
Auger, John & Karen	Gallagher, Pat & Caryn	Linn, Mike & Denise	Schiemann, Charles & Ellie
Austing, April	Gangl, Dale	Linz, Curtis & Mary	Schlough, Thomas & Joyce
Austing, Dick & Jane	Gasow, Ralph & Lori	Loehr, Jim & Renee	Schmid, Judith
Becker, Virginia	Gerads, Dale & Mary Lou	Logan, Guy & Suzanne	Schmid, Ted & Julie
Beckermann, Fran & Linda	Gerding, Dewayne & Alvina	Mack, Murray & Sue	Schmidt, Jane
Beekhuizen, Steven & Julie	Gerner, Robert & Charlene	Maeder, Niklas & Brandee	Schmidt, Thomas & Joann
Benning, Ken & Mary Pat	Gordon, Brian & Kristen	Malm, Scott	Schmit, Nicholas
Benolken, Sue	Goulet, Evan & Emily	Martland, Richard & Marge Anderson	Schnettler, John & Jan
Berg, Dwaine & Louise	Grossman, Jim & Jan	Matchinsky, James & Roselyn	Schraver, John & Lezlie
Berg, Ken & Bev	Gruenke Lake Cabin LLC	McConnell, David & Ann	Schwantes, Mike & Amy
Bergmann, Ken & Marilyn	Grutsch, John & Jan	Mehr, Mike & Lori	Schwartz, Dick & Ellen
Beuning, James & Judine	Hammerstrom, Malia	Mehr, Ralph & Mary Ann	Schwartz, Steve & Joann
Blommel Family	Hatton, Rene & LuAnn	Meyer, Barry	Schwieters, Charles & Beatrice
Blommel, Leroy & Marilynn	Hendrickson, David & Colette	Meyer, Glenn & Dianne	Seitzer, Jim & Belinda
Borgerding, Clarence	Hennemann, Kitty	Meyer, Juel	Sieben, Kevin & Beth
Braegelmann, Pat & Sandy	Hinman, John & Kathy	Meyer, Ken & Sherry	Silbernagel, John & Marie
Brandt, Richard & Judy	Hinnenkamp, Ben & Pam	Meyer, Virg & Joyce	Sinclair, James & Carolyn
Brattensborg, Ruth	Hoeschen, Larry & Elaine	Miley, Rod & Nancy	Sinclair, Ken & Jan
Brixius, Bernard	Hoffman, Dan & Janell	Mische, Hans & Julie	Spanier, Eric & Jana
Broman, Brad & Charlene	Hughes, Bob & Sally	Moening, Lee & Judy	Spears (Moening), Heather
Broman, Mark	Hughes, Parry & Kathy	Mohr, Marilyn	Spence, Jim & Christine
Broman, Raleigh & Ruth	Hughes, Tim & Kristine	Mohs, Dean & Sandy	Sschmall, Bruce
Brown, Becky	Humbert, Rick & Lois	Molitor, Chick & Karen	Stalboerger Family, Lorraine
Bullock, Lou & Debbie	Humbert, Ryan & Stacy	Molitor, Jon	Starfield, Glenn & Katy
Bushman, Wayne	Huseby, Robert & Christina	Moser, Helen	Steinbring, Brad
Bussmann Properties LLC	Ingold, Kirk & Mandi	Mueller, Jerry	Steinbring, John & Sandy
Butte, Rick	Ingold, Linnea	Nathe, Mike & Laura	Stomberg, Chuck & Nancy
Campbell, Mel & Sherry	Iverson, Ron & Jennifer	Neibling, Tim & Sue	Strack, Bob
Carpenter, Todd & Laura	Jacobs, Dave & Diane	Neville, Steve	Studniski, Adam & Jolene
Cash, Brian	Jacobsen, James & Marjorie	Niehaus, Anthony & Carol	Tanner, Lucy
Caspers, John & Allyson	Jansen, Jeff & Teri	Niehaus, Grant	Tembrock, Henry
Cavello, Butch & Amy	Jepperson, Craig & Mary	Niehaus, Jeanne	Thelen, Steve & Amy
Cebuhar, Charles & Mary	Jeske, Nancy	Niehaus, John & Mary	Thielen, Marvin & Judy
Chaput, Larry & Bradley Johnson	Johnson, Adrian & Kay	Nohner, Kevin & Mary	Timmermann, John
Chirhart, Penny	Johnson, Blake	Nohner-Black, John	Tomsche, David & Molly
Chmielewski, Daniel & Barb	Johnson, Craig & Debra	Orth, David & Linda	Tomsche, Dr. Ed
Claussen, Kim	Johnson, Dan & Julie	Osendorf, Phil & Gail	Trierweiler, Corey
Collins, Jim & Crystal	Kadri, Abdu & Janice	Ostendorf, Lenore	Tschida, Wayne & JoAnn
Collins, Joyce	Kalgren, Rick & Ann	Ostendorf, Mark & Lisa	Tweedale, Craig & Mary Lou
Collins, Margaret	Kappes, Mike & Jannie	Pakola, Howard & Barb	Uphoff, Jim & Lee
Comfort, Jeff & Julie	Kelly, Brandon & Becky	Patch, Bruce & Johanna	Van Beck, Chad & Brenda
Costello, Kevin & Ann	Kemper, Jeff & Linda	Pavlivek, John & Kathryn	VanDrehle, Donald & Helen
Coulson, Brad & Jane	Kerfeld, Art & Rosie	Pelo, Rod & Phyllis	Vener, John & Corinne
Damrow, Paul & June	Kerfeld, Cheryl	Peterson, Dr Thomas & Virginia	Vener, Mike & Kim
Davis, Scott & Marjo	Kerfeld, Glenn	Phillips, Rev Roger & Rosemary	Voigt, Kenneth & Joan Zirbes-Voigt
Denne, Marv & Mary Beth	Klaphake, Deb	Piersak, Jeff & Kim	Von Wahlde, Cody
Dickhaus, Kristine	Klaphake, Florian & Doreen	Piersak, Thomas	Waldorf, Bernadine
Dinndorf, Don & Vi	Klapperich, John & Suzy	Pladson, Dr & Mrs Terence	Waldvogel, Dennis
Dobesh, Jeff & Jill	Klasen, Kyle	Plombon, Roger & Gloria	Walker, Tom
Dougherty, Tim	Klasen, Vern & Marlene	Poganski, Rock & Marcia	Walters, George & Sue
Dubiel, Marvin & Pam	Klocker, Barbara	Powers, Robert & Kathleen	Wander, Dave & Joan
Duevel, Jerome & Kim	Kloos, Mike & Becky	Provinzino, Chuck & Jannine	Ward, Melissa
Duncomb, Bruce & Vicki	Kluempke, Jim & Cathy	Pundsack, Craig & Lisa	Warnert, Ron & Lee Meyer
Elfering Family, Evelyn	Koch, Bob & Connie	Rahn, Dave & Lisa	Weber, Thomas
Elieff, Daniel & Julie	Kohorst, Don & Loni, Bob & Joan	Rasmussen, Steve	Weinman, Roger & Constance
Enneking, Gene & Cheryl	Konsor, Stephen & Karen	Refsland, Curt & Mary	Weitzel, John & Mary
Erdmann, Mark & Summer	Kotsmith, Randy & Karen	Rieger, Joel & Pamela	Weitzel, Michele
Erickson, Russell	Kotsmith, Terry & Sharon	Rieland, Chuck & Lucy	Welle, Larry & Rose
Ersland, Mary Kay	Kuehne, Robert	Rieland, Matt & Shari	Wendt, Connie
Everding, Matt & Missy Kotzer	Kuehne, Ron & Midge	Rieland, Mike & Mary	Westbrock, Bruce
Eveslage, Steve & Sarah	Kunkel, Phil & Rose	Rieland, Shirley	Worms, Steven & Shirley
Falk, Jeremy & Jennifer	Kutter, Robert & Nancy	Roe, John & Janet	Zaborski, Tom & Julia
First, Pete & Nicole	Kutter, Wayne & Sherry	Rothstein, Gary & Ruth	Zachman, Jeff & Linda
Fischer, Pete & Barbara	Kyllo, Carole	Roy, Robert & Barbara	Zackoski, Michael & Kimberly
			Zaczkowski, Marie
			Zehrer, Kenneth & Pam
			Zenzen, Art & Marilyn
			Zimmerman, Lowell & Kris

## SPONSORSHIP AS OF JUNE 27<sup>TH</sup> 2023



### PLATINUM

Opatz Metals & Rolloffs . . . . .	Holdingford
Kutter Agency Inc. . . . .	Grey Eagle
Magnifi Financial - GE . . . . .	Grey Eagle



### GOLD

Freeport State Bank . . . . .	Melrose
Rahns Oil & Propane. . . . .	Melrose
Spiritiz Liquor . . . . .	Melrose



### SILVER

Pooch's Corner Pub . . . . .	Freeport
Double R Saloon Inc . . . . .	Grey Eagle
Central MN Realty-Brandon Kelly . . . . .	Grey Eagle
Hinman Lawn Service. . . . .	Grey Eagle
Neville Hardware . . . . .	Grey Eagle
Guy Waymore's Musc Emporium . . . . .	Grey Eagle
Lake Country Storage LLC. . . . .	Grey Eagle
Kraemer Lumber Co Inc . . . . .	Melrose
Meadowlark Country Club. . . . .	Melrose
Munson Feed Co Inc. . . . .	Melrose
Kemper Excavating . . . . .	Melrose
North Risk Partners . . . . .	Melrose
Proliant Dairy Inc. . . . .	Melrose
Melrose Plumbing & Heating Services Inc . . . . .	Melrose
Main Street Title & Closings LLC . . . . .	Sauk Centre



### BRONZE

Shattuck's Hub Supper Club . . . . .	Burtrum
Hennen Lumber Co Inc. . . . .	Freeport
Hennen Floor Covering Inc . . . . .	Freeport
Nancy's Bait & Tackle . . . . .	Grey Eagle
Update Buiding Supplies, LLC . . . . .	Grey Eagle
Engelmeyer Land Services LLC . . . . .	Melrose
Mayers Inc. . . . .	Melrose
Econ-O-Wash Laundromats . . . . .	Melrose
Melrose Bakery . . . . .	Melrose
Dan Schmidt Printing Inc . . . . .	Melrose
Grey Eagle Gas & Grocery-Sinclair . . . . .	Melrose
Melrose 1 Stop-Sinclair . . . . .	Melrose
Tim Kampsen Agency . . . . .	Sauk Centre
Centre Powersports & Marine. . . . .	Sauk Centre
Hoffman Tree Service . . . . .	Sauk Centre
All Stars Sports Bar & Grill . . . . .	St Rose

THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS [bigbirchlakeassociation.org](http://bigbirchlakeassociation.org)



## Maintain duck housing

By Grant Niehaus

Wood duck houses/mallard tubes will be maintained sometime in February/March.

Keep an eye out for the April newsletter to see how many houses had a successful hatch in 2023.

For those who have wood duck houses on your property, it is recommended that you clean the house out and install fresh wood shavings (animal) bedding prior to the spring thaw, as ducks won't nest in a house that has used bedding. This animal bedding can be purchased at your local Ag/Farm and Fleet Stores.

## Association establishes new buffer contracts

By Grant Niehaus

An updated buffer contract was established with the three farmers that the BBLA previously had buffer contracts with along Adley Creek (Fish Creek).

Under this new contract, The BBLA is no longer paying for the portion of buffers that are adjacent to Adley Creek as this falls under the state buffer law.

For the remaining buffers that do not fall within the state buffer law, we were able to renegotiate contracts with the farmers to keep these buffers but at a reduced rate of \$250 per acre.

## Weed removal stations well received

By Grant Niehaus

Feedback from the weed removal stations at the DNR public access that were installed this past spring has been very positive.

The BBLA will continue to maintain and look at adding additional tools to these stations in 2024 to better help boaters remove all aquatic weeds/algae from their boats and trailers prior to entering and leaving BBL.

The photo to the right is from one of the three weed removal stations on BBL.

Other than zebra mussels, no new invasive species has been introduced into the lake since 2014. The BBLA wants to keep it that way, and this is one little step in the process to keep the lake from additional unwanted species.

## Volunteer work appreciated

By Grant Niehaus

I thank all of the volunteers who have helped in 2023 with all of the Fishing/Wildlife and Water Quality projects this past year.

These projects include, road ditch trash pick up, trash pick up on the ice, wood duck/mallard house maintenance, ortho phosphorous water sampling, Secchi disk sampling, loon nests, buffer strips, and public access weed checkers.

Your dedication and hard work to improve the lake is much appreciated.

For those looking to volunteer for 2024, we do have some openings for water sampling and taking Secchi readings. If you are interested, please call Grant Niehaus at 320-583-4939.

## Be well informed about laws before deciding to build on BBL property

The Todd County Planning and Zoning Ordinance has strict standards for building in unincorporated Todd County.

Lakeshore owners may request variances from the Ordinance in instances where a practical difficulty exists.

Common variance requests are those that attempt to reduce a building setback from the ordinary high water level of a lake such as going from 100 feet to 80 feet.

The variance process has multiple steps including application fees, septic system compliance, public hearing for requested variance before the Board of Adjustment.

Before considering building on a Big Birch Lake lot, be sure to contact the planning and zoning office of the county.

Membership and sponsor renewal forms were mailed in December.

A refreshed mailer list for all lake property owners supplied by Todd and Stearns Counties was used, so some may have received duplicates.

Membership forms were also mailed to current members who may not be property owners.

This is another reminder to submit your membership dues in order to be listed in the April newsletter.

## Association considers kiosks at landings for additional messaging to lake users

The BBLA is considering constructing kiosks at each of the three lake accesses: North Bay, state forest campground and Hunter's Bay, with the approval of the DNR.

The kiosks have been successfully used in Park Rapids area lakes. The BBLA would use them to get the word out on numerous subjects in one display.

1. Information on AIS with photos, proper boat cleaning, etc.
2. Fisheries- keeping all allowed north-erns to improve the fishery.
3. Membership- encourage people to join the association and help protect the lake.
4. Loon Watch- educate on loon safety in the spring with new hatches.

Each kiosk would cost approximately \$400 for materials.

There is always a natural draw to these displays and surely it is good PR for the association.

The BBLA spends thousands of dollars getting the word out to our members, which is great, but it doesn't have a medium to reach the other people who use the lake. This would get the word out on numerous subjects in one display.

Todd County is willing to do cost share.



# Determine when Big Birch Lake is iced in

By Robert Kutter

When will we call ice over this winter? Well, that was the mystery many lake watchers were speculating about as 2023 drew to a close. The curious and anxious fishers pull into the North Shore access to check on the ice regularly. At the writing of this newsletter, there is not ice-in.

It will be the first time the ice didn't form until the new year in anyone's memory.

Have you wondered how the BBLA determines when the lake is ice covered? For many years we have used this formula provided by the climatology office at the DNR.

"The definition of lake ice-in can vary from lake to lake. For the citizen observers reporting data, ice-in occurs

when the entire lake is frozen over and the ice cover remains through winter.

Sometimes waterfowl, fish or springs keep a small area of a particular lake open so sometimes 90 percent can be a good guide.

"This will be an odd year, and I can see lakes reopening. Many froze over on November 28-29 but not all." Pete Boulay Climatologist | MNDNR Ecological and Water Resources.

There are many groups around the lake who take bets on when the ice will go out. Will they now start betting on when it will come in?

The latest ice cover in the past 19 years was December 19, 2015.

## Big Birch Lake Ice-over Dates

2023	None
2022	December 4
2021	December 7
2020	December 15
2019	December 2
2018	November 20
2017	December 7
2016	December 10
2015	December 19
2014	November 21
2013	November 27
2012	December 10
2011	December 6
2010	November 27
2009	December 10
2008	December 7
2007	December 1
2006	December 1
2005	November 30
2004	December 14
2003	November 29

## Lindbergh visits Sandy Beach in 1935

By Robert Kutter

The Minneapolis Star Tribune Newspaper allows subscribers a few days at the end of the year to search its archives.

This year I sought information about Big Birch Lake. As one might guess nearly all references to the lake are made in property advertisements; however, I came across this story from August 1, 1935, about Charles Lindbergh.

Lindbergh disappeared from St. Paul evading reporters and crowds that gathered at his hotel to get a glimpse of him.

He slipped away in a car to drop in at Big Birch Lake to visit his aunt, Mrs. Lida A. Seal, who was the post mistress at Melrose.

The day before the car trip he flew to Melrose in his plane, circled Melrose for about 20 minutes and could not find a suitable place to land. So, he flew back to St. Paul and spent the night and then traveled by car.

He spent Sunday at Sandy Beach, Big Birch Lake with his wife and his aunt. He took a swim, and got a good Minnesota sunburn according to the report.

## Winter good time to plan shoreline buffer

By Robert Kutter

Many of us know by now that a shoreline buffer can greatly help to preserve and enhance a lake's water quality. It can filter the runoff and prevent shore erosion.

The BBLA has been encouraging property owners to protect water quality with natural shorelines for many years. (Remember the Friends of the Lake award given to property owners who made efforts to naturalize shorelines.)

Natural shorelines cost less to maintain, adapt better to changes in precipitation and lake levels and provide beauty and privacy.

Much of the shoreline of BBL has a natural landscape that has been there since the lake was formed 10,000 years ago.

Some property owners in the past brought their suburban green lawn mentality to the lake and poured chemical on the lawn to establish that perfect carpet of green.

They got the lawn they wanted but it wasn't good for the water in the lake. Shifting social norms are moving away from that to growing a more natural shore.

Over half of Minnesota's 11,843 lakes are impaired due to runoff as people have built around lakes and put in streets and driveways made of impervious surfaces.

I have planted many of these native plants on my shoreline. One has to get accustomed to the appearance. The property won't have the green trimmed perfec-

tion seen in suburban lawns but will look more colorful with a mixture of grasses and native plants.

BBLA Board member, Deb Johnson, has a rain garden on her property that has been in place for several years. It gathers runoff closer to its origin rather than running over many feet before it washes down hill into the lake.

The variety of plants in the garden bloom at different times of the year. This past summer, one of the driest in recent memory, produced less bloom but natural habitat always responds to the conditions and adjust accordingly.

Winter is a good time to plan your shoreline buffer. Start small, study the myriad of online resources and begin to improve the water of BBL in one more small way.



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**Winter scenes from Big Birch Lake. The trumpeter swans still inhabit the area in the new year.  
Photos by Kevin Kutter**