No Place Like Sugar Bush: The Great Outdoors, Conservation, Local Involvement, and the Feeling of Relevance

by Jimmy Olsen

In almost any other time, we might consider the last few years a golden era for Big Sugar Bush residents. “The Big Sugar Bush Notes” chronicled the stories and joys of life in the and around the “Bush”, the Lake Association has enjoyed good participation and involvement while promoting the general health, care, and well-being of the lake and its residents. The wildlife, waterfowl, fisheries, and overall water quality of Big Sugar Bush is among the best in the area. And, of course, those residing in and around Big Sugar Bush have demonstrated their commitment to their neighbors, respect for their property, and the land and water of Big Sugar Bush, treating it all as they would their own.

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The Redear Sunfish: They don’t call it the “Shellcracker” for nothing

by Jimmy Olsen

I had always assumed that some of our Big Sugar Bush summer residents travel to Arizona in the winter to bask in the sun, play golf, and otherwise relax in the warmth – while the rest of us freeze “up north”. But now it seems there may be a new motivation. Could it be they are after the giant sunfish of Arizona? Check out this headline:

Possible World-Record Redear Sunfish Caught in Arizona – Field and Stream, February 21, 2014

Yes, on February 17, 2014, Hector Brito, caught a pending world record redear sunfish weighing 5.78 pounds and measuring 17 inches long, in Lake Havasu, Arizona. How? Well on a drop-shot rig using a worm, of course. Take a look at the photo (Figure 1) – looks almost like a bluegill doesn’t it. Apparently, their “red ear” actually turns blue after a few years.

So, we might ask, what about us at Big Sugar Bush? Can we catch one of those redear sunfish in our neck of the woods? Not likely, since there does not appear to be any redear sunfish in our lake (they are native to the Southeastern U.S – but have been stocked elsewhere). The DNR lake information report for our lake records the following panfish (besides Crappie): Bluegill,
While many of us are up north to “get away from it all”, we still see folks engaged in our community, feeling they can make a difference. This engagement is not limited to just the lake, but to the community as a whole. Involvement does much to promote an overall feeling of relevance in us – be it through individual actions, our lake association, the Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA), the Sugar Bush Township, Becker County, local churches, Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, volunteer events in the Detroit Lakes area, supporting neighboring resorts and businesses, or just being neighborly.

Recognizing that the “golden era” of real wilderness in and around Sugar Bush is long gone, it still gives us a sense of purpose to preserve what we can for now and for the future. However, we also recognize the reality that our lake is experiencing increased pressure to accommodate changing recreational use, and the goal to voluntarily balance lake use and purposes. For example, some recent popular activities such as kayaking, and water boarding show how recreation use and experiencing nature can co-exist beneficially.

One of our biggest challenges of this “era” is the prevention of invasive species in our lake and surrounding lakes, rivers, and sloughs. Again, our community has been proactive and acted with a sense of purpose, in this regard. While some may have resigned to themselves that the spread of invasive species is inevitable, we remain committed to vigilance in educating and supervising ourselves, occasional lake users and guests on the proper precautions to guard against inadvertent introduction of invasive species.

So it can be said that the “Big Sugar Busher” is not one to stand idly by – yet ironically, one of the primary motivations for this is that we want to be able to enjoy some “idle time” in the north country of lakes and woods. Many of us also spend time residing in the urban world, where civic disengagement and a collective sense that ordinary people can’t influence their community is more prevalent. We know that not to be true in our lake community, and that is one of the key reasons we say – there is no place like Big Sugar Bush.

Notice to Eagle Watchers

By Dean Bellefeuille

Jim Jasken passed along a story from the MN Department of Natural Resources regarding the eagle cam.

The DNR is now streaming live video of a nesting pair of bald eagles, in the twin cities metro area, on its website at [www.webcams.dnr.state.mn.us/eagle](http://www.webcams.dnr.state.mn.us/eagle).

DNR biologists believe it’s the same pair of birds that used the nest last year, but their eggs failed to hatch, probably because they were laid too early and froze. This year, the birds have laid two eggs.

Let’s hope for a successful hatch.

Eagle Nest as of March 15, 2014
Pumpkinseed, and Hybrid Sunfish. However, some lake residents have identified, recorded, weighed, and confirmed catches of Green Sunfish (some over 1 pound). (Figures 2 through 4)

What in the world did that beast of a reedear sunfish eat to get so big? Would you believe invasive species? Well apparently. It is thought that Redears have been getting exceptionally large during the past four years the lake has been infested with the invasive quagga mussels. Quagga and zebra mussels are two closely related types of dreissenid mussels (they are both “invasive species”). Crawdads eat quagga mussels, which could be another reason for the enlarged Redear. It is currently believed reedear sunfish eat quaggas, although this hasn't been proven. This sunfish meanders along the bottom of lakebeds seeking and cracking open snails and other shelled creatures with its thick, pharyngeal teeth and hard, movable plates in its throat that allow it to crunch exoskeletons. Hence their nickname – “shellcrackers”.

While most discussion in Minnesota references zebra mussels, it is reported that quagga mussels have become the dominant invasive mussel in the upper great lakes since around 2010. Also, while zebra mussels rely on attaching to hard surfaces such as rocks, and other hard structures – quagga mussels can thrive in soft sand or silt bottoms. Both types are a big problem if they enter any lake or water system.

But don’t expect the Minnesota DNR to be stocking reedear sunfish in Minnesota lakes anytime soon as an invasive mussel remediation plan, however. Redear sunfish introduction can have negative impacts on the lake ecosystem to include direct impacts on invertebrates and indirect impacts on vegetation, and impacts on fisheries and forage such as reduced consumption of snails and reduced population densities of Pumpkinseed (Huckins 1997).

It is interesting to note that Redear, and to a lesser extent Pumpkinseed, are the only known morphologically and behaviorally specialized molluscivores in the sunfish family [meaning they feed on snails and other hard shelled organisms because of their unique teeth structure] (Huckins et al. 2000). The ability of these sunfish to crush hard-shelled organisms provides a set of food resources that are less effectively used by other sunfishes, facilitating cohabitation with other sport fish such as bluegill and bass (VanderKooy et al. 2000).

Anyway, be that as it may, let’s work to keep Big Sugar Bush free from invasive species. And that being said, the field is still wide open at Big Sugar Bush for the adventurous angler to get on out there and attempt to set a local record for a giant sunfish or bluegill on Big Sugar Bush. But if you do – I suggest you don’t tell anyone about it.
Figure 3 Pumpkinseed

Figure 4 Green sunfish

Figure 5 Quagga and Zebra Mussel
Winter Fishing
By Dean Bellefeuille

Access to the lake was tough, and conditions were cold, resulting in fewer fishermen than in the past. Results were poor in our shanty, but two young anglers shared success.

Michael Kraimer (left), Mack Bellefeuille

Fall Potluck

Dave and Mary Mueller opened their home to all of us again last fall. Their fried fish, tender pork, and hospitality are second to none. The contributions by all along with the camaraderie were great. (photographs to the left)

This is why we like Big Sugar Bush! September 30 from the Mueller’s dock.
Septic Maintenance

Here are some suggestions from the Environmental Pollution Agency to maintain and protect your septic system.

Do's:
- Have your system inspected every three years by a professional, and have the tank pumped every 3 to 5 years.
- Eliminate or limit use of a garbage disposal.
- Properly dispose of coffee grounds and food.
- Discard of grease in the garbage.
- Dispose of non-degradable products in the trash.
- Consult a septic professional to advise you on proper planting distances from your tank and field.
- Stagger the use of water generating appliances.
- Become more water efficient by fixing plumbing leaks and installing faucet aerators.

Do Not's
- Pour grease or oil down the sink or toilet.
- Rinse coffee grounds down the sink.
- Pour household chemicals down the sink or toilet.
- Flush non-degradable products or chemicals, such as feminine hygiene products, dental floss, diapers, cigarette butts, cat litter, and pharmaceuticals.
- Park or drive on your drain field.
- Plant trees or shrubs too close to your drain field.
- Concentrate your water use by using your dishwasher, shower, washing machine and toilet at the same time.

Attention Property Owners:

Zebra mussels, an aquatic invasive species (AIS), continue to spread in Minn. Over 60 lakes have already been infested. The closest lakes are Pelican, Lida, and Lizzy. The spread is caused by boats and other water craft that move from lake to lake. Additional signage and periodic inspection at our lake access is again planned for this year. As residents of Big Sugar Bush, it is important that family and friends who bring watercraft to the lake be familiar with the law. Any watercraft coming from infested waters must be decontaminated. Home owners who rent their property must also inform renters of the laws and need to bring only AIS free watercraft to the lake. If anyone would like information concerning AIS, please give me a call Ken Mattson-Cola Representative at 218-983-3173.
boat landing practices
Robert Backman, River Keepers, www.riverkeepers.org

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds boaters using public accesses to check ramp conditions before launching any boat and to refrain from “power loading.”

Power loading is a phrase that describes using the motor thrust to load and unload a boat onto and off a trailer. The method is dangerous and can damage boats.

Instead of power loading, boaters are encouraged to use a winch to load and unload a boat.

Power loading creates blow holes and prop mounds when sediment, gravel and sometimes large rocks are blown beyond the ramp. Power loading can also cause damage to launch ramps that may not be visible from the surface of the water. Erosion under the concrete ramps and dock wheels can cause them to become uneven and, in some cases, fall into the blow holes.

The practice can also lead to expensive boat motor and trailer repairs. Motors can incur damage if the boat or lower unit runs aground on the mound. At shallow accesses, boat trailer frames can get hung up when trailers are backed off the end of the concrete ramp into the blow outs. Smaller vehicles may be unable to get the trailer out.

“We recommend that before launching, boaters look beyond the ramp for shallow water caused by prop mounds and ensure the water is deep enough for the boat and motor,” said Dave Schotzko, DNR northwest region Parks and Trails Division supervisor. “This is especially important for those with larger boats and pontoons.”

The DNR Parks and Trails Division manages about 3,000 public boat accesses statewide. DNR crews stay busy in the summer maintaining public water accesses. The added tasks of removing prop mounds and repairing docks and ramps become expensive and time consuming, making it impossible to level every boat landing to accommodate all sizes of boats at every lake. These repairs also take funding and time away from efforts that could be spent on other improvements.

To view a video on power loading, visit dnr.state.mn.us/water_access/powerloading. For more information on boating and boat accesses, visit dnr.state.mn.us/boating or contact the DNR Information Center at info.dnr@state.mn.us or 651-296-6157, toll-free at 888-646-6367 between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

My Last Winter’s Walk
By Kimberley Grandbois

As I take a walk down Sugar Creek Road today there is a breeze but not enough to require a hat. The smell of fresh air is liberating! The earth peeks out beneath the snow and slush as tomorrow is the first day of spring. The crunching sound of my boots on the road dominates the sound of the forest warning the inhabitants of my presence. They seem not to mind.

Numerous squirrels run animated at the prospect of finding food chattering all the while bringing laughter to my heart. Various birds, which I have yet to identify, caw and tweet to each other. The sounds kick up childhood memories when I played outside all day unaware of how precious nature really is.

Standing still, taking in the beauty of my new home, I listen to the non-rhythmic pitter patter of melting snow. God’s winter blanket ever filling our lake. What a blessing it has been finding our new home.............
Back to the 50’s
By Dean Leitheiser

When I was a very young Lad, I would ride up to the lake with my dad in the late night, and sometimes very cold, to service the generators at the Dreasbach’s Resort. They were of the Kohler brand, and generated 32 volt power. This was before REA power. Those trips and my time at the resort made me very fond of the lake, and the beautiful scenery surrounding it. The ladies name was Fern as I remember, and she always had something for us boys. In the summers, when the generators would quit, we would swim in the lake while dad worked.

I told myself one day I would love to have a place on the lake. Well growing older Kermit Jordet worked for my dad, and once again I enjoyed the lake at his resort. I continued to enjoy the lake even more as Ken and Kyle came along. These two young one’s also worked for us at our family business, thus keeping me going back to the lake for years.

Then in 1988 we began looking for a place and maybe on BSB. We heard of a few placed and checked them out. The first was too low with flooding even during that dry year, but we found the right one later that fall. It was really high, but no flooding! We signed the papers and it was a done deal. The kids gave up Disney World for a lake place. The work started, clearing, mowing, but not without fun. We enjoyed campfires, fishing, a boat, dock, lift, even a pontoon. My 3 year old adopted son would not come off the dock, only maybe to go fishing on the pontoon. We were up from 6 A.M. until the last call of the loons. This was the life in the golden years.

Membership
By Dean Bellefeuille

The board made the decision to mail an annual dues request. This was done to increase membership, simplify the collection, and to manage a budget.

Membership now includes 88% of owners, with 76 members for the 86 addresses on our lake. This is an increase of 23% from our prior year. Congratulations and thank you for your membership!

BOAT PARADE
By Diane Becker

Believe it or Not....

This cold weather will come to an end…
The sun will come out…
The temps will rise…
The ice will melt…
The boats will once again appear on BSB, and they will gather in the Public Access Bay on Friday, July 4th at 2:00 pm for The 2014 Annual BSB Lake 4th of July Boat Parade!

Save the date and join in the fun! Door prizes will be awarded! This event is sponsored by the BSB Lake Association
The inspiration for this recipe comes from Nathan Jorgenson’s novel Waiting for White Horses. The story is anchored in Minnesota’s Lake Country, and the characters, landscape, and north country dialogue will be familiar to any resident of Big Sugar Bush. The plot, inventive and tightly knit, follows Grant Thorson on a movingly human journey through love, friendship, family, loss, grief, and finally to hope and redemption. Through it all, duck hunting runs as a persistent motif that connects events, binds characters together, or separates them, and serves as a reservoir for the novel’s values. This novel’s horizons are too broad for it to qualify as a mere hunting story, and no reader need be a duck hunter to enjoy it. If one should happen to be a duck hunter, however, Jorgenson’s story is even more certain to please. There is even some hunt camp cookery in it.

Spider Lake Roast Duck

This recipe is for a single whole duck, cleanly plucked and drawn. A large mallard will feed two diners. If you are feeding a crowd, choose smaller ducks, plan for one per person, and wrap each in its own packet as described below.

Begin by preparing a piece of heavy aluminum foil large enough to seal the whole duck in a double layer. Season the bird’s cavity with salt and pepper, and then stuff it loosely with chunks of onion and apple or orange. The stuffing is not to be eaten; its purpose is to add additional flavor and to provide moisture during the long roasting period.

Now salt the outside of the duck fairly liberally and place it breast side down on the foil. Draw the sides of the foil up and fold them into a neat double seam. Then seal the ends of the packet, leaving the seams pointed slightly upward to prevent leakage. Place the packet on a sheet pan, again to avoid leakage, and the duck is ready for the oven.

Long, slow cooking is the secret here, so allow four hours for the whole process. Start the duck in a 350 degree oven, but turn it down to 300 after the first 30 minutes.

Half an hour before serving, remove the pan from the oven, allow it to cool for a few minutes, and then carefully unseal the top seam. The bird should be tender and quite ready to eat now. It will be more attractive, however, and even more delicious, if you turn it breast-side-up, brush it with a glaze, and return it to the oven for a few minutes.

The glaze can be anything from prepared teriyaki sauce to a homemade mixture of white wine (2 Tbsp.), soy sauce (1 Tbsp.) and enough apricot jam or marmalade to make a smooth sauce. Spread the foil back, brush the breast and legs with the glaze, return it to a hot oven for a few minutes--and watch it carefully. The glaze will burn quickly if you turn on the broiler.

The result you want is a bird with crisp, salty-sweet skin over dark, meltingly tender flesh. There will be no gravy, so serve it with a wild rice casserole, braised Brussels sprouts, a green salad, and loaf of crusty bread.
It's "Do or Die" for Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Research Center

The future health of Minnesota’s iconic lakes and rivers may well depend on passage of this year’s bonding bill. The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center at the University of Minnesota, (MAISRC) will be unable to continue without the funding to build a secure lab. “It is do or die,” said Dr. Sorenson at the February meeting of the Statewide AIS advisory Committee. Without additional funding, MAISC will have to close before it really gets started. Said Dr. Sorenson, "Our Center’s request for an AIS and holding lab, via the University bonding bill, is essential to our continued existence."

The "lab" at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Research Center, (MAISRC) is currently housed in a turn-of-the-century tractor barn. →

The University of Minnesota has included funding for renovations of the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center as part of its $12 million Capital Request for the Laboratory Improvement Fund ($8 million state investment is needed to match $4 million in University funding). If the request is met, $6 million would be used to update the MAISRC’s Central Research and Holding Facility, which is currently housed in a tractor garage built in 1911 and must be updated to become functional. For instance, the flow of water through MAISRC is only 8 gallons per minute, far too low to provide the lab. In addition MAISRC has insufficient effluent screening or filtration and so cannot safely study zebra mussels, invasive plants, diseases and mature Asian carp.

Two years ago the MN Legislature invested one-time funds to begin to get MAISRD programs and staff in place, but failed to invest in the Center’s infrastructure and ongoing needs. Without additional funds the MAISRC will run out of money in the next few years, still without an adequate lab.

Action Needed:  Ask your Legislators to support the University of Minnesota Capital Request for the Laboratory Improvement Fund. Go to mnlakesandrivers.org for more information or to join.
Dean McBride
By Kent Anderson

We would drive in on North Sugarbush Heights, and park at the top of Sugar Hill Drive. All our gear was packed into tub sleds, and pulled behind us as we cross country skied to the cabin. This was a typical winter weekend with Dean McBride and family on Big Sugarbush. One winter the snow cover was not as heavy so Dean decided to drive the Oldsmobile Station wagon in. Dean drove down Sugar Hill Drive and stopped to open the “private drive” gate. For those of you not familiar with this road, after the private drive gate, the road curves to the right followed by a long hill up to the 1st driveway, the McBride’s. Out of the gate, Dean drove the Oldsmobile around the curve gaining speed to carry us up the hill; the rear of the station wagon was drifting around the corner as we climbed the hill up to the driveway. Dean laughing along the way, without a doubt he would make it up the hill. As a kid this did not seem all that extraordinary, but as an adult whose 4wd pickup has gotten stuck on this very road I am in awe. I think of Dean every time I attempt this winter drive. Winter was a blast at the McBride’s Cabin. Dean stoked the fire; it would be so warm upstairs that John and I would open the window. In the morning we would awake to Olaf Harvey, Snus & Commentary, Dean’s boisterous laugh, and the smell of Pancakes. Dean epitomized what Big Sugarbush was…..enjoying the outdoors. His work to purchase the Island, and give it to the MN DNR is a testament to this. For us Sugar bushers, we will all miss Dean. I would not know Sugarbush if it were not for Dean. The last Summer Dean was up to Big Sugarbush I was fortunate to have another one of those great breakfasts with Dean, Mickey, and John. It was not unlike those mornings when I was a kid, Dean calling me “Kentifer” with his deep laugh full of life.

Tony Prickett
By MaryAnn Jasken

I never had the privilege of knowing Tony Prickett before cancer impacted his life and the lives of those who love him. For that reason, some might say that I never really knew Tony. But I would beg to differ.

It wasn’t surprising to read in his obituary of Tony’s distinguished background, though he didn’t ever refer to it. The Tony that I came to know had an air of dignity about him, a reserve, a gentility that spoke to a particular type of upbringing. His attention graced those in his presence. Plain and simply, Tony had class.

He was passionate about golf, soccer, racquetball, hunting, fishing, skiing, country music, cooking, dog walking, and reading among other things, according to his obituary.

In the years I was privileged to know him, Tony was passionate about LIFE…whatever it might bring him. That passion showed in a handshake, in a hug, in a burst of loud laughter, in the sparkle of his eyes when he’d see someone he cared for. It showed when he brought the best wine to a gathering, when he crafted a gin & tonic (or when he savored one!) He was passionate about cooking and serving until the last guest was filled. He was passionate about Roy Orbison music…and about dancing until the band stopped playing….and in life, just as in dancing, sometimes the band stops playing much too soon.

We who loved Tony find our lives richer for having known him. We miss him greatly.
Thomas Drayton
By Justine Boots

Longtime Big Sugarbush Lake resident, Tom Drayton, died on November 5, 2013. With his wife Polly, he designed and built the Drayton lake cabin more than thirty years ago. He loved fishing and hunting with his children and grandchildren; he was the president of the AFS foreign exchange program for many years; he was a highly respected Fargo businessman. His family along with his many friends and admirers take comfort from the lines of poetry printed in his Celebration of Life: “A golden heart stopped beating. Hard-working hands to rest. God broke our hearts to prove to us that He only takes the best.

New Horizon Dinners

Once again, Big Sugar Bush neighbors are invited to gather on the second and fourth Mondays from June into Oct. at the New Horizon Resort on White Earth Lake. Chris and Linda May, owners of the resort welcome us for a buffet dinner. Beer, wine and set-ups can be purchased as well as the delicious meals created by Linda. We gather at 5 and the meal is served at 6. Fran Mattson takes your reservations by the Fri. prior at 218-983-3173. Please let Fran know if you need to cancel, as well.

Calendar Dates:

- Saturday, May 24 - 10:00 am – Association Meeting, at the Sugarbush Township Hall
- Friday, July 4 – 2:00 pm - Boat Parade starting near the public access.
- New Horizon Dinner – 5:00 pm on the second and fourth Monday of each month from June into October. RSVP

Directory Maintenance

Please notify Nancy Nornes Olson, of any changes to your email or address, at nanornes@gmail.com.

Meeting Minutes

All association meeting minutes can be viewed on our website at www.bigsugarbush.net.

Big Sugar Bush Lake Association Board Members

President: Nancy Nornes Olson Term: 2013 – 2016
Vice president: Jim Lindsay 2013 - 2016
Treasurer: Dean Bellefeuille 2012 - 2014
Secretary: Justine Boots 2012 - 2015
Other Board members include:
Kent Anderson 2013 - 2014
Chuck Becker 2012 - 2015
Ken Mattson 2013 - 2016
Steve Odegaard 2012 - 2015
Jimmy Olsen 2012 – 2014

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