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April 2015

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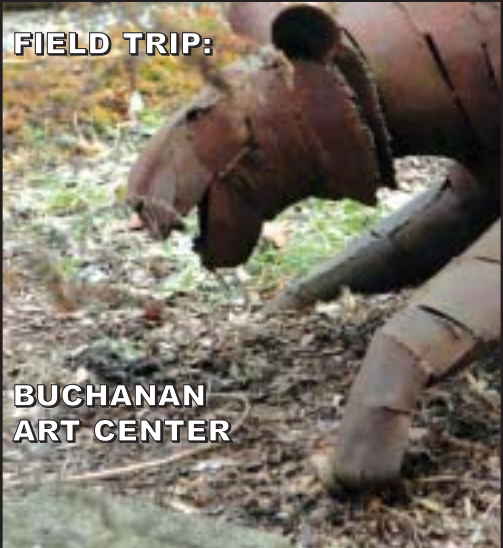
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Neighbors is published monthly from March through December.

Neighbors

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# REGIONAL NEWS

## Federal Employees to meet

The National Association of Active & Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter will hold their monthly meeting on April 28 at 6 pm at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired/current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 782 2769 or e-mail [jeanrowe70@comcast.net](mailto:jeanrowe70@comcast.net).

## Beckwith Theatre Company presents "God of Carnage"

Find out what happens when adults stop being polite and start getting real in Yasmina Reza's Tony award-winning dark comedy "God of Carnage" at the Beckwith Theatre in Dowagiac on April 9-12. When a fight breaks out between two boys on the playground, their parents meet for what begins as a civil discussion. As tempers spark and truths are exposed, an all-out verbal brawl ensues. For mature audiences only.

Friday & Saturday, April 9-11 at 7:30 pm; Sunday, April 12 at 2 pm. Tickets for the shows are \$10; Call 782-7653 to make reservations.

The Beckwith Theatre is located at 100 New York Avenue, Dowagiac.

For more information, visit the Beckwith Facebook page or call the Beckwith Theatre at 782-7653.

## Smith's Chapel open house rescheduled to June 13

The open house at Smith's Chapel near Niles has been rescheduled to June 13, from 10 am - 2 pm.

Learn about the history of the oldest

church in Southwestern Michigan. The chapel is located at 29858 Redfield Rd., Niles, MI 49120. For more information call 932-5242.

## 4-H Leaders plan auction

A silent and Live auction will be held on Sat. April 11 at the Cass County Fairgrounds, Gregrarick building, 590 N. O'Keefe Street, Cassopolis. The auction begins at 11 am; you may preview items beginning at 10 am. A food booth will be available. This annual fundraiser is fun for the family and supports the programs provided by the 4-H Leaders' Assoc. for the 4-H youth of Cass County and the surrounding counties that participate in the 4-H program in Cass County. The 4-H Leaders' Assoc. provides scholarships for educational trips to MSU Exploration Days, Citizen Washington Focus, College Scholarships, county workshops and leader training along with other programs and events.

Check their website at <http://www.cass-county4hleaders.org> to see the list of items to be auctioned. New items are being added to sale list daily so check back often. Contact person for the auction is Bonnie McCarthy at 445-2686 or the MSU Extension - Cass Co. office at 445-4438

## Art Show planned

The Cass County and Michiana art show DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH will be in Cassopolis on the Lowe Center grounds on July 4 to entertain summer residents from the many lakes and towns of Cass County and Michiana who will be waiting for the night time fireworks to begin.

Cass Area Artists are hoping to attract 50 to 75 artists for the juried event intended to appeal to the discerning buyer. Visit their website at [www.cass-areaartist.com](http://www.cass-areaartist.com) to learn more about the group and the art show.

For more information call Tom Rose at 228-8047.

## COA to host nationally known Alzheimer's, Demential expert

The Cass County COA Lowe Center will present Teepa Snow, a nationally recognized expert on dementia care and education, at a special Dementia Conference on Tuesday, May 12 from 9 am to 4 pm. Session 1, from 9 am-noon, is designed for Professionals in the Caregiving field. Session 2 from 1-4 pm, is designed for caregivers involved in the day-to-day hands-on caring of individuals with dementia.

Snow has over 33 years of clinical experience in geriatrics and dementia care. She is an advocate for those living with dementia and has made it her personal mission to help families and professionals better understand how it feels to be living with such challenges. Snow seeks to change and improve life for everyone involved. She has taught at medical schools and post-doctoral programs, health professional programs, colleges and universities, community colleges, and community centers. As one of America's leading educators on dementia, Snow has developed a dementia care philosophy reflective of her education, work experience, medical research, and first hand caregiving experiences.

Session 1 of the COA's Dementia Conference is open to healthcare professionals, members of law enforcement, emergency management teams, legal professionals and anyone whose profession puts them in contact with an individual who might be dealing with dementia. Session 1 will teach how to communicate, understand behaviors and offer practical tips. The session is \$20 per person.

Session 2 is for all caregivers and will explain how to build hands-on caregiving skills for various stages of dementia. This fee for this afternoon session is \$10 per person.

Lunch will be served that day from noon to 1 pm at a fee of \$5 per person.

For additional information, contact the COA Lowe Center at 445-8110.

## Earth Day Celebration set

Earth & Stars Concert/Celebration will be Saturday, May 16 from 3-9pm (& later) at Dr. T.K. Lawless Park in Vandalia. Activities will include: Hands-on educational displays, Storyteller/naturalist Wil Redding, magician John Dudley, Lake Milton Raptor Education Center exhibit, John VanHattum-Juggling at large, Naturalist Bill Westrate guided hike, The ChillBilys Bluegrass, The Winsom Hags folks songs and storytelling, Lee Holdrige singer/songwriter and Michiana Astronomical Society speakers cake walk — and come dressed as your favorite species for the All Species Parade.

Call 506-8334 for more information.

## Reptiles and amphibians at St. Patrick's County Park (IN)

Preschoolers and an accompanying adult will learn how to identify reptiles and amphibians found in Indiana from 9:30 to 11 am on Thursday, April 16 at St. Patrick's County near South Bend.

The class includes story time, hands-on nature activities, an outdoor hike and a craft. Please dress for the weather.

Registration and payment is required

Monday prior to program. For more information call 574/654-3155.

## Bendix Woods County Park offers programs for home-school families

This spring, the St. Joseph County (IN) Parks invite home school families to explore habitats and the creatures that depend on them.

The programs will take place at Bendix Woods County Park from 10 to 11:30 am. The fee is \$3 per child.

Programs include: Thursday, April 23: Fields: Learn to use binoculars to study a field, and collect insects with sweep nets to get a close look at some field creatures; and Thursday, May 21: Ponds: Scoop in the pond to discover who lives there, and help to create a hilarious frog chorus!

The programs are geared towards children five to 10 years old, although older and younger children are welcome as well. Advance registration is required by the Tuesday prior to the program.

Bendix Woods County Park is located on State Road 2, nine miles west of the US 20 Bypass in South Bend.

## Civil War exhibit in Edwardsburg

The Civil War, an exhibit commemorating the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War will be held at the Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum on April 18 through May 26. The exhibit will include battle and battlefield models and scrapbooks created by eighth grade students at the Edwardsburg Middle School and an hour-long playlist of videos on the 14th, 15th, and 16th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution by students at Edwardsburg High School. The exhibit also will include artifacts, photographs and short biographies of Edwardsburg area residents who served in the war.

At 7 pm on April 23, at the museum, Edwardsburg Middle School Teacher Erin Souchick will speak on "Forgotten Soldiers: the Role of Native Americans in the War Between the States." Souchick was honored in 2008 by the local and state chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) with the History Award for Teaching."

The museum hours for the last two weeks in April will be 1-4 pm Thursdays and Fridays, and 11 am to 2 pm on Saturdays. The Museum will begin its regular seasonal schedule beginning May 5. Hours will be 1-4 pm Tuesdays through Fridays, and 11 am to 2 pm on Saturdays. Contact: Jo-Ann Boepple, museum president, 663-8408, for more information.

## Cass County Great Start April Play Groups, Parent Coalition Meeting

Cass County parents and caregivers of children ages 0-6 are invited to join us for "Spring" activities at April's Great Start Play Groups. Meet other parents and allow your child to socialize with other children their age. Play Groups will feature spring themed activities to do with your child as well as play areas that encourage developmental skills. We are excited to announce we are now offering Play Groups at local libraries. The Parent Coalition will also be hosting its monthly meeting during the April 22 Play Group. Each child will take home the book The Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear by Don and Audrey Wood. A snack will also be provided. You are welcome to join any or all of the Play Groups and are encouraged to bring along friends and family. There is no cost to attend.

Play Groups at Squires 9:30-11:00 April 7, 8, 15, 22, 28 and 29

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# REGIONAL NEWS

April 22 — Parent Coalition Meeting  
Community Play Groups 9:30-10:30  
am, April 14 at Edwardsburg Library,  
April 21 at Cass District Library-Main  
Branch

Play Groups are held in the Play  
Group Room in the Early Childhood  
Wing of Squires in Cassopolis, located at  
725 Center St. Please use the York St.  
entrance to the back side of the building  
and enter in the Play Group Room Door.  
If Lewis Cass ISD or Cassopolis Schools  
are closed/delayed, the Play Group will  
be cancelled. Community Play Groups will  
be held at the local libraries named. If  
the school district the library is in or  
Lewis Cass ISD is closed/delayed, the  
Play Group will be cancelled. For more  
information please contact Vicki Foote at  
vfoote@lewisassisd.org or call 445-6283.

## Up-cycle plastic lids at St. Patrick's County Park (IN)

Lids! Lids! Lids! Make fun decora-  
tions, or anything you can imagine, out of  
plastic lids! Program will be held at St.  
Patrick's County Park (South Bend) on  
Saturday, April 11, from 9-11 am, in the  
Brown Barn. Participants will also learn  
about recycling from a special guest from  
the St. Joseph County Solid Waste  
Management District. They have a huge  
collection of lids in all sizes and colors,  
but feel free to bring your own too. All  
materials provided. Designed for ages 5  
and up, with adult help. Program is  
FREE, but registration required by April  
6 at 574-654-3155.

## Free skin cancer screenings

The American Cancer Society, along

with Allegan General Hospital,  
Kalamazoo Dermatology, Southwest  
Michigan Dermatology, Three Rivers  
Specialty Clinic and Van Buren County  
Health Department are offering free skin  
cancer screenings to help find the disease  
early and educate the community about  
being sun smart.

Screenings will be held at the Van  
Buren County Health Department, 57418  
CR 681 in Hartford on Wednesday, May  
6, from 1:30 - 4:30 pm; Three Rivers  
Specialty Clinic, 711 S Health Parkway  
in Three Rivers on Thursday, May 7,  
from 1:30 - 4:30 pm; Kalamazoo  
Dermatology, 6100 Newport Rd., Suite  
100 in Portage on Monday, May 11, from  
9 am - noon; and Allegan General  
Hospital, 555 Linn Street in Allegan on  
Wednesday, May 13 from 1:30 - 4:30 pm.

Appointments are required and slots  
fill up quickly. To schedule an appoint-  
ment at Van Buren County Health  
Department or Kalamazoo Dermatology,  
call your American Cancer Society at  
(269) 349-8710. For Three Rivers  
Specialty Clinic appointments, please call  
(269) 273-9691. For Allegan General  
Hospital appointments, please call (269)  
686-4231.

Skin cancer is the most common of  
all cancers. It's estimated that more than  
two million people will be diagnosed with  
skin cancer this year in the United States  
according to the American Cancer  
Society. Malignant melanoma, the most  
serious form of skin cancer, claims more  
than one life every hour.

According to the Society, melanoma  
— the deadliest form of skin cancer — is  
expected to be diagnosed in about 73,870

Americans in 2015. Ann Moenke,  
Account Representatives, Hospital  
Systems for the American Cancer  
Society, notes there are many risk factors  
for melanoma: overexposure to UV radi-  
ation (sunlight); presence of atypical or  
numerous moles (more than 50); fair skin  
with blond or red hair; family history;  
and a weak immune system.

For more information on skin cancer  
detection or prevention, visit cancer.org.

## New Michigan fishing license

The Department of Natural  
Resources reminds anglers that a new  
fishing license season began on April 1,  
which coincides with the new regulation  
cycle. All 2014 fishing licenses were good  
through March 31, 2015.

Anglers have five options to choose  
from when making their purchases. All  
fishing licenses are good for all species.

The options are:

Resident Annual - \$26  
Non-Resident Annual - \$68  
Senior Annual (for residents age 65 or  
older) - \$11  
24-Hour (resident or non-resident) - \$10  
72-Hour (resident or non-resident) - \$30

Residents and non-residents also can  
purchase the Hunt/Fish combo license for  
\$76 and \$266, respectively, that consists  
of a base license, annual fishing license  
and two deer tags. A base license is not  
required when just purchasing a fishing  
license. There is also a Hunt/Fish combo  
license available to senior residents for  
\$43.

There are two simple ways to pur-  
chase a fishing license in Michigan:

1. Visit a local license retailer or DNR

Customer Service Center and make a  
purchase in person.

2. Use the E-License system to buy a  
license online 24 hours a day, seven days  
a week. Just visit [www.mdnr-elicense.com](http://www.mdnr-elicense.com) on  
a computer, smartphone or tablet to get  
started.

For more information on fishing in  
Michigan, visit [michigan.gov/fishing](http://michigan.gov/fishing).

## Money Smart Workshops: Budgets, Financing, and SBA Loans

On Tuesday April 21 at 8:45 am to  
Thursday April 23 at 10:30, SCORE  
Michiana is partnering with 1st Source  
Bank to celebrate Money Smart Week.  
During the week they will be offering  
three free seminars: "Starting a Business  
101: How to Plan and Budget" is  
Tuesday, April 21, "Financing a Business  
101" is Wednesday, April 22, and "Small  
Business Administration (SBA)  
Financing: Nuts and Bolts" is Thursday,  
April 23.

All workshops are from 8:45-10:30  
am at National College, 1030 E. Jefferson  
Blvd., South Bend.

For more info or to register contact  
Michiana SCORE at 574-310-8097.

## On the cover

Because of a reader's request we will  
be identifying the location of the cover  
photo this year. The photo this week  
shows two swans on the recently thawed  
surface of Birch Lake.

Last week's photo was a stream that  
flows out of Shavehead Lake. The photo  
was taken near the intersection of Carter  
Lake and Rainbow streets.

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# REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

April 9-12 "God of Carnage," Beckwith Theatre, Dowagiac, \$10, 782-7653

April 7 — Maximizing Social Security, COA Cassopolis, 6-8:30 pm, 445-8110

April 9 — Maximizing Social Security, COA Front Street Crossing, Dowagiac, 445-8110

April 9 — Computer support, COA Cassopolis, 8 am - noon, 445-8110

April 10 — Family Movie, 1 pm, Free and open to the public. Call for title. Cass District Library- Main Library, 445-3400

April 11 — Trivia night, COA Cassopolis, 6 pm, 445-8110

April 11 — 4H Leaders silent and live auction, Cass County Fairgrounds, Gregrarick building, Cassopolis, 10 am preview; auction starts at 11 am, 445-2686 or 445-4438

April 11 — St. Patrick's County Park (So. Bend) up-cycling of plastic lids for children age 5 and up, 9-11 am, free, registration required by April 6, 574-654--3155

April 16 — Author Visit: Cheri Hallwood, 6 pm, Author will talk about new chapter book Frogwilla; snacks and craft included. Cass District Library- Howard Branch, 684-1680

April 16 — Preschooler class on reptiles and amphibians, 9:30 - 11 am, 574-654-3155

April 16 — Computer Support, COA Front Street Crossing, Dowagiac, 8 am - noon, 445-8110

April 17 — Computer Support, COA Front

Street Crossing, Dowagiac, 9-11 am, 445-8110

April 18-26 — Civil War exhibit, Edwardsburg Area Historical Museum 663-8408

April 21 — Beginner Cake Decorating Class, 6-8 pm, Space is limited, cost is \$10. Call to register. Cass District Library- Main Library, 445-3400

April 23 — St. Joseph County (IN) Parks program on using binoculars for home school families, 10-11:30 am, \$3/child

April 23 — Edwardsburg Middle School teacher Erin Souchick speaking on the role of Native Americans in the Civil War, 7 pm, 663-8408

April 23 — Harp Performance, 6 pm, Elizabeth Carpenter will perform. Free and open to the public. Cass District Library- Edwardsburg Branch, 663-5875

April 27 — Caregivers Support, COA Front Street Crossing, Dowagiac, 6-7:30 pm, 445-8110

April 28 — Small Loom Weaving Class, 6-8 pm, Space is limited, class is free, call to register. Cass District Library- Mason/Union Branch, 641-7674

April 28 – 6 PM – National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 will hold their monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). For information, call Jean Rowe at 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

April 29 — Volunteer dinner, COA Cassopolis, 4 pm, 445-8110

April 30 — The ABCs of financial planning, COA Front Street Crossing, Dowagiac, 6:30-8:30 pm, 445-8110

May 6 — Free skin cancer screenings, Van Buren County Health Department, Hartford, 1:30 - 4:40 pm, 349-8710

May 7 — Free skin cancer screenings, Three Rivers Specialty Clinic, 1:30 - 4:40 pm, 273-9691

May 12, Teepa Snow, nationally recognized expert on dementia, 9 am - 4 pm, 445-8110

May 16 — Earth & Stars Concert/Celebration, TK Lawless Park, Vandalia, 3-9 pm, 506-8334

May 21 — St. Joseph County (IN) Parks program on ponds for home school families, 10-11:30 am, \$3/child

May 26 – 6 PM – National Association of Retired Federal Employees, SW Michigan Chapter 572 will hold their monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). All retired /current federal employees, spouses/families are welcome. For information, call Jean Rowe at 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

June 13 — Smith's Chapel open house, 10 am - 2 pm, 29858 Redfield Rd., Niles, 932-5242

June 23 – 6 PM - National Association of Retired Federal Employees, SW Michigan Chapter 572 will hold their monthly meeting at the Super Buffet, Benton Harbor, Jean Rowe 782 2879 or jeanrowe70@comcast.net

July 4 — Diamond in the Rough art show, Lowe Center, Cassopolis, 288-8047

July 18 — Sister Lakes Triathlon, details tba

July 25 — Steve's Run, Southwestern Michigan College, details tba

July 28 – 6 PM National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter will hold their annual picnic at a site to be selected. Main food & drink will be provided, please bring a dish to pass. For information, call Jean Rowe at 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

August 25 – 6 PM – National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 will hold their monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). For information, call Jean Rowe, 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

September 22 – 6 PM – National Association Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter will hold their monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). For information, call Jean Rowe, 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net

October 27 – 6 PM National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 will hold their monthly meeting at the Super Buffet in Benton Harbor (next to Big Lots). For information, call Jean Rowe, 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net.

December 1 – 2 PM – National Association of Retired Federal Employees SW Michigan Chapter 572 will hold their annual holiday dinner at a site to be determined. Next meeting is March 22, 2016. For information call Jean Rowe, 269 782 2769 or e mail jeanrowe70@comcast.net



- **Household Hazardous Waste Collection** (Free For First 300 lbs./vehicle)
- **Electronic Waste Collection** (There will be a charge for old style computer monitors and TV's with CRT/Picture Tubes. See back page for cost.) All other items are **Free**.
- **Used Tire Collection** (See back page for cost)
- **Old Flag Collection** (Free) Flags will be disposed of properly with a ceremony by the VFW
- **Used Eye Glasses Collection** (Free) - given to Lion's Club to be recycled
- **Hearing Aids** (Free) – donated to Lion's Club to be recycled

**When: Saturday May 16, 2015 (Rain or Shine)**

**Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon (No Appointment Needed)**  
First Come/First Served

**Where: Cass County Fairgrounds**  
590 O'Keefe Street  
Cassopolis, Michigan 49031

Please look on back page for examples of Household Hazardous Waste items accepted and for TV, Computer and Tire recycling cost.

**Electronic waste consists of any item that is operated with a battery or is plugged into an outlet.**

**Items That Will Not Be Accepted**

**Latex Paint** – Latex Paint is not hazardous and may be disposed of with your ordinary refuse. Open can, let paint dry and throw out with regular trash.

- |                               |                    |               |             |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Major Appliances              | Air Conditioners   | Dehumidifiers | Fireworks   |
| Used Motor Oil                | Fire Extinguishers | Ammunition    | Bio-Hazards |
| Propane Tanks (20# or Larger) |                    |               |             |

**Tire Fee Schedule and TV & Computer Monitors (old style with CRT)**

Vehicle Type	Without Rims	With Rims	TV and Computer Monitors	
Car/Pick-Up Truck	\$3.00	\$5.00	Up to 16"	\$5.00
Semi Truck/Trailer	\$8.00	\$10.00	From 17-25"	\$10.00
Tractor	\$35.00	\$35.00	From 26-36"	\$15.00
			From 37" on up	\$20.00

**List of Acceptable Household Hazardous Waste (First 300 lbs. per vehicle Free then \$1.50 lb.)**

From Your Home	From Your Garage	From Your Garden	From Your Workshop	Miscellaneous Items
Aerosols	2-Cycle Gas Mixes	Algaecides	Adhesives & Cements	Disposable Propane Cylinders (less than 20# tanks)
Ammonia	Antifreeze	Ant & Roach Powder	Alcohol's	Dry Cleaning Solvent
Batteries All Types	Brake Fluid	Bug Sprays	Artist's Paints	Hobby Chemistry Sets
Carpet Cleaners	Car Wax	Fertilizers	Creosote	Hot Tub Chemicals
CFL & LED Bulbs	Degreasers	Fly Strips	Cutting Oil	Lighter Fluid
Chlorine Bleach	Diesel Fuel	Fungicides	Mineral Spirits	Mercury
Drain Cleaners	Engine Cleaners	Garden Dusts & Sprays	Model Paints	Photographic Chemicals
Dyes	Fiberglass Epoxy	Insecticides	Muriatic Acid	Swimming Pool Chlorine
Floor Care & Floor Wax Products	Gas/Diesel Additives	Rat & Rodent Poison	Naphtha	Thermostats
Furniture Polish	Gasoline	Round UP	Oil Based Paints	Thermometers
Insect Sprays	Kerosene	Weed Killers	Paint Brush Cleaners	White Gas
Lamp Oils	Metal Polishes	Misc. Chemicals	Polyurethane Coatings	
Moth Balls & Flakes	Radiator Flushes		Rust Remover	
Oven Cleaners	Rubbing Compounds		Strippers	
Scouring Powders	Starting Fluid		Sulfuric Acid	
Smoke Detectors	Transmission Fluid		Thinners	
Spot & Stain Removers			Varnishes	
Spray Dust Cleaners			Wood Preservatives	
Upholstery Cleaners			Wood Stain	

Need More Information: Call 445-4420  
Sponsored by Cass County Board of Commissioners and MSU Extension



# NATURE NOTES

## Spring brings interesting sightings

Provided by the Cass District Library  
Local History Branch

The warm weather experienced in Southwest Michigan over March 13-16, inspired many to get out and walk the trails and beaches at places such as Warren Dunes State Park and elsewhere.

Mark Parren of St. Joseph says the highlight for him was at the end of a hike at Warren Dunes, when he approached his vehicle he found a photogenic male eastern bluebird perched on his side-view mirror!

Eastern bluebirds are still moving into our area from their wintering grounds to our south. Others have started nesting already and it would not be a surprise to hear that females are incubating eggs.

Parren also photographed a male red-winged blackbird in Royalton Township, in Berrien County that day. Red-winged blackbirds are now moving back into our region in great numbers. Males arrive first ahead of females, which arrive about ten days later.

Upon arrival, male red-winged blackbirds pick a potential nest site, usually in an old, mowed field, or a cattail marsh, and being to defend the territory from other males, at the same time trying to attract a female.

When male red-winged blackbirds are defensive, they display their red winged feathers, called epulates, as seen in one outstanding photograph by Parren.

Parren also photographed a common grackle, which an abundant summer resident in our area. His photo captures the birds iridescent feathers in the sunlight.

Brad Anderson of Bridgman sent photos of migrating sandhill cranes, and an adult bald eagle, both seen at Warren Dunes State Park this past weekend.

Cranes are moving forth in great numbers, especially on warm days. Sandhill cranes tend to stay clear of crossing large bodies of water, such as Lake Michigan.

Cass County harbors more sandhill cranes than Berrien, as it has more wetlands and open space.

Several reports of bald eagles have been received in the last weeks, including



Adult bald eagle, as told by white head and tail, in flight last weekend at Warren Dunes State Park. Photo by Brad Anderson of Bridgman



Common grackle photographed by Mark Parren of St. Joseph.

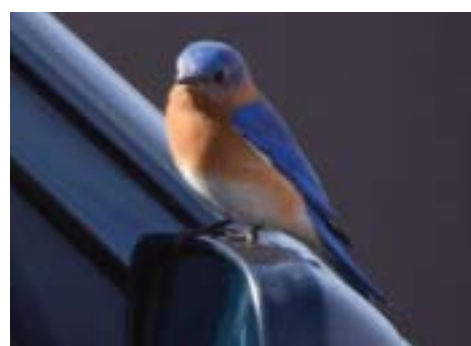
Mel and Debbie Glover of Bangor, who reported an eagle near their home last week.

Numerous reports were received recently of over wintering and migrating bald eagles in Cass, Van Buren, and Berrien Counties.

Pileated woodpeckers have made an amazing comeback over the last 40 years. The pileated woodpecker in the photo



Male Red-winged blackbird, recently back from the south, defends possible nesting territory, with hopes of attracting a female. Taken by Mark Parren of St. Joseph on March 15, near Rogers Supermarket in Royalton Township.



Male eastern bluebird, perched on side-view mirror of truck owned by Mark Parren of St. Joseph. Taken this week at Warren Dunes State Park by Parren.

appears to be a female. Notice the long, rectangular excavation holes that only the pileated woodpecker creates.

Photos are copyrighted by Mark Parren.

Sarett Nature Center has been host to tow notable sightings this week, both members of the weasel family.

First, although the animal was not seen itself, Sarett naturalist Rob Pearce photographed the distinctive tracks of at least one northern river otter!

Northern river otters are uncommon in Southwest Michigan, but are present along uninhabited rivers and streams at places such as Sarett.

The otter is very playful and will often take a few steps and then glide over ice. This is evident by the photo Pearce took along the nature centers river trail.

Otters were found in our region by the early European settlers c1830s, but numbers dwindled due to their highly valued fur. In the late 20th Century, northern river otter populations have rebounded in many areas although they are still uncommon in Southwest Michigan. Chances are that due to a drop in demand for otter fur, legal protection of the species and habitat management, local river otter sightings will increase in the coming years.

Report you sightings to Jonathan Wuepper at wuepperj@gmail.com.



Pileated woodpeckers have made an amazing comeback over the last 40 years. The pileated woodpecker in the photo appears to be a female. Notice the long, rectangular excavation holes that only the pileated woodpecker creates.

Photos are copyrighted by Mark Parren



Slides of a northern river otter at Paw Paw River frontage owned by Sarett Nature Center, February 18, 2015.



Sandhill cranes in flight at Warren Dunes State Park, March 2015. Photo by Brad Anderson of Bridgman.



# HEALTH & FITNESS

## Exercising with Parkinson Disease

By Brenda Harris

Cass COA

April is Parkinson Awareness Month. What is a typical day for a person with Parkinson Disease (PD)? I can only tell you that my typical day is "very busy." I'm a fitness instructor and a personal trainer. When I was first diagnosed with PD, I told myself that it wasn't going to be a downer for me. I don't know the words "give up."

Exercising, and helping others to exercise is my life and love. Regular daily movements, such as walking or riding a stationary bicycle, help ward off the stiffening effects of the disease.

Exercising, particularly walking, will make a difference and slow down the progression of PD. It hasn't been proven

that exercising affects the brain that is damaged in PD; but it does allow the body to function as efficiently as possible and help prolong physical function. Exercising is not a cure, but it can definitely improve the quality of life for people with PD.

Who should work out? How often? For how long?

These questions are enough to discourage anyone. Walking will help. If walking isn't an option, then use a stationary bicycle or any form of low impact exercise. There are many options of exercise. Try to find which one works for you.

No matter your age or how long you've had Parkinson's, exercise is an extremely important aspect of successful disease management. While exercise will

not stop PD, it is crucial in helping to maintain mobility and live well with Parkinson's. For most people, regular exercise is just as important as taking medications on a routine basis. If you are not exercising regularly, consider starting today! Always consult your doctor before initiating any exercise regimen.

A well-balanced exercise program should include stretching, strengthening, and conditioning activities, and be tailored to your individual needs.

Exercise makes you feel more flexible and move more freely. Early research suggests that exercise may even play an important role in maintaining brain function. The benefits of exercise on walking, balance, and range of motion have been demonstrated in clinical trials. Large,

exaggerated movements and regular repetition are suggested for maximized exercise benefit.

Some benefits of regular exercise include

- Fine movements to promote coordination, flexibility and balance
- Strength exercises, such as weight lifting
- Aerobic exercises for stamina and endurance
- Recreational sports for fellowship and social outlets

Remember, don't stop exercising to maintain the benefits and see continued improvement. Exercise must become a way of life for everyone!

## Ten steps to help make fitness stick!

By Brenda Harris

Cass COA

How many times have you started a fitness program then only dropped it after a short time? Are you aware of the benefits from exercising how it effects you physical and mentally?

Exercise doesn't just simply happen — you have to put yourself into it. Ask yourself if your family or boss holding more sway over your time than taking care of you!! Your time is very important so take time for your health and well being and adjust the balance in your life. Changing the way you think about getting active could make all the difference.

These 10 rules will help you make your fitness program stick!!

### 1. Do it for you

Before starting an exercise program, consider why you want to get fit. It may be for your health, to reduce stress or to shed a few pounds. Your reason for exercising should stem from your own desires, not someone else's. Making exercise a part of your life isn't a matter of willpower or white-knuckled determination, but of doing something that's good for you.

### 2. Take baby steps.

Don't expect success overnight. Try to reach for doable, moderate goals, both short & long term goals. As you achieve each goal, set new ones. Keep your goals in sight and that way you will reach successfully!

### 3. Make exercise a given.

Excuses such as "I don't feel like it," "I should pick up the dry cleaning," or "The kids need new sneakers," are just little ways we wiggle out of exercising. Choose a "special" time of day and be selfish about preserving the time for your body and general well-being.

### 4. Give yourself credit.

Treat yourself to something that is special to you. When you reach that first goal celebrate you deserve it!

### 5. Pace yourself.

Increase your exercise load, but don't do it by going all out, no matter how good it feels. Overexertion can lead to muscle soreness or injury and that can lead to quitting.

### 6. Build a support network

The good old BUDDY SYSTEM will work. Find a friend or group to exercise with, or join a class at your local club. Chat with some of your friends and tell them your goals and ask them to check in with you periodically.

### 7. Embrace Change.

Boredom!!!! Who wants that. Do a variety of activities each week and change to equipment that's a good fit for you.

### 8. Use the right equipment.

Whether it's sneakers, free weights, or a bicycle that you're buying, or just using at the club, make sure it's suited to you. Working out won't be fun if your clothes are chafing or your joints ache. Have a professional help you choose equipment that's a

good fit.

### 9. Educate yourself.

Knowledge can go a long way toward convincing you to stay physically active. It can also help you reach your highest potential. There's a wealth of easily available information about getting fit and stay fit. Go on line, magazines, books, and ask questions to fitness professionals.

### 10. Eat right.

If you put bad gas into your car, it won't go very far without giving you trouble or stopping. Just remember supplying your body with the proper nutrients will give you the energy and stamina to get physically fit; it could even enhance your performance.


Be patient, use your knowledge, set your goals, listen to your body, and commit yourself to a healthy way of life.



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# BUSINESS & FINANCE

## Home-based business: Is it for you?

by **VICKI BROSSMAN**  
Kemner-Iott Agency

**D**o you have a home-based business or are you thinking about starting one? There seems to be no end to what you can do if you have the passion and drive. Just a few opportunities are beauty consultant, on-line businesses, selling kitchen tools, photography, party planner, home health care, handyman services, lawn care, cleaning and/or organizing, decorating cakes, selling vegetables at a roadside stand, operating an in-home day care, creating and selling your own items.

Operating a home-based business has many rewards as well as challenges. The U. S. Small Business Administration is an excellent resource if you are considering starting a home-based business. Some of the information you will find on their website [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) is:

### Before You Begin

- Can you live and work in the same area? Find the answers by asking yourself these questions: Where in the home will the business be located? What adjustments to living arrangements will be required? What will be the cost of changes? How will your family react? What will the neighbors think?
- Is working from home for you? Do you

have the personality and business skills? Does it make sense to operate the business out of your home? How will this business affect your family environment? Is there sufficient demand for your product or service and what price should be charged? These and other important questions can be answered by writing a sound business plan. A business plan is a basic description of the goals and objectives of your business and how you plan to achieve them. Developing a business plan will help you answer important questions about your business idea before you start your business.

■ What else should you research? Will you need financing to get started? What taxes will you have to pay? What licenses will be required? What are your local ordinances? How will you market your product or service? What type of insurance will you need?

### Insurance for home-based business

■ Will my homeowners insurance policy cover me? Homeowners insurance policies were never intended to cover business exposures. Therefore, coverage for the items you use in your business such as a computers, fax machines, filing cabinets, tools, and inventory are limited to \$2,500 in your home and \$250 away from your home under most policies. Using a

separate structure on your premise for your business will most likely void any coverage for that structure under your homeowners policy. Your homeowners policy provides no liability insurance for your home-based business. Depending on your business, you may be able to add an "Incidental Business Endorsement" to your policy to cover your business liability, other structures, and equipment ON your premises that you use for your business.

■ Will I need business insurance? If your in-home business does not qualify for the "Incidental Business Endorsement", you will need to purchase business insurance. A business insurance policy provides the most comprehensive coverage for your in-home business and includes both property and liability coverage.

■ Will I need any other type of insurance? Additional policies you may need are:

**Automobile Insurance** - your personal auto policy may not cover business use of your vehicle. If you make deliveries, visit clients, pick up packages, or use your auto for a business purpose and you get in an accident, your personal auto policy may not cover you. You may need to purchase a business auto policy.

**Workers Compensation** - If you hire employees, you need to know about this

type of insurance. All states require employers to purchase it if they have employees.

**Other Insurance** - Other types of insurance you may need are professional liability, cyber liability, E & O insurance, or some type of bond. You may need health insurance, disability insurance, life insurance and a retirement plan. Remember you need to protect your family and yourself.

■ Once I have my insurance, am I covered no matter what I do? As your business changes and grows, so will your insurance needs. If you make any changes to your business, contact your insurance agent. Just a few changes your agent will need to know are: increase or decrease in supplies and/or inventory, change in sales, a change in location or the addition of a location.

As a home-based business you need to make sure you have the correct level of insurance to protect yourself, your business, your home, and your family. It is important to discuss every aspect of your in-home business with your insurance agent so he can help determine what coverage you need. It is never a good experience to find out you do not have the correct coverage after you have a loss.

## Will baby boomers ever truly retire?

### Many may keep working out of interest rather than need

Provided by **Greg Schoenfeld**  
Compass Wealth Advisors

**B**aby boomers realize that their retirements may not unfold like those of their parents. New survey data from The Pew Charitable Trusts highlights how perceptions of retirement have changed for this generation. A majority of boomers expect to work in their sixties and seventies, and that expectation may reflect their desire for engagement rather than any economic desperation.

Instead of an "endless Saturday," the future may include some 8-to-5. Pew asked heads of 7,000 U.S. households how they envisioned retirement and also added survey responses from focus groups in Phoenix, Orlando and Boston. Just 26 percent of respondents felt their retirements would be work-free. A slight majority (53 percent) told Pew they would probably work in some context in the next act of their lives, possibly at a different type of job; 21 percent said they had no intention to retire at all.<sup>1</sup>

Working longer may help boomers settle debts. A study published by the Employee Benefit Research Institute in January (Debt of the Elderly and Near Elderly, 1992-2013) shows a 2.0 percent increase in the percentage of indebted households in the U.S. headed by breadwinners 55 and older from 2010-13 (reaching 65.4 percent at the end of that period). EBRI says median indebtedness for such households hit \$47,900 in 2013 compared to \$17,879 in 1992. It notes that larger mortgage balances have been a major factor in this.<sup>1</sup>

Debts aside, some people just like to work. Those presently on the job expect to stay in the workforce longer than their parents did. Additional EBRI data affirms this - last year, 33 percent of U.S. workers believed that they would leave their careers after age 65. That compares to just 11 percent in 1991.<sup>2</sup>

How many boomers will manage to

work past 65? This is one of the major unknowns in retirement planning today. We are watching a reasonably healthy generation age into seniority, one that can access more knowledge about being healthy than ever before - yet obesity rates have climbed even as advances have been made in treating so many illnesses.

Working past 65 probably means easing into part-time work - and not every employer permits such transitions for full-time employees. The federal government now has a training program in which FTEs can make such a transition while training new workers and some larger companies do allow phased retirements, but this is not exactly the norm.<sup>3</sup>

Working less than a 40-hour week may also negatively impact a worker's retirement account and employer-sponsored health care coverage. EBRI finds that only about a third of small firms let part-time employees stay on their health plans; even fewer than half of large employers (200 or more workers) do. The Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies says part-time workers get to participate in 401(k) plans at only half of the companies that sponsor them.<sup>3</sup>

Boomers who work after 65 have to keep an eye on Medicare and Social Security. They will qualify for Medicare Part A (hospital coverage) at 65, but they should sign up for Part B (doctor visits) within the appropriate enrollment window and either a Part C plan or Medigap coverage plus Medicare Part D.<sup>3</sup>

Believe it or not, company size also influences when Medicare coverage starts for some 65-year-olds. Medicare will become the primary insurance for employees at firms with less than 20 workers when they turn 65, even if that company sponsors a health plan. At firms with 20 or more workers, the workplace health plan takes precedence over Medicare coverage, with 65-year-olds maintaining their eligibility for that employer-sponsored health coverage provided they work sufficient hours. Boomers who work for these larger

employers may sign up for Part A and then enroll in Part B and optionally a Part C plan or Part D with Medigap coverage within eight months of retiring - they do not have to wait for the next open enrollment period.<sup>3</sup>

Prior to age 66, federal retirement benefits may be lessened if retirement income tops certain limits. In 2015, if you are 62-65 and receive Social Security, \$1 of your benefits will be withheld for every \$2 that you earn above \$15,720. If you receive Social Security and turn 66, this year, then \$1 of your benefits will be withheld for every \$3 that you earn above \$41,880.<sup>4</sup>

Social Security income may also be taxed above the program's "combined income" threshold. ("Combined income" is defined as adjusted gross income + non-taxable interest + 50 percent of Social Security benefits.) Single filers with combined incomes from \$25,000-34,000 may have to pay federal income tax on up to 50 percent of their Social Security benefits in 2015, and that also applies to joint filers with combined incomes of \$32,000-

44,000. Single filers with combined incomes above \$34,000 and joint filers whose combined incomes top \$44,000 may have to pay federal income tax on up to 85 percent of their Social Security benefits.<sup>5</sup>

Are boomers really the retiring type? Given the amazing accomplishments and vitality of the baby boom generation, a wave of boomers working past 65 seems more like a probability than a possibility. Life is still exciting; there is so much more to be done.

Greg Schoenfeld may be reached at 574-522-3738 or by visiting the website [www.compasswa.com](http://www.compasswa.com)

### Citations.

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# HISTORIC POSTCARDS

## Historic postcards depict rich scenes of early area life

In this issue of Neighbors, Jerdon Real Estate of Dowagiac, owned by Floyd Jerdon and his son Tom, has provided antique postcards of a few of the many lakes in our area. Floyd and his wife Donna started collecting post cards more than 20 years ago, and since Jerdon Real Estate specializes in marketing lake property, it was a natural fit that Floyd's interest be directed to the lake cards. The collection now numbers many thousands.

Jerdon has recently used many of his postcards featuring the Sister Lakes area in a book written by RL Rasmussen. The book, which retails for \$19.99, is in its second printing by

the publisher, Arcadia Publishing.

Among other places, the book may be purchased at the Jerdon Real Estate office on M-62 West, and at Whistlestop Gifts, which is operated by the Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce.

For more information or to get a copy of Jerdon's book, visit the website: [www.arcadia-publishing.com](http://www.arcadia-publishing.com)

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In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images in the area of Cassopolis.

In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area's lakes with views of nearby communities and countryside.



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# NEW FEATURE: LAKE LIFE

## Thinking spring — Let's chat!

by JANE BOUDREAU

**H**i Neighbors! My name is Jane and I'm so happy to be writing a column for your favorite newspaper this month! I've lived on Diamond Lake with my husband for the past 25 years, we raised our four children (and several pets) in this year-round home, all the while commuting back and forth from Illinois.

I love lake life and even more, the joy of slow and simple country life. I've been writing and publishing a lifestyle blog for the past six years. It's all about cooking, gardening, crafts, home decorating, Do-It-Yourself-projects, book reviews, traveling ... and all sorts of trivial things!

Photography is a big love in my life, I try to capture my world in words and pictures. I do my best to inspire people to try things they've never done, or pick up something they used to do. That said, I'm hoping you enjoy what I've cooked up for you this month!

I think "Spring" is a good jumping off point for us. Grab your favorite beverage and let's chat!

For me, spring begins when we can open those doors and windows and let the warm breezes in and chase the old air (and dust bunnies) out! Winters can be long here in the Midwest, as you know, but I think the first sign of spring bulbs opening and the bright green of grass and trees makes it so worth the wait. I try to plant bulbs every fall, there just can't ever be enough for me. These daffodils bloomed so sweetly last spring and many tulips followed (I love those to cut and bring indoors). I have some flowering trees and bushes as well. I like to "force" blooms by cutting a few slender branches just as the buds are starting to swell. Place them in some water and in a week or two you will have a pretty display of what is eventually to come in your yard!

By the way, pictured on this page is Milo, my Rat Terrier, frolicking in the tall grass that hadn't seen a lawn mower as of yet. Now, the sound of lawn mowers ... that's definitely a sign of spring and I am so looking forward to that! Don't get me started on the smell of a grill sending smoke signals in the direction of my house!

I love to make soups and stews, roasts and hearty casseroles during the cold months, but come warm weather, we all want to lighten up a bit. I cook pretty healthy with fresh, in-season ingredients, and love to fiddle with my own recipes. I also love to see something gorgeous on my plate and this is something I came up with that you can definitely do and even make for company.

### Chicken with Pine Nuts and Spinach



#### Ingredients:

2 Boneless chicken breasts, cut into thin strips  
 2 T. olive oil, divided  
 1 t. onion powder  
 1/4 t. red pepper flakes  
 1 t. each of salt and pepper  
 3 garlic cloves, chopped  
 1/3 c. chicken broth  
 2 T. lemon zest  
 1 T. lemon juice



10 oz. fresh spinach  
 2 T. pine nuts

#### Directions:

Season the chicken with the onion powder, red pepper flakes and a pinch of S & P.

Heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large pan and saute the chicken over medium heat, 5-7 minutes, turning to brown all sides.

Remove from pan and cover with foil to keep warm.

Reduce heat to low and add another tablespoon of olive oil to pan.

Add garlic and cook 1 minute until just softened.

Add the broth, lemon zest and lemon juice. Stir constantly for about 2 minutes, scraping up the chicken pieces on the bottom of the pan.

Add the spinach and pine nuts, stir to incorporate, about 2 minutes.

Spoon mixture from the pan, reserving about 2 tablespoons, on to a serving plate.

Top with the chicken strips and remaining juices. Garnish with a few lemon slices if you'd like.

Serves 4.

Super simple and quick and it makes for a great presentation. Cook it up fast, make a pretty platter, pat yourself on the back and wait for the compliments!

I love a pretty table for company and on holidays. You can easily make a tablescape like the one I had for a recent spring dinner. Look around your house for pieces to make a pretty centerpiece...this is a funky basket I've had for years that has held everything under the sun.

And oh, how I love flowers. Sometimes I buy a big bouquet from the grocery store and separate it into 3 smaller ones to scatter around (one in the bathroom that

your guests use is a nice touch!). I find all sorts of glass vases at the dollar stores, as well as candlesticks and votive/tealight candles and holders.

I'm pretty old school ... I simply love flowers and candles ... this table was an exception. Other than the flowers it didn't cost me a penny. Napkins ... there are so many pretty paper napkins available right now, you can really make your guests ooh and ahhh! I personally like to find pretty cloth napkins priced for a song at stores like HomeGoods and TJ Maxx. Get a few packs of white dinner napkins and you are good to go forever!

Don't want to spend a lot of money on napkin rings? Google "Napkin Folds" and you can find everything from the simple to the fabulous (have you ever wanted to make a swan like you see at fancy restaurants?!).

I have so many ideas I'd love to share...especially with summer coming up. We love to be outdoors during the warm months, and I have so many quick and easy recipes for wonderful al fresco meals, as well as some more elegant dinners to have with guests, indoors or out. Setting a pretty table can be inexpensive and fun.

And I hope to share some of my simple seasonal ideas for home and outdoor decor. April means gardening and getting your outdoor areas in shape. Pretty flower pots and a spectacular patio, deck, sun porch or gazebo are just waiting to be freshened up and/or updated. I know mine do. It's exciting to get out and get going!

I hope I've given you some ideas and inspiration to get you in the spring mood. And that you enjoyed our little chat! You can find my blog at [blondiesjournals.blogspot.com](http://blondiesjournals.blogspot.com) and if you have any questions or comments...write me at [blondiesjournal@gmail.com](mailto:blondiesjournal@gmail.com).

Happy Spring!!!



# LOCAL LORE AND HISTORY

## More History from George R. Fox

Provided by Cass District Library,  
Local History Branch.

In this installment for April 2015 Neighbors, I copied word-by-word, a few interesting items out of area newspapers.

From the weekly Niles Gazette and Advertiser dated March 5, 1836:

### EDWARDSBURGH

This prosperous village is regularly laid out, and pleasantly situated, at the east side of Beardsley's Prairie--frequently called Four Mile Prairie, from its size -- The location is directly upon the National Road running from Detroit to Chicago [now US-12], and might properly be called Ten Mile Centre, it being ten miles from Niles, and a similar distance from South Bend,

Mishawaka, Cassopolis, and Elkhart. The village consists of about fifty buildings, including taverns, stores, mechanics' shops & c.

About twenty new buildings are under contract, or open for contract, to be built in the ensuing season. The fertility, salubrity and picturesque granduer of the Prairie is not surpassed by any other in Michigan. There remains a small quantity of public land for sale in this vicinity, and property increases rapidly in the village and vicinity. No country better rewards the industry of the farmer than the lands adjacent to Edwardsburgh.

### Niles Republican, March 25, 1843:

Winter still lingers with all the severity of January. The earth presents a dreary aspect being covered with snow to the depth of three feet, to which more is added every night. We have either been moved many degrees

north, or the sun has waxed so old and infirm, that it has lost all its former power. One thing is certain, that if the cold holds on many days longer, the stock of the farmers that is left, will have to perish, as fodder cannot be had at any price.

### Edwardsburg Argus, May 29, 1941: Count Seat News: Kills Snake --

Cass County Agricultural Agent R.F. Bittner reports that his office has gone in for active biology in a large way, or at least one snake appeared to think so. Last week a five foot long blue racer crawled through an open window into his office in the basement of the court house. A club expertly wielded by Bittner permanently stopped the snake's progress.

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# THE LAST WORD

## *If no one hears the ice melt, is it still spring?*

**F**most people living in the Midwest, particularly in the upper Midwest where record cold, snow and ice have dominated the weather for as long as anyone can remember, the arrival of spring is a much celebrated event.

And even though the spring hasn't been all that spectacular as yet (an informal poll of people walking down the lane behind my house has so far been met with frowns, grunts, whines, cavils, complaints and the occasional unprintable epithet), the season has undeniably made a turn for the warmer, and the return of rancid roadkill and the omnipresence of knee-deep, axle-busting potholes is making our morning commutes so much more pleasant than last month when we were dodging and sliding through all that boring, dirty and treacherous snow and ice.

I am even willing to welcome back the scads of squabbling and squawking seagulls, the raw-throated cries of the love-lorn Canadian Geese and even the bright-breasted robins (although the ones hanging out in the tree right over my parked car made quite a mess on the windshield) ... and the good Lord knows that the cliché "a breath of fresh air" fulfills its destiny on that first day I can slip open the sliders, throw up the windows and let Mother Nature whisk the accumulated winter stink outside to join the earthy aromas of wet dirt, scared skunk and the musty, less-than-pleasant odors emanating from the piles of last fall's moldy, rotting leaves that I should have gotten rid of in last November.

Of course the harbingers of spring aren't all quite so welcome.

The last snowfall of the season always seems to be just a little too heavy and a little too wet and a little too hard to shovel, and it always comes just when you were sure you were done with winter for good ... and delights in freezing your fingers just one more time and straining you back just one more time and getting you yelled at for tracking snow into the house just one more time.

And the spring rains and storms and winds always seem just a little too cold, a little too raw, and aren't we done with all that, and why can't we string just a couple of days of sunshine together?

Despite a cold front last weekend, there was activity at a cottage down the road; one of those places that normally sits empty for six months or so while the owners taunt us with emailed fairweather photos from their winter lodgings in Tampa or Tucson. Good to see the neighbors coming back, but bittersweet to see the dark gray tarp being pulled off the jetski parked in their driveway.

But on that first day when the weather turns balmy and the sun breaks through and even though the thermometer only reads 55, you can't resist the urge to find a wind-sheltered place and pull of the sweatshirt and let the glorious sense of relief wash away the winter's bitterness ...

Ah, blessed spring.

Warm breezes waft avian melodies that mingle with the rat-a-tats of the woodpeckers and the grunts of the baby raccoons and the chirps of the red squir-

rels and the frantic panting of my hyper-excited puppy as she strains and pulls at her leash trying to catch one ...

"Come on dad," she seems to say when she looks back at me in dismay, her snout now covered with leaves and twigs from the roadside pile that just a day or two ago looked like the last of a melting glacier. "I only want this one then I'll quit ... I promise," she seems to say.

A flight of Sandhill Cranes catches my eye as they soar gracefully overhead, making a mockery of their prehistoric appearance and their raucous rants.

A small herd of deer graze idly in a neighbor's pasture, chewing the new sprouts of grass and flowers and finally eschewing the rows of now nearly naked yews that sustained them during the recent ice age.

For days the neighbors have been abuzz about this "almost" spring, dreamily predicting when ice-out will happen here as it's already happened to the ponds down the road and to the shallower lakes where the sun's weak rays have reflected off the sandy bottom and warmed the water enough to make a few waves.

Outside my front window, the head of a muskrat breaks the surface of the lake and spawns an elegant trail of wake on the otherwise calm water between my rock seawall and the last of the lingering lake ice that steadfastly refuses to obey the seasonal melt.

Maybe I missed it but one of my favorite spring signs went missing this year. I was careful to watch (or rather to listen) for it, but either it didn't happen

or I missed it while I was walking the dog or picking up the stinking pile of leaves so my beloved spouse (BS for short) wouldn't yell at me again ...

Whatever happened, this year, I missed the spring sonata, the annual singing of the ice.

If you don't know what I'm talking about ask any old timer ... any year-rounder. Then watch for the glint in their eyes and the knowing nod ...

You see, in the years when the conditions are just right, when the spring truly comes in like a lamb and gently, slowly warms things up in a civilized manner without all the refreezing overnight and the late-season snow and sleet ... in those years, when the ice finally starts to melt off the lake, it positively sings to us and there's this spectacular sound that occurs, just on that one day of the year when the ice starts to break up into smaller and smaller pieces. As that happens, a little at a time, if the wind is just right and in just the right direction, the small pieces of ice pile up on the lee shore of the lake and gently bounce off one another, they gently rub up against their neighbors, and produce a light, lilting sound that sound like a hundred violinists plucking the "A" string all at once; a tender tinkling that rises and falls on the waves in soft but almost symphonic brilliance; a veritable spring sonata.

Alas, I missed it this year.

I missed the singing of the ice.

But there's good news ... to paraphrase another cliché ... even if no one hears the ice melt, it's still spring!

Happy spring everyone!

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