

# Big Sugar Bush Notes

Fall 2020 Volume 30 Number 2

Hello BSB Neighbors!

The summer is nearing its end here at the lake. It has been the perfect rainy season....we didn't even have to water the sweet corn!

We are continuing to struggle with Covid 19 in our area. Because of this we have been unable to hold many of our usual get-togethers which will include our 2020 BSB Lake Association annual meeting and the sweet corn feed.

Also because of Covid, the Board had a virtual meeting on August 9. Outcomes of the meeting were:

- Gary Mohlenkamp resigned from the Board effective immediately. The Board appointed Jim Olson to replace him.
- Kay Lohman resigned her position as Treasurer of the Lake Association. Bob Bachman was appointed to take that position.
- Kent Anderson resigned as Secretary of the Lake Association but will remain on the Board. John Boots was appointed to replace Kent as Secretary.
- All other positions on the Board will remain the same until we have the next full Association meeting in June of 2021.
- Thank you to Gary, Kay and Kent for their contributions to the Lake Association and Board in their positions.
- The Board decided to take no further action against the over population of beaver on the lake this year. This will be reviewed again in the Spring. We had a local trapper tell us that he believes we still have over 100 beaver on the lake after he trapped earlier this year.

Also, we are pleased to have 89 paid Association members this year. This is a very good percentage of paid members and we appreciate everyone's participation and support of the Association. Each paid member should receive a copy of the "latest and greatest" directory, as well as a map of the lake with all landowner's sites. If you have not received these yet, please contact me and I will get you one.

Research is taking place this fall by St. Anthony Fall Laboratory (University of MN) related to the height and energy of waves and also the depth and force of propeller wash generated by wake boats and other large watercraft. This research will help us better understand and quantify their impacts on lake bottoms and shorelines. No further action by the Big Sugar Bush Lake Association is planned until the results of the university study is known.

Big Sugar Bush is the place to be!

Larry Michelson, President



**Congratulations Mark Jenson,  
Detroit  
Lakes Schools new superintendent**

**Update: St. Anthony Falls  
Laboratory (SAFL) Wake and Prop  
Wash Study**

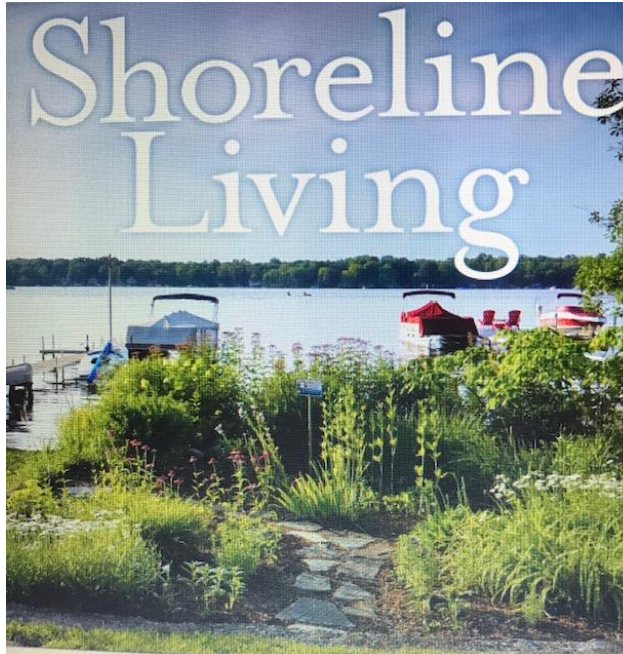
- As of August 14, donations of \$80,865 had been received. Additional known donation commitments have assured that the \$94,000 goal will be reached and, very likely, exceeded. Of note is that many of the donations have come from organizations and individuals outside of Minnesota, including a donation of \$10,000 from a Michigan organization.
- **The SAFL team of scientists plans to conduct their on-the-water research in September and will have data available by early January.**

**The Next Generation** by Fran Mattson

Last summer there was a celebration on Lake Sally, west of DL, acknowledging 100 years of one family being property owners on the lake. Big Sugar Bush was not really developed until the 1960's, so there is nothing that lengthy here, but numerous properties have already evolved into the next generation. Some of those into the next generation are Penny Aquire, the Robson's, Lacina's. Jenson's, Bergen's, McBride's, Frasee's, and Sinkler's. As families gather together by the lake multi-generations can spend time in nature strengthening family ties.

Area visitors may come to the lake possibly for an afternoon of fishing or canoeing, but it is the property owners who have a responsibility to care for the lake environment. This was verified by a Concordia study. There is a lake in southern Mn where the property owners actually taxed themselves as they knew it was important to protect the lake environment from aquatic invasive species which had become a significant problem on the lake. This is one example of property owners taking their responsibility seriously.

As we spend time with children, grandchildren, and other relatives at Big Sugar Bush Lake, it is important to set a good example in terms of our respect for the environment. Attitudes aren't always taught but rather caught by observations of your words and actions. We may be the caretakers today but, the future of the lake environment will pass on to future generations.



**This Shoreline Living 28-page booklet can be downloaded at the following website** [http://midwestglaciallakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/VBCD\\_2020\\_ShorelineLiving\\_WEB.pdf](http://midwestglaciallakes.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/VBCD_2020_ShorelineLiving_WEB.pdf)

This booklet is put out by Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership. It gives good tips related to managing lake property naturally. It reminds us that lakes are living systems. All lakes need clean water to support the organisms that sustain life up and down the food chain. The Lake Stewards Program recommends 75% native cover up to 25 feet from the water. Here are some key take away points from the booklet:



- \*On undeveloped waterfront, first “do not harm.” Before you cut or remove anything, take inventory of the native plants and trees that are already there.
- \*Look for any terrain between the house and lake that will be prone to erosion. Design your walkways to protect such places.
- \*Serve on your lake association as a friendly advocate for shoreline habitat.
- \*Shrubs growing along your property boundaries and shoreline create privacy and serenity.
- \*Don’t forget the value of near-shore woody debris, such as down logs or aquatic shrubs, which are havens for fish and wildlife.

**The US Post Office wants to remind those of us receiving mail at our lake address that the Post Office has requirements for the proper placement of our mailbox.**

The bottom of the box should be between 41 and 45 inches off the ground. Check your height even if it was correctly installed several years ago. With the addition of road gravel many of the boxes have essentially been lowered

The ground between the box and the road should be level. The delivery folks have occasionally slipped off the road in the winter delivering to boxes around the lake where the ground under the box is not level with the road.

**Recycling Pointers** by Bob Bachman

- You may have noticed that in the past year there have been some changes to our big blue recycling bins.
- Plastic (#1-#7), metal and cartons are now combined in one bin. This includes aluminum, tin, steel cans (no need to remove labels and small pieces of scrap metal, yogurt containers, milk and juice cartons. It does NOT include plastic bags or plastic wrap. This cannot be recycled in Becker County and must be put in the garbage. Leave caps on all plastic bottles. If loose they jam machinery. Remove all plastic bags, otherwise the staff have to do it.
- The paper bin now includes office paper, newspaper, phone books, junk mail, paperboard such as cereal boxes. Shredded paper must be in a bag otherwise it tends to jam machinery.
- The cardboard bin is only for corrugated cardboard boxes. Pizza boxes or freezer food boxes are considered contaminated and must be thrown in the trash. Break down all boxes.
- Glass includes all colors of glass but does NOT include window and ceramic dishes which must be placed in the trash. Remove caps from glass bottles.
- Trash and food products can cause an entire load to be rejected. Throw it in the trash.
- Appliances, fluorescent bulbs, passenger tires (limit 4), old extension cords, automobile oil, used oil filters can be brought to the transfer station for NO charge recycling.
- Electronics, demolition material, household garbage can also be brought to the transfer station but there is a nominal fee.
- Household Hazardous Waste including paint, pesticides, automobile products, and household cleaners, can also be dropped off at the Transfer station.
- The Transfer Station is located at 24413 County Rd 144, Detroit Lakes, right off of Highway 59. 218-847-6382.
- The recycle bins on County 34, generate over \$300, for our township. The bins in Richwood generate funds for Richwood township. The main thing is to recycle which ever location works.



Photo by Julie Barsgard

## BSB Pizza Masters

If you ever have the good fortune to be invited for pizza at the Mueller's,



700 degrees for 3 minutes and you are in for a gourmet treat.



## **A Fisher in the Woods**

*By Jimmy Olsen*

Firsthand experience of the activities and happenings around us are essential to a more complete understanding of community in and around Big Sugar Bush. While many of us seasonal lakeshore owners think we know a thing or two about the lake and our cabins, we can all be surprised by the wonders and mystery of nature in the surrounding woods.

That was the case for me and our family this summer when we came upon a creature unknown to us. As our family dog barked and jumped up and down, we wondered what it was that had young "Cheeto" so excited. When we looked, there it was about 50 feet up an old oak tree clinging tenaciously in between two branches. It looked about the size of an ordinary red fox, about two feet long with a tail about a foot in length. It was slender with a dark brown color to its fur. Its head was relatively wide and its small ears laid low on its head. It obviously had very stout and curved claws to be able to climb the tree so ably.

Since we were baffled as to what animal it was, we did the logical thing – ask a resident neighbor what they thought. Bryan Christensen, who owns and raises chickens, knows a lot about animals so we asked him. Without seeing it in person he guessed it may be a pine marten. This was likely because pine martens are said to be expert climbers, and are as much at home among the trees as a squirrel. They bare

a strong resemblance to the mink, only they are a little larger in size; however, their ears were very much larger.

Reports are that the pine marten is only about the size of a common house cat, though standing much lower on account of the shortness of the legs. The length of the head and body is about a foot and a half, more or less; the tail with the hair is a foot long or less. Further the pine marten has a fur color with a tint that may with propriety be termed an orange brown, considerably clouded with black on the back and belly, and exhibiting on flanks and throat more of an orange tint. This gave us doubt that we had seen a pine marten.

Calling upon a wise veteran of the Big Sugar Bush woods, Jim Jasken, seemed a prudent thing to do at this point. After all, he has a brother that is a known expert trapper and has encountered most of the resident animals of the BSB woods. John Boots has a Fisher skin in his basement that he obtained from Mr. Jasken.

After sending a picture of the mystery animal to the Jaskens the conclusion was we had not a pine marten, but a Fisher in our tree. This was notable because Fishers were once considered essentially extinct from the woods of Big Sugar Bush and Becker County ("A Pioneer History of Becker County Minnesota", by Alvin H. Wilcox, Pioneer Press, St. Paul, MN, 1907). Since the 1970's however, it seems the Fisher has made a comeback and is once again thriving in our woods. According to the University of Minnesota (Duluth) there

currently are more than 10,000 throughout the northern Minnesota habitat region.

So now I feel somewhat more knowledgeable about the critters that roam the woods of BSB while still recognizing that there is much to learn and experience in the animal wonderland of Big Sugar Bush.

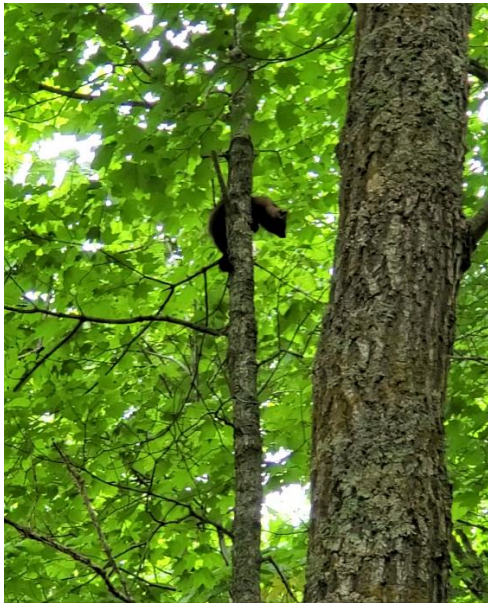
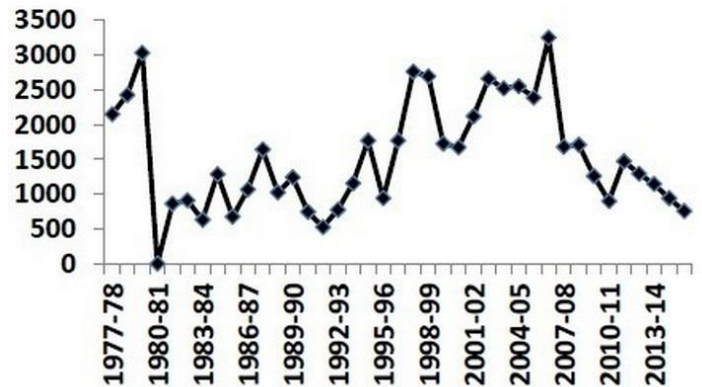


Photo by Jimmy Olson

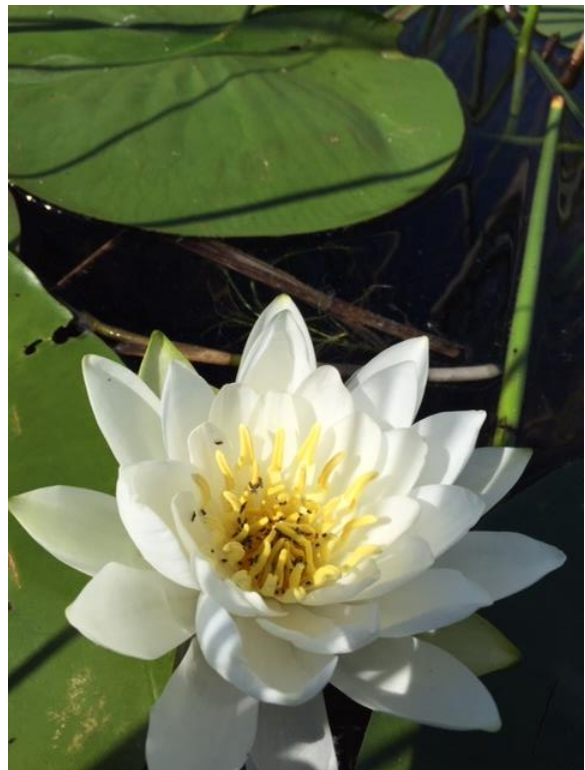


A Fisher in our tree  
Close-up of a Fisher (U of MN Duluth website)

### MN Fisher Harvest



Minnesota Fisher harvest since late 1970's (University of MN Duluth Website).



The white water lily requires quiet waters because it is rooted to the lake bottom.

## **MN Lake Associations** by Fran Mattson

A Concordia College study found that the main purpose of lake association is the preservation and protection of the lake as is the case with the Big Sugar Bush Lake Association. There are over 599 lake associations in Mn. Individuals donate 1.2 million volunteer hours annually including AIS inspection attendance of meetings, water quality testing and community education and outreach activities. Residents of this lake donate hundreds of hours each year dealing with all of the above and much more. We have been fortunate to have good leadership from the early years in protecting the natural habitat of the lake.

The top three concerns of lake association in MN are AIS, water quality, and runoff control. Our residents and the lake association have been active in all of these areas. Not only have our local volunteers worked in these areas but they have also brought in specialists from such agencies as Becker County Soil and Water and the Department of Natural Resources.

We promote 100% membership in the Big Sugar Bush Lake Association, so send in your membership fee each year. At this time, it is only \$20, which is far less than other lake associations. Those funds go to protect BSB and support other environmental organizations and support systems. Be an active participant in supporting your lake association.

## **FISH HEALTH & POPULATIONS AT BSB** by Jim Jasken

(some research and a bit of speculation...)

I'm betting there are as many Big Sugar Bushers asking *what happened to the good fishing?* as there are others complimenting themselves for their good luck on the lake. The truth be told, the former question is a complaint, while the latter's comment is best kept a secret. Good fishermen catch many good fish here. But if one casted an eye over the many dozens of fish houses that dotted the north end of the lake last winter, concern might be warranted. Most were locals and many Native, whose tribal sunfish limit is 30 per day with no possession limit.

Let's be realistic. Research tells us that fish numbers and sizes do change in a particular body of water over time. Maybe fishing is not what it was 50 years ago. We know that stories of success with the rod or pole are ingratiated over the decades. Memory, we must admit, is not a sure science. My fishing buddy claims the fish seem smaller when taken from the live well compared to when we put them in.

What might be current factors for these variations of size and numbers of fish in a particular water? And what are the facts? Much recent research assists our understanding.

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE FISH GROWTH & SIZE:** (health and abundance)

1. interaction amongst species
2. food web
3. environmental factors
4. habitat loss
5. invasive species
6. stock recruitment (annual numbers of young)
7. overharvest, lack of catch & release practices
8. Pollution
9. lake temperature PH level

10. lake water level
11. water turbidity
12. lake recreational activity
13. available fishing info: internet, social media, research and development, tackle manufacturers' releases, fishing shows and publications
14. fishing pressure
15. appropriate regulations and enforcement

Balanced INTER-ACTION AMONGST THE SPECIES is essential for lake health. How does a balance become tilted? OVERHARVEST is one. When the largest of the northern pike are harvested, the predator-prey relationship can be skewed (Flecker, 1996), promoting a large growth of stunted small northern (lacking the control mechanism of the larger predators). Overpopulation of small northern may stress food sources which also feed other species. This is the FOOD WEB consideration. When a population is stressed, disease can also become an issue. An armory of modern fishing aids has not helped maintain the historical numbers of several species. Graphs, GPS systems, aquatic cameras and imagery equipment of incredible definition mean there are no more underwater secrets regarding structure, a key to much fishing success. The old man and his granddaughter in a wooden rowboat is history, relegated to calendar stock. The proliferation of fishing information is at record levels. Yet, we expect the fish to maintain their historic population numbers.

Overharvesting of the largest bluegills (the most successful of the spawners) allow smaller fish of lesser genetic quality to reproduce (MN DNR study), resulting in a smaller average fish. In some waters INVASIVE SPECIES have entered the food chain or changed the food chain by altering the lake bottom or water clarity.

Traditional spawning areas have been made sterile for walleye spawning by invasives covering the needed bottom content. Walleyes are very specific about their spawning environment. Such needed walleye-spawning shoreline has always been very rare at BSB. DNR netting research here indicates the presence of "year classes" of walleyes when no stocking was done. Those are our "shore spawners." Walleyes in northern lakes are most susceptible to negative forces if the water should warm. Some predictions say that walleyes will be less evident in southern Minnesota lakes if the waters warm just a few degrees.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS are many. Air pollution has affected many fresh water lakes. Lawn fertilizers, garden chemicals and insecticides wreak havoc with lake quality. Lawns near the water should be maintained only with a buffer zone of growth which help cleanse the residual run-off waters.

Deep water environments are not ignored in research, though it has been slow in coming. Particles from as deep as 25 feet have been blown from the bottom and suspended in the water column by large-sized motors, according to a Canadian study. Recent studies relate to negative shoreline water and environment changes for waves from powerboats. Big Sugar Bush, after all, is the remains of a pre-history *river*. A boater is never far from shallow water here. BSB is affected by some of these factors in varying degrees.

My optimism for those who work so hard to preserve the quality of life at the lake runs to admiration. Since this piece of prehistoric river was developed relatively late in time, there is yet much to protect. In fishing some Park Rapids area lakes, I find many lakes have lost what progressives at BSB work so hard to preserve.

HABITAT LOSS simply cannot be reversed. Land that is developed into small pieces and sold as lots can never be returned to its former state. Similarly, shoreline that has been abused is a tough challenge to restore. A bed of bulrushes removed takes years to rejuvenate back to spawning status. This damage of shoreline affects STOCK RECRUITMENT.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON FISHING- Fishing information and how-to videos are available at the push of a button. It was once said that someone who read a good book and was more than 20 miles from home was an expert. Today's fishers bring significant knowledge to the task, much more so than even a decade ago.

Sugar Bush's greatest assets at this time are two-fold: limited development and acres of virgin attached (mostly undevelopable) spawning and "nursery" acreages. I am delighted by the news that lake residents continue to purchase adjacent acreages near Big Sugar Bush. When it is in a developer's financial interest, there will come another push for off-lake development, proposing a single lake access for many off lake lots. It has nearly happened here (if not for some vigilant residents) in the past. This threat will return.

Secondly, BSB has attached to it (through channels and beaver runs) many acres of spawning grounds for most species. High water helps fish find adequate quality areas to reproduce. In addition, if you consider "Bullert's Bay" to the far northwest (Jim Kaiser) a part of the lake feeder system for fish reproduction as I do, the future is very bright for most of our species.

Considering the number of pro-active quality-concerned volunteers evident at our BSB, the future speaks to one of quality maintenance, even improvement. The residents' purchase of the priceless fourteen-acre island that we see at the center of our environs each day attests to the special spirit here in the Bush Country. The driving force behind this potential positive is the great community effort that promotes the common good.

**NOTE: factors that influence fishing success on a particular day:** water depth, clarity and temperature, weed presence (algae bloom?), weed varieties, bait/lure selection, bait/lure speed, depth and color, time of day, moon phase, barometric pressure (rising, falling or steady), recent bait hatches, rod-reel-line selection, presence of forage and wind direction and velocity. Did I mention dumb luck? Happy fishing!



### FISHING WITH GEORGE by Jim Jasken

Fishing with George is like being a young priest accompanying the Bishop. Never turn down an invitation to fish with him.

You'd think a guy who has conquered the academic world, who has a building as big as a football field named after him wouldn't have the time or even the inclination to fish walleyed pike.

The first time I fished walleyes with the Dr. W. (he always insisted on taking his boat), he picked me up at our dock. He roared us to a spot where I had never ever fished walleyes. *Nothing impressive about this*, I mused. That's when he offered me a leech.

Oh, I had caught some fish on leeches, even sunfish, but never before considered the "blood suckers" more than a curiosity. George pulled one from his container that was as large as a 1957 ski strap. It would have stretched over half a ruler in length and cover the width.

"You've got be to kidding me," I exclaimed, "I've clean fish with smaller fillets than those leeches."

We fished the area that he claimed he had caught fish before. I wondered if I were being *taken for a ride*, you know, like the snipe hunt after dark? We caught nothing there, not even a "tap."

So, we roared to another *honey-spot*. After fifteen minutes we were fishless. My gut feeling is that the fish were scared of our baits. "Where did you get these leeches?" I asked.

"Oh, they come from up north," he casually offered. I usually like secrets.

As the setting sun neared the tree-tops, George intimated he had one more place to try. Now, I knew this spot, and had caught some fish there.

So, we began at 27 feet, slowly ascending to a 16-foot flat, his boat barely moving. My impression was that if we caught anything on these monster baits, they would be stuck to the cheek of a pike and just refused to let go.

Suddenly George stiffened, wholly immersed in a slow line departure from his reel. "Got to be a big one," he confided, "it just keeps going."

"Probably a northern," I opined.

"Not at this depth. And it's a big one!"

A minute passed. *What is he thinking*, I wondered.

Another half minute.

“George, she’s got to be on there by now!” I blurt. He slowly took up slack line.

“Still there,” he confirmed. With a major hoist of his light rod George set the hook.

Two minutes later a 28 incher flops in the net. “About eight?” he questioned, knowing full well that a twenty-eight-inch walleye was an eight pounder.

“Yeah, I’d say so.” I tried to be casual. “Too big to eat,” I asserted.

“Eat? I don’t eat fish. I’m allergic to them.” With that he gently placed the fish head downward into the water and watched it disappear into the calm dusk water.

Two more passes and I land a 22 incher. “Perfect for four people,” I declared, sliding the fish into the live well.

“What do you think of my leeches, now?”

I began to think that George was like the elk guide who takes a fellow on a week-long hunt. He allows the nimrod to thrash through poor country for four days, then scores big just before it is time to depart. Perfect hunt, I suppose, and a big tip.

We landed one more fish. I should admit that George caught it after another minute of romancing the leech; twenty-six inches, six pounds. Of course, he released it. He’s allergic, you know.

“Ah, let’s give ‘er up,” he suggested.

“What?” I exclaimed, “George, the sun hasn’t even set! The best is yet to come!”

“Naw, I think I’ve had enough for one day,” he responded, “the mosquitos will be out in half an hour.”

As we roared back to the dock, I couldn’t help but wonder if George might just be allergic to mosquitoes, too, and small leeches. Maybe his boat turns into a pumpkin at the dark, I thought. maybe his leeches were on a time-sensitive steroid feeding schedule?

George dropped me off at the dock and I walked up to our cabin. Mary Ann asked how we did.

“That’s pretty good,” she observed. “Did you offer him a tip?”

“No,” I said, “he wouldn’t tell me where he got his leeches.”



Taken from his obituary

Jerry Amundson, 74, died unexpectedly Aug. 10, 2020, of natural causes. He grew up in Moorhead and attended school there through college. He worked thirty-nine years for the 3M company. He was a high school football player, who continued enjoying sports, hunting, travel, and much more. He was a long time Big Sugar Bush resident and past board member, who loved spending time at the lake with family. Our sincere condolences to his family.

**Reminder: Drive carefully. Our lake roads are very narrow with many hills and curves. There are speed limit signs posted-SLOW DOWN!**

**Big Sugar Bush Lake Association**

Since the annual meeting was cancelled due to covid 19, existing board members are extended till our next annual meeting.

Board Members

President: Larry Michelson 2019-2022

Vice President: Ken Mattson 2016-2020

Treasurer: Bob Backman 2017-2021

Secretary: John Boots 2020-2022

Mary Kolhepp 2016-2020

Kent Anderson 2016-2020

Jimmy Olson (replacing Gary Mohlenkamp) 2017-2021

George Wallman 2017-2021 (replacing Kay Lohman)

Ken Bruss 2020-2022

Webmaster: Ross Collins

Web content: Nancy Nornes Olson

Newsletter editor: Fran Mattson

Website: [bigsugarbush.net](http://bigsugarbush.net)

Facebook page: Big Sugar Bush Lake Association

All photos not indicated otherwise were taken by Fran Mattson. Submissions for spring 2021 newsletter are due Apr. 1, 2021. Email stories and photos to [fnkmattson@gmail.com](mailto:fnkmattson@gmail.com)