

Big Sugar Bush Notes

Fall 2019 Volume 29 Number 2

Special Meeting of the Big Sugar Bush Lake Association

Friday, Aug. 30th at 2 pm

**Where: Town Hall on Cty 34.
across from Strawberry Lake
Store**

Consultant hydrologist, Bob Merritt, will present key findings from his research study on the environmental impact of wake boats as it relates specifically to the unique dynamics and features of Big Sugar Bush Lake.

The Big Sugar Bush Lake Association would like to strongly encourage all residents to attend to hear critical information and discussion regarding the impact of wake boats on the lake habitat and personal property.



BSB celebrates 4th of July with annual boat parade. Twenty-six watercraft participated in the 2019 Boat Parade



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

When a bog floated into Epperle's dock area earlier this summer, eight neighbors came with boats and pontoons to move it away from that area.

We all have a shared responsibility to protect our lakes, natural areas and wildlife habitat: to use only what we need, make smarter choices, and pass onto future generations the beauty, wildlife, water and natural resources we have today. – Author Unknown



Four chicks hatched from three loon pairs this summer on Big Sugarbush.

BSB Water Clarity Is Worth Protecting

By Fran Mattson

As you sit on your dock or in your fishing boat and look down into the water, you can see the fish and aquatic vegetation below. That is not the case in many of the lakes in Mn. Big Sugar Bush Lake clarity readings in July were between 18.5 to 21 feet. Presently five GPS sites are tested three times a month from spring to fall.

The secchi disk is dropped into the water and the cord attached indicates the number of feet and inches at the point the white disc can no longer be seen. There is some variance at different times of the year. This year the May readings were not as good due to cold water algae, which was true in other lakes, also. Clarity is the best single, simple and understandable indicator of water quality. Phosphorus and chlorophyll are tested by R and B Environmental Labs on samples taken five times a year from Big Sugarbush Lake.

Increased phosphorus in the lake promotes algae growth which reduces water clarity. Increased phosphorus is caused by shore-line run-off, fertilizer going into the lake and disturbing shoreline and lake bottom. It is a particular problem when boat motors or wave action churns up the bottom in shallow areas. According to Moria Rufer, water specialist, when a boat travels through shallow areas, it stirs up the lake sediment, re-suspending nutrients (phosphorus) into the water. These nutrients can then feed algae and cause an algae bloom. This stirring can also decrease the water clarity because of additional particles suspended in the water column. Props and wave action can also disturb sensitive habitat for spawning fish and other organisms. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control agency it is important to minimize disturbance of aquatic plants as they are vital to the health of the lake. Let's do our part to protect the water clarity which other lakes have already lost.



Why do we have a Big Sugar Bush Lake Area Association anyway?

By Jimmy Olsen

Many, if not most, of us are confident that we can manage our own affairs well enough without the intrusion of others, or other entities. Yet, it is a generally accepted rule of living in a civil society that there are instances and functions where organizations and government serve a beneficial purpose for our wellbeing.

As it applies to our Republic form of government, Thomas Jefferson explained this well in a letter to Joseph C. Cabell on February 2, 1816:¹

“No, my friend, the way to have a good and safe government, is not to trust it all to one, but to divide it among the many, distributing to every one exactly the functions he is competent to: Let the national government be entrusted with the defen[s]e of the nation, and its foreign and federal relations; the State governments with the civil rights, laws, police, and administration of what concerns the State generally; the counties with the local concerns of the counties, and each ward direct the interests within itself.”

As for the individual, and their inalienable rights and freedom to run their own life, Jefferson had this to say in the same letter:

“.....the secret will be found to be in making [one]self the depository of the powers respecting [them]selves, so far as [they] are competent to them, and delegating only what is beyond [ones] competence by a synthetical process, to higher and higher orders of functionaries....Where every [person] is a sharer in the direction of their ward-republic, or of some of the higher ones, and feels that [they are] a participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year.”

¹¹ Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Joseph C. Cabell on February 2, 1816. <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch4s34.html>

So, how does that apply to us in the Big Sugar Bush lake area? Our lowest form of self-government is our lake association. One of its primary functions is outlined in the Minnesota Shoreline Management Resource Guide:²

“An important function of a lake association is to serve as the organized voice for its membership with township and county government and as the watchdog for enforcement of local ordinances.”

The guide also states other typical functions of a lake association

“Lake associations serve a variety of valuable functions. They may monitor the condition of the lake, develop lake management plans, educate shoreland property owners about individual and collective actions to protect the lake, or network with other lake associations to learn from their experiences. They can work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) to improve fish habitat or stock fish, get permits for aquatic plant removal, or maintain the lake access.”

The Minnesota Lakes Association and The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs republished “A Guidebook for Lake Associations”, that offered the following advice for lakeshore residents:³

*“One of the most valuable and productive things that lakeshore residents can do for protecting or preserving their lake’s water quality is to form an effective lake association. By becoming organized, you create the ability to initiate projects and programs of long-term significance that will lead to a healthier lake. An organized group can have more credibility and clout than any one individual and, as a group, there are more opportunities for education, information, and, ultimately, power. While there is no perfect way to do this, there is one basic rule behind forming a lake association: **if you and others who utilize the lake resource don’t take action to protect your lake, no one else will!** [emphasis added]. The resources which state and local agencies have available are limited. Although they can be effective in some areas of water quality protection, it is unlikely they will have adequate resources to provide the comprehensive protection your lake needs. You also need to know that the longer you wait to take action, the harder your task will be. **The worst thing that you as a lakeshore resident can do, is to simply do nothing.**” [emphasis added].*

The guidebook also points out the complexities and varied elements involved in lake management that can be more fully understood and leveraged by a representative lake association:

² Minnesota Shoreline Management Resource Guide, Organizing a Lake Association. <http://www.d.umn.edu/~seawww/quick/ol.html>

³ “A Guidebook for Lake Associations”, Republished by The Minnesota Lakes Association and The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, 1997. <https://www.d.umn.edu/~seawww/depth/guidebook.pdf>

“What can lakeshore residents do to protect and enhance the water quality of their lake? Plenty! As you proceed through this booklet, you will begin to understand the complexity of the elements of lake management. You'll need to equip yourself with a general basis of understanding of a wide range of topics, including biology, chemistry, geology, administration, and politics. By learning a few basic skills about the organization of activities and the science of lake systems, you will gain the information required to be in charge of your lake's destiny and the quality of the environment in which you live and play.”

So goes the fundamental reason, purpose and function of a lake association. The Big Sugar Bush Lake Area Association bylaws state its purpose as follows:⁴

PURPOSE:

Section 1. The Association shall promote, protect and maintain the environmental and recreational value of Big Sugar Bush Lake area.

Section 2. The Association shall work in conjunction with Federal, State, and Local Agencies and Associations, Public and Private, to maintain the quality of the lake.

Section 3. The Association shall inform the general membership of concerns relating to the purposes of the Association.

Section 4. The Association shall be a non-profit, non-stock organization. No member shall have any ownership interest, legal or equitable, in the corporation.”

Such is our purpose as a lake association. The Big Sugar Bush Lake Area Association has a fine legacy of proven actions to enhance and protect the quality of the lake area environment and its recreational value. It remains incumbent on us to carry it on.



George Wallman's Visitor

Big Black Bear of Big Sugar Bush

By Jimmy Olsen

I think I might have to tell you this story – a story that might save your lives - since we are up here in the north woods on Big Sugar Bush. (*Oh, you're thinking you already know CPR*). No, no, this is a bear story, true bear story.

You see, a few years back, Dan and Kim Grandbois settled into a cabin on Sugar Creek Drive. The cabin once owned by the infamous outdoorsman, story writer and gun expert, James Jasken and his wife Mary Ann. Well, one day in early June, Dan ventured out into the woods about 100 feet off Sugar Creek Drive to clear brush in an opening to eventually build a pole barn on a small parcel of land he purchased. As he bent down to pick up some brush, he noticed something out of the corner of his eye. He looked up, and there was a big black bear staring him face to face. Their eyes locked, Dan's heart was pumping – pump, pump, pump. The bear was maybe 30 feet away. On all fours he was about waist high, weighing about 200 to 300 pounds with big white fangs, and black claws – razor sharp.

Now, most of us would have run for our lives, but Dan, you see, is a bear hunter. He has tracked, baited and shot seven bear (that's right - 7 bear) and seen still others. He knew it was either the bear, or him. But this was the biggest, baddest, bear he had ever encountered. At first Dan tried to scare the bear off with standard tactics of yelling, and waving his arms. But this didn't intimidate the bear – and the bear began to circle him bearing a menacing look. Dan retreated to his only other option – his ATV. He revved up the engine and charged the bear with all four wheels spinning (*You're wondering if it scared him off*), but no, no, an ATV is not going to scare a bear like that. The bear stood its ground. Dan's best efforts were hopeless. At this point, Dan's only choice was to retreat yet again and wait for the bear to eventually wander off into the woods. Dan hasn't seen it since.

But wait, what? Maybe I shouldn't be telling this story to you right now. After all it's the middle of summer when bears are on the prowl in and around Big Sugar Bush. But, no, you have to hear this; after all, as I was saying, it might save your life one day.

(*Now you're thinking "Sure, you bet – a big bad bear in the woods."*) I might have even been skeptical myself; but now I know it must be true – and it is no

made up story. For it was early one morning in July that I came down the stairs of our cabin on North Sugar Bush Heights to engage in the normal routine of making coffee. I looked out the lakeside window to check out the morning and there it was – not the bear, but the after effects of it. The iron bird feeder pole was bent over flat to the ground, the bird feeders crushed and broken, the hummingbird feeder mangled and the residual sugar water exposing bear tracks on the concrete porch. And, right in front of me were giant smears of the bear's paw on the picture window. Its face and breath had likely been right up against the glass. Suddenly, I realized this had really happened; this wasn't a movie or a make-believe story – all that had separated me from that bear was a pane of glass.

You see, once a bear gets a taste for bird seed and sugar water, it craves it. It will do anything it can to get it. That bear had become a bird feeder eater!

(Now you are wondering if it is still around). Well, I hear from my neighbors every now and then – and they tell me about the bird feeder destroyer bear that is roaming about the area, The Big Black Bird Feeder Eater Bear of Big Sugar Bush. Ted Torgeson chased a brownish headed bear off his deck. Bob Backman saw the bear on his lot in broad daylight, and his wife attested to the fact that a bear smashed their mailbox and consumed the cookies she goodheartedly left there for the mailman. Ken Mattson noticed the bear swimming across the lake. Wayne Epperlie's son-in-law saw the bear while waking his dogs along the road. George Wallman was yet another victim of the bear attacking his bird feeder.

And so, you see, he is out there - the crazy, bird feeder eater bear - hungry as ever. So, when you go to bed tonight, if you hear a noise, whatever you do, don't look out the window.



Bear tracks on Sugar Bush Trail (Maplelag Resort) The Big Black Bird Feeder Eater Bear (George Wallman)



Bear swimming across Big Sugar Bush Lake (Ken Mattson) Bear paw smear on window pane (Jimmy Olsen)

Seasons at Sugarbush



taken by George Wallman



Winter taken by Steve Knutson

Spring



Summer Taken by Kay Lommen



Fall taken by Fran Mattson

A history of UP NORTH (once defined as a spot on the map)

by Jim Jasken, former resident

One might say that many come to Big Sugar Bush to relax. I call it that *UP NORTH* feeling. It is that deepest part (soul?) of one's identity that requires a peaceful recharging periodically. Maybe it is called *introspection*.

Some may claim they can find this renewal on a downtown street, or by playing a video game, riding a roaring snowmobile or diving from a plane. I guess I'm not one of them.

Retreating to a lakeshore seems the ideal place to find tranquility. That would be, of course, in an *ideal* world. Folks come to the lake for their own reasons: some seek the benefits of beauty and quietude; others to carouse, to revel in bigger and faster and noisier. For both extents, the gift of common sense becomes a punishment when one has to deal with those who don't have it.

Complaining about it will not bring back Up North. Once Up North was a place on a map, a place of ultimate peacefulness, brought to an observer by unblemished landscapes, air filled with only natural sounds and wood country aromas, fishing a truly quiet bay. Up North, in reality, is mostly history.

It is really no surprise, but a shame, anyway. It was bound to happen. But it happened far too fast... and so soon. I may have done a small part to bring it on. I never thought much about it.

To experience Up North today, we are talking about a *diluted concept*, a state of mind that, knowingly or not, some rarely find. Might some not recognize it if they experienced it? Might they scoff at the "inner peace" thing? Must we accept distractions as *normal* when seeking peace? Does the guy doing whirly-twirls in front of a resident's dock give a rat's butt about the land owner's peace?

Losing the original Up North began hundred of years back. The French brought trade muskets to the Ojibwe, insuring their victory over the Sioux, chasing them from BSB boreal pines. Then, the squeaking and yawing of the oxcart wheels (the annoying squeals could be heard for many miles) broke the area peace. A few trappers and a scattering of Native Peoples were probably amused. The coming of *Commerce* was changing the picture. Who could have fathomed just how fast those changes would come?

President Lincoln instituted the Homestead Act in 1862. Surveyors marked every piece of every township, pounding stakes. The sounds axes and saws interrupted the tranquility of the prairie, the lakes and forests. Settlers sought and found the Up North peace that was lacking in

Europe and the Atlantic Coast, but it didn't last.

Land speculators rushed in. Timber companies controlled huge tracts of virgin land. The *quest for wealth* often trumped good management. Pines blanketed the BSB County. But the topography soon lay barren, other than miles of dry heaps of branch refuse, ripe for fire and erosion. The resulting holocausts killed hundreds of Minnesotans, and the erosion continues today.

Towns were established to accommodate the influx of workers, noise pre-dominated. The Northern Pacific tracks laid in the 1870's, connected our county's west and east lands. It was followed by the Soo Line Railroad, running north and south across Becker County, replacing the overland cart traffic from Pembina to St. Paul.

The huffing of the steam engine replaced the squeaking carts. The train whistle could be heard for eight miles (It still can). Add the internal combustion engine and its huge industrial applications in our area, necessitating road, dam and bridge building. The roar of the early petro powered engines whined and roared as they transported ore, lumber, supplies, and moved the earth. Saw mills howled and whirred.

Finally, recreational use of the engine changed our county. The

Industrial Revolution was a cancer to the peace of Up North.

Today, we have infinitely multiplied the noises and pace of the past century. Finding uninterrupted periods of peace in a specific location remains nebulous, at best. We know that a place where we found that special feeling yesterday, may not be quite so peaceful tomorrow; or possible ever again.

Commerce, industrialization, successful quests for free time and accumulated wealth and the rise of society's pace of busyness all have scared hell out of Up North. It is as recent as 1975 when a resort-owner on Big Sugar Bush refused to sell some youngsters gas for their twenty-something horse-powered outboard because they had been water-skiing on the lake. Whether we find this amusing or not, it is a defining lesson in the evolution of our Lake activities and thought.

Each spring Up North migrates through the duck passes of Red Cabin Bay and ever further northward, returning in various degrees during summer midweeks, and with more permanency on the autumn north winds.

The cost of progress, some might hold, bears a most hefty price tag. Up North just ain't what it used to be.



Sugar Creek Visitors

About the third week of June a number of snapping turtles were sited on Sugar Creek Road coming up to lay their eggs in the newly graveled road. A snapping turtle is not mature until fifteen to twenty years. Snapping turtles can live as long as 100 years. They can weigh over 22 pounds, males being larger than the female. The heaviest specimen known in the wild weighed 75 pounds. They seek sandy soil to lay their eggs, typically depositing 25 to 80 eggs. The incubation period is 9 to 18 weeks, which would mean the turtles sited the third week in June would hatch the eggs likely between the end of Aug and early November.

Big Sugarbush Lake Association Board Members

President: Larry Michelson 2019-2022

Vice President: Ken Mattson 2016-2020

Treasurer: Kay Lommen 2017-2021

Secretary: Kent Anderson 2016-2020

Mary Kohlhepp 2016-2020

Bob Backman 2017-2021

Gary Mohlenkamp 2017-2021

(replacing Joanna Christianson)

John Boots 2020-2022

Ken Bruess 2020-2022

Webmaster: Ross Collins

Web content: Nancy Nornes Olson

Newsletter editor: Fran Mattson

Big Sugar Bush Website: bigsugarbush.net

Facebook page: Big Sugar Bush Lake Association

Reminder to all Boaters

**It is against the law to
operate a watercraft so it's
wash or wake endangers,
harasses or interferes with
any persons or property**

**Submissions for spring 2020 newsletter are due April. 1. Email stories and photos to
fnkmattson@gmail.com**