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www.mynorthwoodscall.com
Spring break time: Is winter really over?

It’s time for the Call gang’s annual spring break and—after this past winter—a respite is sorely needed.

That means that the next North Woods Call will hit our mailboxes in late April—just in time to wrap those shiny trout you pull from Michigan waters. We recommend, of course, that you read it first.

Over the break, we’ll be doing some spring chores around the house and perhaps taking a drive south in search of spring blossoms among the laurel and redbud trees.

Meanwhile, we’re completing our tax forms for 2013, and have been examining income and expenses for the year. The good news is that The Call is operating in the black. But just barely. So we’re still looking for more subscribers and advertisers.

An upcoming public radio piece about the publication should help in that regard. (More about that later.)

We should be seeing April flowers and green grass popping out around here in the coming weeks, although at this writing—five days after spring officially arrived—it is 19 degrees and snowing outside our office window. Tomorrow may be even colder.

The prognosticators say that the spring season will likely be cooler than normal, due in part to the large amount of ice that accumulated on the Great Lakes during the winter.

So we might as well chill out, so to speak, and enjoy the rebirth of nature whenever it occurs. Some years it just takes a little longer than others.

Remember: Patience is a virtue.

Michigan’s Conservation Sentinel Since 1953

St. Mary’s claims benefits of land swap

St. Mary’s Cement Inc. says a land swap between the company and Fisherwoman’s Island State Park in Charlevoix County would benefit the community. Opponents, however, say the public stands to lose much more than it would gain.

The company would pick up a more consolidated “quarry footprint,” officials said, which means a shorter perimeter to re-source such as the Holloway Reservoir, Buttercup Beach and the Flint River.

The plans call for reopening the landfill for garbage and mining during breaks in sorting out fresh material, a Richfield Township official said.

If the project doesn’t materialize, the DEQ said it is prepared to move ahead with a closure plan for the landfill—a process that has already started. The $4.4 million cost to permanently close the landfill would be covered by a fund that was established by former operators of the landfill.

WOLF HUNT PETITIONS: Opponents of Michigan’s wolf hunt have turned in a second round of petition signatures to get the issue on the November 2014 general election ballot. About 225,000 signatures have been collected, they said, which is about 64,000 more than the minimum valid signatures required. If the state’s Board of Canvassers approves enough of the signatures, a new law allowing the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) to set a hunt would be put on hold until the public vote. A competing petition drive could derail the effort, however.

Supporters of the wolf hunt have until May 20 to submit more than 250,000 valid signatures to reinforce the NRC’s authority to designate game species and issue fishery orders. If enough signatures are collected, a bill would go to the Legislature, which would have 40 days to act and could neutralize the ballot efforts of hunt opponents.

ENERGY HEADACHES: A four-bill package that was making its way through the Michigan Legislature during late March would give oil and gas companies tax breaks for re-using carbon dioxide to tap capped wells and have more power to obtain land for pipelines. The state Senate approved the measures and sent it back to the House for concurrence. Supporters reportedly argue that the tax break—a 4 percent rebate on the gross cash market value of total production (reduced from the previous 5 percent for gas and 6.6 percent for oil)—would apply only to extractions that would otherwise be impossible, but critics say it benefits big oil and gas companies that are doing fine already.

The tranquill Norwood area just down the road from Glen Shepard’s former North Woods Call office could be impacted if plans for a land swap between the State of Michigan and St. Mary’s Cement Inc. are approved. Among other things, a new local entrance to Fisherwoman’s Island State Park has been proposed.

St. Mary’s claims benefits of land swap

The Clarkston-based Terreno- 
ography’s Quality officials said that the proposed mining operation isn’t been detailed in writing, but it has been discussed in meetings with the company. Terrenova is also considering a waste-to-energy operation on the 272-acre property, they said.

The company has been negotiating with a U.S. Bankruptcy Court trustee to purchase the landfill, according to The Journal, and recently applied for a license to operate the landfill. The application is said to be under review by DEQ officials.

The planned mining operation has reportedly prompted concerns among area residents and township officials, who are worried about the possible impacts of disturbing the buried waste on water resources such as the Holloway Reservoir, Buttercup Beach and the Flint River.

The plans call for reopening the landfill for garbage and mining during breaks in sorting out fresh material, a Richfield Township official said.

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Minning recyclables: Digging those landfills

The Clarkston-based Terrenova company reportedly wants to buy a Genesee County landfill and possibly mine it for buried recyclables.

Such an operation would be unique in Michigan, state officials said.

Terrenova offered $1 million for the closed Richfield Landfill in Richfield Township about 50 miles northwest of Detroit, according to a recent story in The Flint Journal.

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality officials said the proposed mining operation hasn’t been detailed in writing, but it has been discussed in meetings with the company. Terrenova is also considering a waste-to-energy operation on the 272-acre property, they said.

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The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is presenting information and taking comments on possible changes to lake trout size and daily catch limits for northern Lake Michigan trout management zones MM-3, 4 and 5.

DNR officials are hosting three more public meetings on the subject on April 18 at the Leelanau County Library, 364 Jefferson Street in Suttons Bay; April 23 in Traverse City at the Air Park, 700 East State Road; and April 25 in St. Ignace at the Ironwood Community Center, 103 North Superior Street.

COASTAL TRAILS:

The Great Lakes Coastal Trails Conference is set for May 15-16 at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 604 Culver Street, in Saugatuck, Mich. Registration is free. To sign up, visit www.lmwt.org. For more information, contact Dave Lemberg at (269) 352-8729 or lemberg@wmich.edu.

GREAT LAKES FISH POSTER:

An updated poster showing fish of the Great Lakes is now available from the Wisconsin Sea Grant office. The updated 26.5-by-38.5-inch poster shows the Great Lakes ecosystem, which is historically home to 210 species of fish, according to Sea Grant officials. The fish are presented as colorful images created by Kaman artist Joseph Tomelleri. To get a copy of the poster, visit aquawisc.edu/publications. The cost is $6, which includes shipping and handling.

BUDGET CUT: President Obama’s proposed 2015 budget offers a spending cut for a program that reportedly deals with some of the Great Lake’s most urgent environmental threats. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative—which received $475 million the first year it was funded and about $300 million in most subsequent years—would be “scaled back” to $275 million under the new budget. According to an Associated Press report, the program has funded projects across an eight-state region to clean up polluted harbors and river mouths, battle Asian carp and other invasive species, control runoff that causes algal blooms and restore wildlife habitat.

BEACH MONITORING:

Coastal beaches in the Grand Traverse region will be healthier and safer this summer, thanks to a $27,000 grant from the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians. The grant will fund weekly monitoring of e. coli bacteria at 13 beaches from Memorial Day through Labor Day, as well as a beach safety initiative.

FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has released its new five-year strategic plan to guide its work in sustainably managing and protecting Michigan forest resources. The plan, “Seeing the Forest, the Trees & Beyond,” can be found at www.michigan.gov/forestplan.

Meetings to discuss Lake Michigan trout regulations

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Spring fever and our roots

By Marguerite Gahagan

It is difficult to push humans into the soil through the asphalt and concrete of cities. As a result, modern urban America is rapidly becoming suburban, or even bucolic.

For back in the ancestry of all of us are generations upon generations who lived and loved and tilled the soil in the centuries of the past. From them, most of us—even unless we are descended from the Vikings of the north, or the Phoenician traders of the Mediterranean—have inherited a desire to return to the soil.

This is what sends millions of people to the back woods for vacations each spring and summer. This is why a simple cottage on a lake becomes—in the mind’s eye of every wage slave—the utopia to which he dreams of retiring.

With faster and faster [vehicles] for travel now being made, it is safe to predict that cities of the future may be merely places where business is transacted and articles are manufactured by a race of men [and women] who live in the cool comfort and placidity of the woods. This may be the answer to the modern tensions which bring on the degenerative diseases of man. This may be the vaccine against heart disease that our physicians seek. In any event, it is a fact that even the summer weeks of recreation on trout streams and lakes are serving their purpose in man’s fight against such modern killers.

So then in the early spring the amateur comes to the soul of man shackled in his city towers, it is really only an outpouring of his instinctive desire to return to the land. His subconscious knows that it is easier for him to put down roots in the soil of the farm and the woods, and it is but urging him to go to those places where he can feel that he has “returned home.”

Don’t fight it, you victims of machine-age ennui. Rather, keep in mind that your “spring fever” is just your instinctive desire to return to the land. It is the real you—the one that would like to shake off the cares and worries of the city and, for a time, trade them for the peaceful turbulence of the trout stream for the noisy silence of the woods. And head north, man. Head north.

APRIL NRC MEETING:

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Commission (NRC) will be held at the Michigan State University Diagnostic Center, 4122 Beaumont Road, in Lansing. The June 12, Sept. 11 and Nov. 6 meetings will also be held at that same location, while the Oct. 9 meeting will be at the Ralph A. Hauenstein Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, on Grand Traverse Bay near Roscommon. Other NRC meetings during 2014 will be July 10 at the Outdoor Adventure and Discovery Center, 1801 Atwater Street in Detroit; Aug. 14 at a location yet to be determined in Munising; and Dec. 1 at the Lansing Center, 333 E. Michigan Avenue in Lansing.

April 10 NRC Meeting:

The 26.5 by 38.5 inch poster shows the Great Lakes Coastal Trails Conference is set for May 15-16 at the Saugatuck Center for the Arts, 604 Culver Street, in Saugatuck, Mich. Registration is free. To sign up, visit www.lmwt.org. For more information, contact Dave Lemberg at (269) 352-8729 or lemberg@wmich.edu.

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Corporate representatives of Oklahoma-based Chesapeake Energy Corporation and Delaware-based Encana Oil and Gas USA were arraigned March 20 in Cheboygan District Court before Judge Maria Barton.

As reported in the late March edition of the North Woods Call, they face criminal charges for allegedly collaborating to avoid bidding wars against each other in Michigan public auctions and private negotiations for oil and gas leases.

The activity reportedly caused prices to plummet.

Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette filed the charges on March 5 following an investigation into the companies’ alleged 2010 collaboration.

They face one count each of anti-trust violations relating to a contract, or conspiracy, in restraint of commerce and one count each of attempted anti-trust violations. The former charge is a high court misdemeanor punishable by up to two years in jail and/or a $10,000 fine for an individual. The latter is a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail and/or a $1,000 fine.

Both companies waived their right to a preliminary examination within 14 days and Judge Barton issued $20,000 personal recognizance bonds for the company officials. They are next due in Cheboygan District Court for a preliminary examination scheduled to be held sometime between May 5 to May 8, 2014.

Propane supplier subpoenaed in pricing probe

Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette in late March was seeking civil subpoenas in an ongoing investigation into recent pricing and other suspect business practices related to this winter’s unprecedented price hikes for propane.

Schuette said his office had been contacted by more than 700 Michigan consumers since January, who have complained of unfair pricing and other questionable business practices within the propane industry. Many of the complaints related to Ferrellgas Inc., he said, and review of the information gathered to date led to the subpoena requests.

“Michigan families have enough rising costs to worry about without being concerned that they may be taken advantage of by their energy supplier,” said Schuette. “We are prepared to take legal action if it is determined that state law has been broken.”

As noted in the petition for subpoena filed in Saginaw County Circuit Court, the attorney general has received 65 complaints against Ferrellgas Inc. and its affiliate Best Propane. The complaints include allegations of excessive pricing and misrepresenting the price that consumers would have to pay for propane.

Under the Michigan Consumer Protection Act, a retailer may not charge a price that is “grossly in excess of the price at which similar property or services are sold.” Evidence gathered to date suggests that some Ferrellgas consumers ordering propane over the phone may have been misled as to what the actual price of the propane would be once it was delivered.

Saginaw County Circuit Court has ordered Ferrellgas to provide documents and testimony to the investigation of this and other suspected conduct.

Schuette said his review of consumer complaints related to propane pricing remains ongoing.

If consumers have additional evidence suggesting that a retailer engaged in behavior that violates the Consumer Protection Act, they are encouraged to contact the state Consumer Protection Division at 1-877-765-8388, or file an online complaint at michigan.gov/ag.
A faithful shelter from the storm: My life in tents

By Mike VanBuren

In a fractured nation and topsy-turvy world, many of us are searching for some kind of shelter from the storm. What, for some weird reason—makes me think about tents.

I was first introduced to collapsible cloth structures as a nodder—standing over the backs of two kitchen chairs and sitting in the same world as the small back yard and reclined underneath on the cool, green grass.

Afterward, I graduated to the family camp tent—a made of heavy, weather-resistant canvas—and a smaller A-shaped version that was so weak in the middle I doubt it had been made by anyone, and I might have ingested cleave.

Most of these outings were uneventful—save for some apples dripping from a tree below a noisy rainstorm at Interlochen State Park during the late 1950s and admotions from my parents to refrain from touching cans or vans by tent walls, which were sure to leak like a sieve.

And there was the snowy, sub-zero camp-out my college roommate and I experienced in the mid-1970s, and the lightning storm that blew my modern yacht tent over a Beaver Island bluff a few years later. (Don’t worry, I escaped before the complete disintegration.)

I began to understand the meaning of “pup tent,” though, one dark night many years later, during a mid-Michigan’s Allegan State Game Area in my two-person Eureka Timberline model. I was awakened abruptly by what I thought was a raccoon, or some other wild animal, jumping on the rain fly and trying to push its nose through the seams of the tent. I shoved a few back, but the aggressive animal kept right on assaulting my woodland bed-room, so I grabbed the large metal flashlight I kept at my side and turned it on the intruder, who looked like a sugar puppy several yards away—a normally fearful spirit that apparently enjoyed trying to make friends with a paranoid outdoorsman.

My camp mate and I quickly dubbed him the “Pound Puppy” and I tried to make up for the visit I had witnessed on him. Fortunately, he was the forgiving type, gave a lot of credit for the hanging around camp until late morning, when we convinced him to return to the home we were sure had become yours.

For the past 40 years, that same Timberline has accompanied us on many other projects, rivers and lakeshores in Michigan, the Algonia country of Northern Ontario, the beaches of Florida, the Bitterroot Mountains of western Montana and other locations.

But I haven’t always been as faithful to it as it has been to me.

On a cold, clear spring break outing near Florida’s Atlantic coast—we had 28 people from various states and six-person tent, consuming adult beverages, singing folk songs and generally enjoying each others’ company, as Allan and Marilyn at campgrounds and bluegrass festivals in a 12-by-12-foot nylon umbrella tent covered by a “Stormshiel” that adequately kept some pretty ferocious rain-bourning. If any, their tent spent a relative handful of nights in a 25-foot Wilderness travel trailer, and never felt warmer than any tent I’ve ever owned. Better yet, it’s got a queen-sized mattress and indoor plumbing.

Still, the hassles of getting such a monstrosity out of the barn and putting it away again—nor to mention upkeep, maintenance and extra-fuel costs—have kept me at-tached to my tiny Timberline for most of the years.

These days, though, I’m finding tent life and sleeping on the ground much less comfortable than I once did. I still enjoy doing it, but not so often as well as I often did and sometimes have to take a revitalizing nap when I get back home.

Mostly—especially on road trips—I’m much more inclined to keep an eye on those places that see me find a campground and pitch my tent on the cold, hard turf. There’s all the chances, I guess, that the troubled economy will force me to reverse this trend.

But I’ve grown accustomed to such change. After all, there are plenty of slobbery puppies (and other less-desirable creatures) trying to push their noses into our pillows and blankets.

Some of these intrusive forces are beneficial, but many are not. So it’s good to have a well-manu-factured tent to block the wind and keep the rain off our heads.

The quality and effectiveness of most tents has advanced over the years and improved upon the canvas structures old.

I’m not sure I can say the same thing about the condition of our nation and world.

Chilling the first amendment

Here’s another one of those issues that some readers will say doesn’t have anything to do with the conservation of natural re-sources.

But it does have something to do with the news business—so we figure it probably belongs in this space.

It seems the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) wants to monitor the nation’s newsrooms—particularly those related to television and radio broadcasts—to study the nation’s “critical information needs” and learn how reporters, editors and station owners decide which stories to run. The reported purpose is to explore the process by which those stories are gathered as well as “perceived bias” and “responsiveness to under-served popu-lations.”

Sounds, of course, say this is simply an objective fact-finding mission. Participation in this study, they say, is “voluntary,” although it’s clearly understood that broadcast stations would be out-of-business without an FCC license—which must be renewed every 3 years.

In an era where public distrust of government is growing by leaps and bounds, it’s easy to wonder just what FCC officials are up to. Is the ultimate goal to censor the news, or to pressure broadcasters into presenting issues that Washington bureaucrats decide to be “critical information needs”?

At this point, we can’t assign motives with any certainty, but we do know there is a definite palpation in America’s newsrooms.

Granted, much of today’s media is doing an abysmal job covering what free people need to know to govern themselves. But somehow inserting government observers into the decision making would only make matters worse.
**Sierra Club NOT anti-hunting**

Editor

This letter is in response to the letter from David Gorenflo in the Early March edition of *The Call*. Mr. Gorenflo claims that there is a number of points about a possible referendum on Public Act 21 (contrary to his claim, this is a number of points about a “wolf season”—the referendum is over who should declare game species).

Gratefully, Mr. Gorenflo claims that Michigan residents are uninformed, not qualified and illogical. But it really comes down to this: “We can’t let folks vote on an issue they might vote wrong!” But given how factually challenged the letter from Mr. Gorenflo was, and his claim that he will come as a surprise and disappointment to my bird dog, it will come as a surprise and disappointment to me.

Early March edition of *The Call*

**Letter from David Gorenflo in the Early March edition of The Call**

Editor:

Let’s start with some easy facts. Mr. Gorenflo claims that the Sierra Club is anti-hunting, and singles them out for this. (Full disclosure: I’m a full-time paid staff person for the Michigan Sierra Club. In addition to feeling the need to defend the Sierra Club against false accusations, I suspect that I’m a bit more familiar than Mr. Gorenflo regarding the Sierra Club and its positions). The Sierra Club is anti-hunting, it will come as a surprise and disappointment to my bird dog, a wonderful Gordon Setter named Ruger. Ruger thinks we go out every fall for hunting and woodcock, and have a wonderful time doing so. The Sierra Club is not anti-hunting. The Sierra Club is not even anti wolf hunting. I represent the Sierra Club on the Michigan Deer Management Plan Roundtable. The unanimous recommendations of this group formed the core of the Michigan Deer Management Plan. Mr. Gorenflo was not a member, and did not attend. One of the recommendations agreed to by all (including myself, representing the Sierra Club), was approval of the plan to reduce human/livestock conflicts. Agreeing to that provision is hardly the action of an anti-hunting group, or a hunting, or hunting wolves. We simply think that the current provision does not meet the requirement of the wolf plan.

I was also the Sierra Club representative on the Deer Management Roundtable. Like the wolf roundtable, the unanimous recommendations of this group formed the basis of the Michigan Deer Management Plan (also, like the wolf roundtable, Mr. Gorenflo was not a member and did not attend). At no time did anyone, especially me, attempt to eliminate, or restrict, deer hunting. As a matter of fact, the Sierra Club believes we have far too many deer. It became a joke at the roundtable that the club advocates deer hunting “with napalm.” These facts are easily checkable. The Sierra Club is not and has never been “anti-hunting.” Mr. Gorenflo declares that, because we think we’re anti-hunting, he didn’t invite us to participate in “his” fight against the Graymont proposal. Let’s leave it at that, the need for stupidity from an ally on an issue because you don’t understand their stance on an unrelated issue.

The Sierra Club and many others—the Bay Mills tribe, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, the Michigan Resource Stewards and many others—have been very involved in fighting Graymont, all without invitation from Mr. Gorenflo. I believe that the Sierra Club has been involved for more than two years in this fight.

Given how factually challenged the Sierra Club is on easily checkable facts, it’s hard to take the rest of his letter very seriously. But he may rest assured that no matter how ill-informed his views are, the Sierra Club still thinks he ought to go to vote.

Marvin Robbins
Sierra Club Forest Ecologist
Marquette, Michigan

**Lake Huron fishery will be the subject of April workshops**

Three regional workshops are being held this spring to highlight research and information about Lake Huron’s fishery.

The workshops—free and open to the public—will provide valuable information for anglers, charter captains, resource professionals and other communities impacted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

The DPIR is hosting the events in partnership with Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan State University Extension, the U.S. Geological Survey Great Lakes Science Center and local fishery organizations.

The workshops will focus on topics such as: higher catch data, native species, forage fish surveys, invasive species, fisheries management activities, and other related topics.

Each will be held from 6 to 9 p.m.—April 9 at the Hammond American Legion, 1026 E. 2nd St. in Fort Houston; April 22 at the NOAA Lakes Marine Heritage Center, 500 W. Fletcher St. in Alpena; and April 23 at the Les Cheneaux Sportsman’s Club on M-134 in Cedarville.

To pre-register, contact Val Golding at (989) 354-9870, or golding@alpenacounty.org.

**Apologies to the Sierra Club**

Early April 2014

Sister Laura Cuthbert

Recently I submitted a letter to the editor expressing my views concerning the Michigan wolf hunting issue. Due to some bad information from a third party and a lack of research (mostly on my part), I mistakenly categorized the Sierra Club as an anti-hunting group.

Since that time, I have done my research, and I’ve also had an extensive conversation with a friend of mine, who (just discovered is a Sierra Club member). So I realize now that my comments were highly inaccurate. At the time I wrote my letter, I did not know that the Sierra Club who do not support hunting rights, (mostly in the more liberal areas of the country, according to my friend) these sentiments do not dictate the official policies of the club as a whole.

Though we may not always agree on every issue, (including this one) I do believe the club has only the best intentions in mind to protect wildlife and the habitat it needs to survive. So with all of this in mind, I would like to extend a sincere apology to the Sierra Club for my hastily derived opinion of this organization. Lesson learned.

My opinion regarding wolf hunting in Michigan remains unchanged, however—it seems the club and I will agree on this issue. I believe that voter referendums should be reserved for polities, not wildlife issues. While I am not a big fan of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) or the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), some of the policies they enact and the lack of “checks and balances” when implementing these policies, I have far less faith in the informed voters casting a vote that is based on an emotional response—and even less faith with decisions made by politicians.

It became a joke at the roundtable—Mr. Gorenflo claims that the club advocates deer hunting. As a matter of fact, the Sierra Club believes we have far too many deer. However, I firmly believe that hunting is an effective and valuable tool in managing wolf populations. Permanently eliminating this as an option is simply “bad policy.”

Thank you,

David Gorenflo
Traverse City, Michigan

**Humble pie**
Au Sable trout opener: Not what this novice expected

I finally entered my first trout opener along the Au Sable River a few seasons back. This opener always has been a spring tradition for my husband and his girls, while I came up with other important tasks to address. I finally delicately inquired as to whether there was room for one more; fortunately the answer was an enthusiastic, “Yes.”

Now, do I understand that this is a weekend of grand tradition for many. Given that I was a newbie to the process, my husband spent considerable time reviewing the course of events. We would arrive early enough on Friday to open up camp. Waders and rods would find their seasonal homes on the proper fixtures. The new gadgets and equipment purchased at the Midwest Fly Fishing Expo would be organized and ready to go.

On Saturday morning, we would travel to Lovells for a big breakfast and the celebrations hosted by the Lovell’s Historical Society. Then, after lunch, some fishing would take place. We would return to camp, some sort of as well as plant little white pines from a local conservation club.

Dinner takes place at the riverside home of fellow anglers and dear friends. In previous years, they would call me during dinner and describe the grilled steak (not trout, of course), the bonfire overlooking the Au Sable and the highlights of the day. Is it any wonder that I describe the grilled steak (not trout, of course), the bonfire overlooking a local conservation club.

That was my expectation for the weekend. Do you think that’s how it turned out? Of course you don’t. It started so splendidly: Our pals of Saturday night fame were kind enough to pick up our white pines and drop them off at our place. In one of those moments of unsurprising coincidence, we arrived as they were departing our place on a brilliant Friday late afternoon in April, with temperatures in the ’80s and a bawdy breeze blowing.

We were tickled at being in the same place at the same time that we immediately found adult beverages and toasted the trout opener efficiently and effectively. We enjoyed the happy river and even laughed at how I would be forever jaded in thinking that balmy weather was the norm for this early spring weekend.

Our friends reluctantly headed out to open their own place and we cheerfully jumped to the task of opening ours. Things were moving along smoothly when it suddenly became clear that we had some issues of the plumbing variety. In a nutshell, the drains—all of them—were backed up, the shower was leaking and only a trickle of water was coming out of the bathroom faucet. This did not amuse us.

Following a trip to Grayling for essential supplies allowing us to at least use a chemical toilet, we ate dinner at 9:30 p.m., weary to the bone. But no worries! Saturday morning beckoned and it was supposed to be warm and wonderful.

Are you laughing a bit, dear reader? Saturday morning erupted with thunderstorms and downpours. The saturated land took in no more water, and our little camp flooded in moments. We sloshed through three or four inches of standing water for the rest of the weekend. We had one pair of rubber boots, which we all shared. The brand new waterfalls on each side of the cabin were lovely, however. Fairly quickly, the stream became a river and insult was added to injury. Had I brought coats? Nope! Let’s not go there.

Fortunately, my husband came upon a neighbor on an early-morning walk. This helpful do-gooder cheerfully offered to come over and check our plumbing woes. Before we knew it, he fixed two of the three issues, and we called for some professional help with the septic system.

A few hours later, the float in the septic tank was fixed and drains were moving again. It was time for our wonderful Saturday night dinner with our friends, who welcomed us with a roaring fire in the fireplace and the well-deserved steaks referenced above.

As we told our friends the story of the 24 hours since we had seen them last, we talked about the incredible kindness of our neighbor, who waved off our incessant thanks by saying, “that’s what neighbors do.” That is one of the shining assets of this wonderful piece of heaven called the Au Sable and its surrounding lands.

A WILLOW WHISTLE

Later, he would teach us to make our own. To us, it was a rite of spring.

Willow whistles can be carved all growing season, but I believe it is easiest when the sap is rising in the willows. I have never tried it during the winter, or dormancy. As a naturalist, I taught intern and nature center staff to make them, too. Some got into it in an extreme way. As you can imagine, different diameters and lengths of willow branches will give different sounds.

Our nature center has an extensive boardwalk network of trails through the wetlands. One intern would select the hanging branch of a willow near the boardwalk, not cutting the branch from the tree but carving the whistle from the branch end. As he would lead a group of kids, he could wow them by pulling the branch down and blowing the whistle.

More than likely, such whistles can be made from most spring branches, but I’m most impressed with this with willow and basswood.

A WILLOW WHISTLE

The bark must be able to slip off easily. Basswood takes more care to not split the bark. As in any wood carving, good carving procedures must be followed to avoid injury.

How to carve a willow whistle

By Richard Schinkel

A blueprint for willow whistles.

When I was growing up, my father would always make his children willow whistles when the sap began to rise. Later, he would teach us to make our own. To us, it was a rite of spring.

One intern would select the hanging branch of a willow near the boardwalk, not cutting the branch from the tree but carving the whistle from the branch end. As he would lead a group of kids, he could wow them by pulling the branch down and blowing the whistle.

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How to carve a willow whistle

By Richard Schinkel

As the sap rises, select a straight, smooth branch about one-half inch to three-quarter inches in diameter. Cut a six- to eight-inch length from the stem. At the end, cut an angle to resemble a whistle mouth-piece, leaving about one-third of the top part square to the stem. On the top, cut an air hole, as the diagram shows—straight down and angle upward toward the end of the whistle opposite the mouth.

About three inches down the stem, cut through the bark into the hard wood and through the cambium. Now, gently take your knife handle and pound the bark evenly all over to loosen it from the hard wood.

You can test it by gently twisting to see if it is loose. Don’t pound so hard as to crack the bark. Once the bark slides off, you can carve the sound chamber in the hardwood. To do this, start your cut from the bark top, carving further down to at least half-way through the wood and create a chamber extending beyond the open bark cut. (See diagram) This will provide the tone.

Next, slice a sliver of wood from the top—coming back to the mouthpiece—to allow enough space to blow air over the sound chamber. Now slide your hollow bark over the whistle, position it as it came off, blow and you should have a whistle sound.

You can practice with different cuts and sizes to get different tones.
Ice shanty mess, duck doo doo, a chicken-killing bobcat & “poison” dog scraps

**DISTRICT 1 (Marquette)**

CO Ryan Aho was on patrol in Marquette County when he encountered a fishing shanty on Cedar Lake. The area surrounded it was a sea of garbage, including beer cans and other garbage. CO Aho approached the individual down and spoke with his father, who let the individual know that he was driving a farm vehicle and must have missed the signs. Enforcement action was taken.

**DISTRICT 3 (Gaylord)**

CO Mike Feagan responded to a complaint of a snowmobile driving off the road. Upon arrival, the snowmobile was found lying down on the roadway. The owner was ticketed for operating a snowmobile over a year ago and a quick arrest warrant for a subject who shot an overlimit of deer. The warrants were confirmed and the suspect was able to turn and stop his vehicle displaying an improper coloring and then wrote in large letters that the caller had mistaken a hatchet that the caller had mistaken as a gun was recovered. CO Kyle Bader investigated a complaint of a snowmobile being run out buckets of antifreeze mixed with food scraps. The complaint was that the subject was trying to poison the neighbor’s dog. During the investigation, CO Bader found out that the subject was trying to poison the neighbor’s dog because the neighbor’s dog was always in his yard. So the subject put snow in buckets, colored it with food coloring and then wrote in large letters on the outside “antifreeze” and “dog scraps.” The subject said he has no intention of harming any animals and that he just wants his neighbor to refrain from his dog.

**DISTRICT 9 (Southfield)**

CO Sam Jones followed up on and received a confession from a hunter without a license who shot a seven point buck on opening day. The hunter in this case shot the deer and then posted photos on Facebook. Enforcement action was taken.

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CO Kris Kiel reports that a subject who unintentionally ran over a herd of elk on his snowmobile was issued a Wal-Mart parking lot was sen-

CO Jon Sklba assisted Michigan Conservation Officer Log (2/17/14 through 3/3/14)

**Conservation Officer Logs (2/17/14 through 3/3/14)**

The North Woods Call partners? Please send your news tips, story ideas and photos to: editor@mynorthwoodscall.com

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Fish egg collections on Muskegon, Little Manistee rivers

Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) personnel will be taking walleye eggs this spring on the Muskegon River below Croton Dam. The DNR will also be collecting steelhead eggs at the Little Manistee weir in Stonoch.

Approximately 62 million walleye eggs from the Muskegon River, which will result in 13.4 million fry for transfer to rearing ponds throughout the Lower Peninsula. These walleye will be raised to fingerling size and stocked in late spring, or early summer, in lakes and rivers throughout the state.

The DNR planned to collect walleyes with an electro-fishing boat beginning as early as the week of March 24 and conclude by April 15. Eight days of fish collections are expected during this period. The actual date when collections will begin depends on water temperatures and the presence of "ripe" fish.

The Little Manistee River weir has served as the sole source of winter-run steelhead eggs for fish hatcheries in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana since 1968. Egg-take scheduling information is available from the Little Manistee weir hotline at (231) 775-9727, ext. 6072. The facility is open to the public for up-close viewing during egg-take operations. Formal tours will be offered Thursday, April 10, and Friday, April 11, at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Those interested in tours should call 231-389-2551. Fish also can be observed in the river below the weir at any time.

Easter Blessing

This historic cabin church in Old Mission is a rustic reminder of the upcoming Easter celebration among Christians and the refreshing renewal of the Michigan springtime. May you and your families have a blessed holiday as believers mark the resurrection of Christ—this year on April 20—and the hope of salvation it offers all mankind.