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Inside ...

Regional NewsPage 2, 3
Regional Events Page 4
Field Trip.....Pages 10-12
Floyd's Postcards.....Pages 13-15
The Last Word..... Page 19

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To contact Neighbors
(269) 228-1080
(269) 476-1680

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REGIONAL NEWS

information on www.michigan.gov/vote. Cass County voters can call the County Clerk at 269-445-4464 and leave a message or email monicam@cassco.org. This does not require that you vote absentee. You will receive the AV Application in the mail before every election, and make the choice whether to apply for a ballot, or vote at the polls. An absentee ballot may also be turned in at the polls on election day. It is important to note that felons can vote in Michigan, and you can vote straight ticket and also vote for candidates of other parties. Michigan voters can check their registration and register to vote on line at www.michigan.gov/vote

Update on COVID-19 locally

Data as of April 24, 2020:
25 confirmed positive cases / 2 deaths / 3 recovered in Cass County
34 confirmed positive cases / 2 deaths / 8 recovered in Van Buren County
36,641 positive cases / 3,085 deaths in Michigan. *Recovered is defined as the number of persons with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis who are alive 30 days post-onset (or referral date if onset is not available).

Latest State and Local Updates:

On April 24, Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed executive order 2020-59, extending her "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order through May 15. The new order will require people to wear homemade face coverings when they enter enclosed public spaces. It will also lift some restrictions on outdoor activities and allow some workers who perform previously suspended activities to go back to work. View full press release attached.

Area Agency on Aging and United

Way of Southwest MI are teaming up to deliver shelf stable food to seniors. The State of Michigan purchased 10,000 Quarantine Boxes, also known as "Q Boxes", for the Area Agency on Aging network of Michigan to help provide relief for seniors in need of shelf-stable food. Three Hundred of these boxes have been designated to the tri-county area of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. If you are a senior, or know a senior, who would be helped by a Q-Box, United Way of Southwest Michigan began accepting calls on April 23rd to sign up for one. The number to call is 269-982-4029. See full press release attached.

Van Buren Community Mental Health and Woodlands Behavioral Health are available for residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone who wishes to speak to a mental health clinician can do so by calling:

Woodlands Behavioral Health (269) 445-2541 or (800) 323-0335

Van Buren Community Mental Health (VB County) - (800) 922-1418

Governor Whitmer encouraged residents to begin using www.michigan.gov/coronavirusTEST to find testing sites near them.

Through May 5, all participating McDonald's across the state will provide Thank You Meals to first Responders and healthcare professionals. Eligible individuals simply order a "Thank You Meal", select their meal options, then show proof of employment at the window.

The Census is still happening and both Cass and Van Buren County only have a 51 percent response rate. The census helps to determine funding that comes to the county. Please make sure to

take the census if you have not already done so and encourage others to do the same.

Executive Orders:

Executive Order 2020-53 - Enhanced restrictions on price gouging
Executive Order 2020-54 - Temporary prohibition against entry to premises for the purpose of removing or excluding a tenant or mobile home owner from their home
Executive Order 2020-55 - Michigan Coronavirus Task Force on Racial Disparities
Executive Order 2020-56 - Temporary enhancements to operational capacity, flexibility, and efficiency of pharmacies
Executive Order 2020-57 - Temporary expansions in unemployment eligibility and cost-sharing
Executive Order 2020-58 - Temporary suspension of certain timing requirements relating to the commencement of civil and probate actions and proceedings
Executive Order 2020-59 - Temporary requirement to suspend activities that are not necessary to sustain or protect life, Rescission of Executive Order 2020-42

Contact Numbers and Web pages:

If an individual suspects they have COVID-19 symptoms, they should stay home and take one of the following steps: Call their primary care provider (PCP) via telephone

Do a virtual visit with their health system/provider

Call one of the three Care Advisor phone numbers below provided by our local health systems. These numbers are helpful for individuals who do not have a PCP.

*If your symptoms are life-threatening call 9-1-1

MDHHS COVID-19 Hotline (8 am-5 pm), (888) 535-6136 www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus

Bronson, (269) 341-7788, www.bronsonhealth.com/coronavirus-covid-19

Ascension Borgess, (833) 978-0649 www.healthcare.ascension.org

Spectrum Health Lakeland, (616) 391-2380, <https://www.spectrumhealthlakeland.org/covid19>

*A Chatbot is available online
*Drive-up testing is available but all patients require a physician's order to be tested

InterCare Health Network, (855) 869-6900, <https://www.intercare.org/covid-19.html>

*Drive-thru testing is available to any patient within InterCare service area with a physician's order (does not have to be InterCare only)

As the situation continues to change rapidly, officials recommend referring to these sites for the most current information:

Michigan: www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus

National: www.cdc.gov/COVID19

United Way of Southwest Michigan (local): for emergency updates, links to trusted sources, food distribution sites, and self-care strategies: <https://www.uwsm.org/emergency-preparedness-response>

The local health department will keep its website (www.vbcassdhd.org/covid-19) and Facebook (@VBCDHD) as up-to-date as possible with the latest information, including access to Michigan.gov/coronavirus data.



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REGIONAL EVENTS CALENDAR

Editor's note: Some of the events listed on this page may have already been canceled by the pandemic ... Please check with organizers prior to the events

May 22 - Dowagiac Community-wide Garage Sale weekend, 8 am - 5 pm 782-8212

May 25 - Dowagiac Memorial Day Parade, 10:30 am - noon, 782-8212

June 3 - Dowagiac Farm & Artisan Market, 9 am - 2 pm, 782-8212

June 6 - Porter Township Cleanup Day, 8 am - noon, American Waste, Union, 641-2375

June 13 - Diamond Lake Annual Public Meeting (all lake residents welcome), 10 11:30 am at the Diamond Lake Yacht Club

June 19, 20 - Diamond Lake All-Lake Garage Sale, 9 - 2 pm on Friday; 9 am - noon Saturday

July 4 - Diamond Lake Association Fireworks, Firework's Island, Rain/Wind delay date will be Sunday July 5

July 17, 18- Summer in the City Festival, 10 am - 5

pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

July 25 - Steve's Run, 9 am - 1 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

August 2 - August 8 - Cass County 4H Fair, Fairgrounds, Cassopolis

August 15 - Rod & Roll Classic Auto Show, 7 am - 4 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

August 29 - Kee-Boon-Mein-Kaa Pow Wow, 9 am, Dowagiac, 782-8212

October 10 - Under the Harvest Moon Festival, 10 am - 4 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

November 13, 14 - Christmas Open House Weekend, 10 am - 5 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

November 28 - Small Business Saturday, 10 am - 11 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

December 4 - Candle-light Christmas Parade, 7 - 9 pm, Dowagiac, 782-8212

Outdoor adventures

St. Joseph County (IN) Parks is now taking registrations for "Outdoor

Adventures" summer nature camps at St. Patrick's County Park.

"We offer campers a variety of activities," says Amal Farrough, Day Camp Coordinator. "Depending upon the age group activities may include fishing, archery, hiking trails, and creek stomp-ing and other outdoor fun!"

Six camps are offered for children entering kindergarten through 8th grade. Dates and topics are:

June 22-26: Big Kid Nature Camp (ages 10 - 11)

June 29: Mountain Biking (ages 11-14)

July 1: Tree Top Adventure (ages 11-14)

July 6-10: Animal Safari (ages 6-7)

July 13-17: Mud Monsters (ages 5-6)

July 20-July 24: Outdoor Artists (8-9)

For more information, or to request registration materials, please call 574/654-3155, or visit www.sjcparks.org.

Pasta identification

Just in case you're bored out of your mind, check out this nifty story on how to identify every kind of pasta ...

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/tipsandtricks/a-visual-guide-to-every-type-of-pasta/ss-BB10Xcry>.

VBRGS Donation \$100,000 to the Hartford Public Library

The Van Buren Regional Genealogical Society (VBRGS) has made a \$100,000 donation to the new Hartford Public Library (HPL) and Art & Bonna Vanderlyn Community Center. This donation supports the new HPL Genealogy Room and shows VBRGS's gratitude to the library for welcoming the society and its one-of-a-kind genealogy and history collection into their new building. The VBRGS and the HPL will be working together with a spirit of mutual cooperation to provide the community with a unique learning resource. The VBRGS, using the materials of the Genealogy Room along with state-of-the-art technology, will welcome everyone who has an interest in "finding their roots" or learning about local history.

In 1987 a group of like-minded individuals decided to form the Van Buren Regional Genealogical Society. The Van Buren Regional Genealogical Society looks forward to being a part of the new Hartford Public Library and the Hartford community.

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LAKE LIFE WITH JANE

Getting on with spring

by **Jane Boudreau**

Hello Neighbors. These are very trying times to say the least. I'm praying that you and yours are safe and well. I don't think any of us could have imagined a virus such as this causing so much devastation in the world. We are all affected in some way, and every morning we wake up to more statistics of illness and deaths. It's very surreal. I've always been someone who eats up the television news, reads multiple papers and websites, and fills my brain with facts and trivia. I finally felt a deep depression set in about a week ago and then some severe anxiety. I've heard some people say in the past, and more so now, "I don't watch the news." I always wondered how one could not. My motto has always been: The more you know, the less you need. I guess we are all wired differently, but when I started feeling physical and mental fatigue, I knew that this was how the whole pandemic was taking its toll on me. I wouldn't dare think I'm worse off in any way from others out there suffering illness or the death of a loved one, God forbid. But it's okay to get it out; vent, write in a journal, pray, call a friend, or distract yourself. All of this has helped ease my unhealthy problems.

No matter what or who we listen to, what we believe or don't believe, whether we choose to be fastidious about our health and safety, or try following all the recommendations we can to avoid contacting Coronavirus, there has to be a balance. I'm somewhat of a homebody and I've also worked from home for quite a while now. In my life the biggest changes are not being able to go out and about freely, and not being able to see my family, and most of all, worrying myself sick that I have it.

My immediate family has all quarantined, so nobody is seeing anybody. I know not to compare apples and oranges, but for my family members who work and are now sidelined at home, it's a huge adjustment. For those who aren't getting a paycheck, it's a very tough struggle. One of my good friend's has her mother in a nursing home. The mother has been going downhill rapidly from the late stages of Alzheimer's. She fears she will never see or speak to her mother again. My daughter, who is a high school English teacher, just found out teachers in Illinois will not be returning to work for the remainder of the year. My husband learned today that his legal assistant tested positive. And so we go from day to day being pulled in different directions. The new normal for many of us is missing friends and family, no income or job certainty, and worrying about the health risks and possible exposure we've had. So I am pretty much just sitting here at my kitchen table, tapping away at this column, trying to find the words that can make some sense out of this, at most for me and maybe some of you readers. Is my experience going to touch any of you? Is this the place for it?

Well let me simply just say: live moment by moment. Pray for a better tomorrow. Find the light inside or around you. Have an open mind and heart. Be safe.

Does anyone have tulips yet? I have never been more grateful that I spent an hour last fall freezing my delicate little fingers off planting more bulbs. I was afraid something would go wacko with them as we've been having such extreme changes in the weather. Snow in April? Seriously? A day after the temps were in the 70's?! So this is a beautiful sight.

I have a large forsythia in the backyard. It was the very first thing I ever planted in my life when we first moved into this 'starter home'. It's a spring ritu-



al to snip a few branches and bring them indoors. It looks like gardening might be an iffy thing for many of us depending on how our states are governed. My personal thought on this is a positive one -- we gardeners can truly depend on our creativeness this year. Making and having vases of flowers with the ones we grow, and scattering them in and around our indoor and outdoor spaces, can make us smile, planting vegetable and flower seeds in pots and planters is fun to watch, sharing bouquets and veggies from our gardens with friends and neighbors brings joy to our hearts. Bring houseplants out for the summer to fill in places that need some greenery. And for myself, I'm going to do a lot of major clean up outdoors, plan and sketch out some new garden beds and modifications of others, and focus on taking better care of what I have rather than being spread thin by so many plants and so many chores.

My little Layla just turned 14. She will forever look like a puppy. She sleeps longer now, and has very little tolerance of Poppy the puppy. I will tell you, having dogs gets you outside whether you want to or not. I have gotten in much better shape taking Poppy for walks everyday. It's exciting for her to experience all the new sights and smells here in the city and at the lake, and see how delighted she is with people and other dogs. So many dog walkers these days! In our neighborhood in the city, young families are moving in all the time -- the days of my little ones and all of their friends running up and down the sidewalks have been replaced with a whole new generation. And a lot of these family's have dogs. Poppy sits in front of a

window watches them prance down the street with their owners, much like Pongo in the opening scenes of 101 Dalmatians. Is it me or my imagination that there are more and more Labradoodles popping up these days? They are definitely super cute, and I hear they don't shed. I'd love that. I pretty much walk around with a dust buster in a holster.

You might remember a recent column of mine where I extolled the benefits of coyote urine granules to keep unwanted wild animals away from your property (specifically your flowers and smaller pets). Okay, I can sound a little crazy. So now my latest dilemma (which coincidentally also involves urine) is brown spots on my grass where Poppy pees --



pardon my bluntness. And I mean this grass is pretty much in one area and it's definitely now dead. So I did a little research and in a nutshell, it's a fact that tap water has a lot of nitrogen in it. We get our water from Lake Michigan. So this nitrogen passes through some dogs in varying degrees, and it can burn your grass very much like a heavy application of fertilizer with a high nitrogen level. Female pups usually pee in one area, it's concentrated so you get the spots. Male dogs tend to go on vertical things so you don't see much damage although it can affect plants and shrubs. Anyhow, the remedy for brown spots in digging it out, spreading down some limestone, and then about a week later adding topsoil and planting grass seed. But to prevent the problem from happening at all is to give your dog distilled water which doesn't have nitrogen, rather than tap water. If you have an added filter for your water supply, you've made a good choice. So I recently bought two gallons -- they average about ten buck each, and it's working. But I'm not going to pay that forever for my darn dogs! So I save the jugs and fill them up at my kid's houses who have filters. Oh, what I do for these animals.

On to recipes. I have a homemade



bread that's easy peasy, a main dish recipe for healthy, delicious, and quick pasta good enough for company. A tasty salad for any palate, including your darling kids or grandkids, and finally an updated, unique, and crave-worthy, salty popcorn mix. If you like Chex mix, you'll love this.

SIMPLE FOCACCIA BREAD

When I stumbled upon this masterpiece of a recipe I never looked back. I double the recipe most times, and it's my go-to almost anytime I have dinner company and need good bread. It also makes an elegant appetizer served with olive oil and Parmesan or a marinara sauce. This recipe requires very little hands on time, but as with any bread, it needs time to proof and bake.

Ingredients:

4 c all purpose flour
2 t kosher salt
2 1/4 instant yeast (or 1 packet)
2 c warm tap water
2 t softened butter for greasing pans
4 T olive oil, divided
Italian seasonings or fresh herbs of your choice
Flaky sea salt

Directions:

In a large bowl combine the flour, salt and yeast. Stir well and add the warm water. Using a wooden spoon or spatula, mix until all is well incorporated, there should be no small pockets of flour. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 8 hours and up to 24 hours.

Lightly butter two nine-inch cake pans, then line with parchment paper. I trace the pan on the paper first with a pencil and then cut it out for a perfect fit. Pour one tablespoon of olive oil into the center of each pan. Divide the dough in half with a large spoon or spatula and place one piece of dough in each pan, turning to coat with oil. Tuck edges of dough underneath to form a rough ball. Cover each pan tightly with plastic wrap and allow the balls to rest for 2-3 hours, depending on the warmth of your kitchen. My kitchen is drafty so sometimes I place the pans in my smaller office.

Preheat oven to 450 degrees with the rack positioned in the center. Drizzle another tablespoon over each round of dough and with oiled fingers and hands, press straight down and create 'dimples' that go all the way through the dough, actual holes. Gently stretch the dough as you press down to allow the dough to fill the pan. Sprinkle the tops with dried or fresh herbs and flaky salt. I used an

Continued on next page. See:

JANE

BUSINESS & FINANCE

To brighten your day and lift your spirits ...

By **Charlie Retherford**
Kemner, Iott, Benz Agency

Greetings! I hope all of you are successfully making your way through these trying times and staying as healthy as possible. Many of us are rediscovering home life and searching for ways to keep our bodies in shape and our minds at peace. We have two new forever friends at my house: Ruby, a blue heeler/ shepherd mix and Rufus, a basset hound/pug mix. They are quite the pair and fill up that “empty nest” very nicely. They are a great help with the “peace of mind” issue.

In an effort to brighten your day and lift your spirits, I decided to write about gardening: a great way to sooth your mind and soul; not to mention your body when you soak in a steaming tub after spending the day working or playing in the garden. As Sir Francis Bacon said about gardens, “they are the purest of human pleasures”.

Springtime requires hard work in preparation of a bounteous and beautiful garden. Mending fences, clearing beds of winter debris and amending your soil with the proper nutrients along with pruning summer-blooming shrubs and dividing perennials will surely pave the way for a successful garden. You might even make your neighbors jealous! Gardening happens all around the world and is an activity fit for all ages. After all, a garden is a wonderful mixture of art and science.

There are many types of gardens; Zen gardens, botanic gardens, flower gardens, rose gardens and even zoological gardens. By far, the most common type of garden is the residential garden, a miniature version

of the family farm. A source of food for some and a proud hobby for others.

While planning our garden, my daughter, Holly, and I were doing some research on native plants, nutrients, hardiness zones and so on. What we found in our search for information was nothing short of amazing! For instance, did you know there are more microorganisms in 1 teaspoon of soil than there are people on Earth? Or that MythBusters proved that talking to plants or playing music around plants helps them grow better than their lonely counterparts?

I learned many things about fruits and vegetables too. Tomatoes are the world’s most popular fruit and there are at least 10,000 varieties. The heaviest tomato ever recorded weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces and there are more than 60,000,000 tons of tomatoes grown each year. If you sprinkle baking soda around your tomato plants, you will have sweeter tomatoes because that reduces acidity. By the way, bananas are the second most popular fruit in the world.

Many of our favorite fruits are actually cousins of the long-stemmed variety of roses. This includes apples, pears, peaches, cherries, raspberries and strawberries.

Pineapples are not related to apples; they are in the berry family and they are the only edible bromeliad. Watermelon and rhubarb are vegetables. Eggplants and potatoes are from the same family. As far as we know, potatoes were first grown in Peru ... 7,000 years ago.

Broccoli and cauliflower are both vegetables and flowers.

There was an ancient Native-American technique for growing vegetables called “The Three Sisters”. Corn, beans and

squash were planted together for their mutual benefits. Called companion planting today, it is still a successful growing method.

You can thank those crisp, cool cucumbers for your greenhouse, first invented by the Roman Emperor Tiberius who wanted to be able to eat cucumbers every day of the year.

We find other kinds of plants in the garden as well. Herbs are the leaves of specific plants and spices come from the roots, seeds, berries, bark or bulbs of a plant. Vanilla beans are actually pods that hang from a climbing orchid. Many other flowers also have edible parts but today, flowers are usually grown for their beauty or perfume.

Did you know that tulips were once worth more than gold? In 1637, a virus caused a change in the color of tulips in Holland so they became extremely expensive.

The flowers of figs are carnivorous, trapping and digesting the wasps that pollinate them.

It takes 1000 jasmine flowers and 1 dozen roses to make each bottle of Chanel No 5 perfume.

Flowers are known to attract butterflies, and some do but many flowers have lost much of their natural perfume through cross-pollination. Dandelions, clover and heirloom flowers are much more attractive to butterflies now.

Dandelions were so important to the Europeans that they carried the seeds along to America. Dandelions have been prized as a medicine and a food source for over a thousand years: The greens are used for salads or teas, the roots as a vege-

table or dried to make a coffee substitute, and the flowers for wine or a yellow dye for wool.

Thistles and other weeds are a gardener’s nightmare but ask any true Scotsman how they feel about thistles and you will certainly get an earful! Thistles are the national flower of Scotland because the thick growth of them helped the Scots escape the Vikings who had such difficulty getting through the thistles.

George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both grew cannabis on their respective plantations. Jefferson thought so highly of the plant that he invented a device for producing hemp in 1815.

There is a garden in England called Poison Garden. It has 100 murderous plants that are so nasty, visitors are prohibited from tasting, smelling or touching any of them.

And finally, did you know that the first Saturday in May is World Naked Gardening Day? It is a celebration of harmony and peace with nature. Oops! I bet you just missed it!

Now the next time someone tells you that gardening is for sissies, just look over at the thistles and smile. I hope you enjoyed our little walk around the garden and I know you will soon be sitting on that glider in the shade, sipping a glass of wine and watching your garden grow! All of us at Kemner Iott Benz hope each of you enjoys the fruits of your labors and that you remain healthy and happy. Please remember to call us if we can assist you with any of your insurance needs. We love being a part of your community and we appreciate your business.

JANE

Continued from previous page

Italian seasoning mix.

Transfer the pans to the oven and immediately reduce the temperature to 425. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until the tops are golden and underneath is crisp. Remove from oven. Remove the rounds from the pans with a metal spatula and place on a rolling rack.

I like to serve the bread warm, cutting it into ‘fingers, or strips. This is a plus if you want to reheat it later. Just brush the cut sides with olive oil and place them on a heated skillet, flipping once to crisp them up.

BLUEBERRY SPINACH SALAD WITH FETA CHEESE

I had blueberries on hand that I wanted to use up. And I always have all sorts of fresh greens. I remembered my

sister in law making a wonderful summertime salad with spinach, strawberries, and chopped pecans. I went through some recipes and found this picture but modified the ingredients greatly. No cucumbers here. I think you will like this.

Ingredients:

5 oz. fresh baby spinach
3 oz. fresh blueberries
3 oz. feta cheese crumbles
1/2 c red onion, thinly sliced.
1 c walnuts, roughly chopped
2 T olive oil
1 half to 1 T balsamic vinegar
1 t. honey
1 t Dijon mustard
1 clove garlic, minced
S&P to taste

Directions:

Make the dressing first so the flavors meld. Assemble the salad. Just before serving toss the dressing with the salad and serve.

BAKED SPINACH-ARTICHOKE PASTA

I like this dish because its light, healthy, and very easy to make. If you are craving pasta in the spring or summer, this is perfect.

Ingredients:

8 oz. medium pasta shells
2 T olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
Pinch of red pepper flakes
10 oz. fresh baby spinach
1 14 oz can artichoke hearts, drained and roughly chopped
2 c heavy cream
4 oz. grated Parmesan cheese (about 1 cup)
4 oz. grated mozzarella
S&P to taste

Directions:

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Bring a large pot of salted water to boil and cook pasta till just short of al dente (it will continue to cook in the oven). Drain and reserve.

Heat the oil in a large skillet over



medium-low heat. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the spinach little by little until wilted, then add in the artichoke hearts.

Stir in the cream and bring to a boil over medium high heat. Add in the Parmesan and stir until melted. Remove from heat and then carefully stir in pasta. You can also do this in a large bowl. The liquid may look wet and loose but it will thicken up in the oven. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer the pasta to a 2 quart casserole dish or individual casseroles or ramekins. You may want to set your dish on a baking sheet in case of any overflow in your immaculate oven. Sprinkle with the mozzarella and bake until bubbling, about 20 to 25 minutes. If desired, broil for a minute or two to lightly brown. Let cool before serving.

SMOKEY POPCORN MIX

This snack was super fun to make and you can enlist the help of little ones or teens. It will stay fresh in an airtight container for several days or you can freeze it for up to a month. I think this method would be great to have on hand for some munchies when people drop over. Feel free to change up there ingredients, I think I may sub pretzels for one of the crackers or chips next time, and hubby wants more sesame sticks. Keep the measurements the same so the butter mixture coats everything easily.

Ingredients:

1/2 c butter
2 T Worcestershire sauce
2 t smoked paprika
2 t chili powder
1 t onion powder
1 t garlic powder
1/2 t ground cumin
1/2 t dried thyme
8 c popped popcorn, lightly salted (equivalent to 1/2 c kernels in 3 T vegetable oil in a large pot)
1 1/2 c corn chips (I used Fritos)
1 1/2 c cheese crackers (I used Pepperidge Farm goldfish)
1 c sesame sticks

Directions:

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. In a small saucepan melt the butter and then whisk in the Worcestershire and dried spices. In a roasting pan mix together the popcorn, crackers, etc. Pour the butter mixture over and stir well to coat. Bake 30 minutes being sure to stir well every 10 minutes. I found that the butter tends to settle to the bottom and can brown so you really need to flip this stiff around! Enjoy!

See you next month. Be well.

~Jane

Jane Boudreau is a writer, columnist, and blogger who lives in Chicago, on Diamond Lake, and in the mountains of North Carolina. You can contact her at blndy9@yahoo.com.



LOCAL REAL ESTATE

The Housing Market in Cass County & SWMI

In March, the overall housing market in Cass County exploded in the number of houses sold and increases in selling prices when compared to a year ago.

The overall number of houses sold jumped 49 percent from March 2019 (46 vs. 31). The number of waterfront home sales soared 650 percent to 15 houses in March 2020 from 2 in March 2019. Non-waterfront home sales increased by two houses (31 vs. 29).

At the end of the first quarter of the year, the overall number of houses sold was up 14 percent (109 vs. 96). Waterfront home sales were up 158 percent (31 vs.12). Non-waterfront home sales were down 7 percent (78 vs.84).

The overall average selling price in March 2020 rose 53 percent over 2019 (\$266,264 vs. \$173,667). The overall median selling price in March at \$181,800 was up 40 percent over the \$130,000 median price in March 2019.

The average selling price for waterfront homes jumped 20 percent to \$ 472,377 from \$395,000 in March 2019. The median selling price for waterfront homes fell 18 percent (\$323,000 vs. \$ 395,000).

The average selling price for non-waterfront homes in March increased 5 percent to \$166,532 from \$ 158,403 in March 2019. The median selling price rose 9 percent to \$132,950 from \$122,150 in March 2019.

The median price is the price at which 50 percent of the homes sold were above that price, and 50 percent were below.

In Cass County, there were 5 houses

that were bank-owned or foreclosed as a part of all closed transactions in March or 11 percent of the total houses sold. The highest percentage in March previously was 26 percent in 2015.

For comparison, the number of bank-owned or foreclosed homes as a percentage of all transactions in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and the westerly 2/3 of Van Buren Counties dropped to 5 percent in March down from 7 percent in January and February. The previous lowest percentage was 7 percent in March 2018. The highest percentage in March was 60 percent in 2009.

At the end of the first quarter of 2020 that included months of economic speculation and the need for social distancing, the number of houses sold only declined by 5 percent from the first quarter in 2019. The housing market inventory of homes for sale also dropped by 4 percent, potentially contributing to the lower number of sales. Selling prices set record levels each month. Year-to-date selling prices at the end of the first quarter also set records in the year-over-year comparison back to 2006.

The number of houses sold in March rose to 244 from 234, sold in March 2019 for a 4 percent increase. Year-to-date, March fell 5 percent over March 2019 (615 vs. 644). Sales peaked at 675 at the end of the first quarter of 2017.

The average selling price in March 2020 was \$221,734 compared to \$217,265 in March 2019 up 2 percent. Year-to-date, the average selling price was up 8 percent (\$221,825 vs. \$205,823). The average selling price and year-to-date average selling price set new record prices

in the month of March in the year-over-year comparison.

The median selling price in March 2020 increased 3 percent to \$180,000 from \$175,000 in March 2019. Year-to-date, the median selling price soared 19 percent (\$175,000 vs. \$146,500). The median selling price and year-to-date median selling price also set new record prices in the month of March in the year-over-year comparison.

The median price is the price at which 50 percent of the homes sold were above that price, and 50 percent were below.

The record-setting selling prices, even with fewer houses sold, pushed the total dollar volume up 6 percent in March 2020 (\$54,103,134 vs. \$50,840,184). The year-to-date total dollar volume was up 3 percent and set the new record for the dollar volume at the end of the first quarter (\$136,422,547 vs. \$132,550,612).

The inventory of houses for sale dropped 4 percent from March 2019 (1214 vs. 1341). This level gave the market a 4.9-months supply of houses for buyers. For comparison, in March 2009, there were 2969 houses for sale.

Overall in SWMI, the mortgage rate was 3.635 up from 3.438 in February. Last year in March, the rate was 4.475. Nationally, the Freddie Mac mortgage rate in March was 3.5 up slightly from 3.45 in February for a 30-year conventional mortgage.

When Selling a Home ...

Your REALTOR® has the expertise and local knowledge to advise on how to price your house, so it doesn't languish on the market.

Here are four pitfalls that you can fall into and potential consequences when setting your price.

#1 Pitfall: Thinking your house is so great that you list at too high of a price. You'll lose your most important leverage and timing of a new listing. The longer your house sits on the market, the less likely you are to get your asking price.

#2 Pitfall: Assuming upgrades will get you a higher price. Upgrades don't always equal value. In fact, research from the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® shows you might recoup 59 percent of your costs.

#3 Pitfall: Setting a dollar amount you need to make. The number you have in your head may not be in line with the market. This is where your Realtor's knowledge of the local housing market and how your home compares to others in the area should be your guide for price

setting.

#4 Pitfall: Letting emotions get the best of you. Listen to your REALTOR on how to price your home. You need an outside perspective to give you the market analysis to price your home. The toughest thing is to think with your head and not with your heart when pricing your home for sale.

When Buying a Home ...

The answer to whether closing costs are tax deductible -- or mortgage interest and property taxes for that matter -- is, "It depends."

Basically, you'll want to itemize if you have deductions totaling more than the standard deduction, which is \$12,200 for single people and \$24,400 for married couples filing jointly. Every taxpayer gets this deduction, homeowner, or not. And most people take it because their actual itemized deductions are less than the standard amount.

Here's the list of one-time home purchase costs that are tax deductible:

- real estate taxes charged to you when you closed,
- mortgage interest paid when you settled,
- some loan origination fees (points) applicable to a mortgage of \$750,000 or less.

Costs of closing on a home that aren't tax deductible include:

- Real estate commissions
- Appraisals
- Home inspections
- Attorney fees
- Title fees
- Transfer taxes
- Mortgage refi fees

Mortgage interest and property taxes are annual expenses of owning a home that may or may not be deductible. You should consult with a tax advisor before filing to make sure you maximize your deductions and confirm that you have deductions that exceed your maximum.

To view properties that are for sale in your local area, go to www.swmar.com and click on "Property Search". The Southwestern Michigan Association of REALTORS®, Inc. is a professional trade association for real estate professionals who are members of the National Association of REALTORS®, and ancillary service providers for the real estate industry in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. The Association can be contacted at 269-983-6375 or through their website at www.swmar.com.



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WACHA-MA-CALL-IT?



Answer:

Around the time of 1835 this item would have been seen in church or possibly in a carriage. What is it?

ANSWER ON PAGE 17 OF THIS MONTH'S NEIGHBORS

Below: Thanks to Floyd Jerdon for the 1951 golf scorecard from Indian Lake Golf Course near Dowagiac.

Ground Rules

Out of bounds is designated by stakes on holes, 1, 2, 4, 5 and 9.

Ball driven in water hazard on No. 5, play another tee shot as second stroke.

Ball driven in road on No. 7 and 8 is to be lifted and dropped in nearest rough, *not* fairway, without penalty.

No lifting privileges are allowed on account of trees, but on ornamentals lift a club length.

Please play holes consecutively. For instance, play on No. 1, then 8 and 9 is not permitted.

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A twosome has preference and can play through a threesome or foursome. More than foursomes not permitted.

Players looking for lost ball must allow other players coming up to pass and should promptly signal them to do so.

Spectators are not allowed on the course.

Only shoes with wide heels are permitted on the course.

REPLACE THE TURF

Replace Divots					Non-Transferable				
Hole	Yards	Par	Ladies Par		Handicap	Hole	Yards	Par	Ladies Par
1	305	4	4	5	8	1	305	4	4
2	165	3	3	3	6	2	165	3	3
3	425	4	5	3	3	3	425	4	5
4	465	5	5	5	5	4	465	5	5
5	220	3	4	3	2	5	220	3	4
6	440	4	5	5	1	6	440	4	5
7	350	4	4	4	4	7	350	4	4
8	300	4	4	3	9	8	300	4	4
9	335	4	4	5	7	9	335	4	4
Out	3005	35	38	44		Out	3005	35	38
Player <u>Set Aug 18, 1951</u>						Total			
Attested _____						6010			70 76
Date _____						Handicap			
						Net Score			

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OUR CHILDREN

Take it outside!

by **SANDY FLEMING**

Now that spring is here, it's easy to feel cooped up, especially when you can't go about your regular routine. Getting outside, alone or as a family, can really help with those feelings. Plus, beautiful warm weather lifts the spirits and lends feelings of health and vigor. There are countless reasons to head outdoors, and very few reasons to stay inside. Now all you need is a list of fun things to do outdoors with the kids!

If You Have a Yard

If you do have a bit of land around the house where the kids can safely play outside, count your blessings! It's easy to find things for them to do, even if they have trouble being creative. Here are a few ideas:

- **Sidewalk Chalk (all ages, any number):** Sidewalk chalk is inexpensive and a great investment for keeping children occupied outdoors. You can use it on any relatively smooth surface, like a sidewalk, a driveway, or even some trees! It's great to let the kids have free play with the chalk, but you can also organize things a bit. Try having an art contest, playing Pictionary with the drawings, penning messages to family members or passers-by, or tracing around one another's bodies or other items. You can also have them try tracing shadows to make pictures, being creative to make scenes they can lay on in various positions to put themselves in the picture (be sure to snap a photo of your child "flying" above the chalk city!), and play word games like hangman. Don't forget about games that rely on a drawing to play, like hopscotch and four square. Can the kids create a new game that needs a chalk-drawing playing field?
- **Play tag (all ages, 3 or more players):** Remember, tag has loads of variations, and I'm sure your kids can develop new ones. If they want a nudge for their creativity, you can play Topic Tag, where players can shout out an item related to the topic and crouch down to be safe for 30 seconds. For example, if the topic is "food," then things like "apples" or "steak" will make a person safe. Try Turtle Tag, where flopping over on your back and waving arms and legs in the air for 30 seconds makes you safe, or Blob Tag, where the person who is "it" captures other players and holds hands to form a giant blob to catch the next player. Try different methods of locomotion, too, like skating, hopping, crawling, or rolling to capture players and get away from the person who is "it." In Shadow Tag, you have to play in a bright sunny area, and the player who is It tries to tag others by stepping on shadows instead of touching players. In Color Tag, hand out colored tokens, one per player. Whoever is It takes the token from a player when tagged (they go get a new one from a container), and when It collects all of the possible colors (or 3 colors, or however you want to play), that person is no longer It, but the person who they tagged last becomes the new It.
- **Classic Games (younger kids, larger groups):** Don't forget about the outdoor games from your childhood (or your grandparents' childhoods!). Try old favorites like Mother May I, Red



- Light Green Light, Hide and Seek, and Ship to Shore. Relay races can be fun, and so can various stunts and tricks, like handstands.
- **Go On a Treasure Hunt (all ages, any number):** Hide a surprise (one for every player or something sharable, please!) and give kids a map to follow or hide clues that take them around the yard to find other clues that eventually lead to the treasure. If older kids are playing, make the clues in the form of riddles or put them into a secret code to crack.
- **Following Directions (younger kids, any number):** Make up a set of direction cards that your kids can read or almost read, like "Run to the car" or "Find a stick and break it into three pieces." Have them take turns drawing a card and doing whatever it says.
- **Do Rubbings (all ages, any number):** Use old crayons and pieces of blank paper. Put the paper over various objects, like tree bark or leaves, and rub the crayon lightly over the paper to see the silhouette and its texture.
- **Set up a scavenger hunt for the kids (all ages, any number).** This can be the plain garden variety of a hunt, where the kids have to find and gather items from a list, or it can have a number of variations. You can arm them with cell phones or inexpensive disposable cameras and challenge them to snap pictures of the list items. You can send them off to find something to match each letter of the alphabet or as many items that begin with a given letter as they can. Give them rulers or tape measures and send them off to find items that have a certain size. Try a shape hunt, where they look for circles, squares, triangles, and so forth.
- If You Do Not Have a Yard**
- There's lots to do even if you don't have a yard to send them out into to

- play. Depending on the neighborhood and the age of your children, you might want to make these family activities. But they can all be done from the sidewalk, the back roads, or at the park. "No yard" is no excuse not to get outside and enjoy the beauty of the day!
- **Take a Color Hike (all ages, any number):** Give each person a different colored crayon (or more than one!) and challenge everyone to find something on the outing that matches the color.
- **Magic Loop (all ages, any number):** Make a loop of string or yarn approximately 12-18" inches across. Get a magnifying glass if you can, and a pad of paper with a pencil. Put the loop down anywhere you like outdoors, and then examine the things you can find inside the loop. Make sketches on the paper. See how many living things you can find, how many nonliving, and try for items of various colors and shapes.
- **Be an Ecologist (all ages, any number):** Take a walk and look for examples of the forces of nature at work, like water erosion. Explain what's going on to everyone else in the group.
- **Be an Animal Detective (all ages, any number):** As you walk around, look for signs of animal and insect life. Can you find homes, food, or tracks?
- **Changes, Changes (all ages, any number):** As you move around over days or weeks, make a list of places you see changes, growth and development. Are there plants that get larger or taller? Flowers that bloom? Houses that have cars in front and then not? Try to predict how each place will look next time you see it.
- **Shadow Detective (all ages, any number):** Take a camera along on your walk. Take pictures of shadows, then later, see if others can figure out what is making the shadow.

- **Go on a Letter Hunt (pre-school-early elementary, any number):** See if you can find each letter of the alphabet as you walk past signs and advertisements.
- **Play Bingo (preschool and up, any number):** Make up a few bingo cards ahead of time, with items commonly seen in your neighborhood or your local park. As you walk, try to mark off the items on your card that you come across. Who can go Bingo first?
- **Repeating Yourself (middle elementary and up, any number):** See how many repeating patterns you can find on your walk. How many times does each repeat? These might be fence sections, telephone poles, whatever. The world is full of patterns, large and small, and picking them out will improve with practice.

It's All in the Attitude

The world is a wondrous place, whether it's your own back yard, your neighborhood, or your local park. You can choose to feel confined and bored, or to embrace whatever you have and make the most of it. And nearly any activity can become educational if you take time to talk about it, make predictions or observations, think about what might happen if, and so forth. Look carefully, and you might be able to create math problems or find topics for writing, too. Have fun!

Sandy Fleming is an educational consultant, writer, and tutor living in Edwardsburg. If you need a steady stream of ideas to help you navigate suddenly and unexpectedly homeschooling, check out her website at <http://sandyflemingonline.com> and the Facebook group, Active Minds, at <https://www.facebook.com/ps/1048952175489109/>.

FIELD TRIP

Fred's winter in Brazil



This is our Brazilian house in front of the ocean.



This is the view from my office there.

By **FRED STEIN**

Normally our field trips are close by and free or low cost; however, nothing is normal this year.

Our field trip this month takes you, the readers, to Brazil. Ana, my wife, and I have a house on the ocean and spend the Winters there.

Some facts about Brazil: The population is 230 million people. Portuguese is the language. Brazil is larger in land mass than the United States minus Alaska and Hawaii, and the airplane flight is brutal.

C.A.R.E.

Call And Reassure Elders

Participants enrolled in the program will receive phone calls each weekday at a scheduled time as a daily check-in and provide friendly conversation. Any concerns would be referred to the participant's emergency contact or other local agencies if needed.

If you, a family member, or a friend is interested in the COA's C.A.R.E. program, please call (269) 445-8110. C.A.R.E. is only a phone call away.

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FIELD TRIP



In Brazil people who are over 60 years old get preferential parking.



Every March the town of Arroio Do Silva, where we live, sponsors a Truck Drag Race along the beach of the ocean. The population of the town increases from 10,000 people to over 300,000 people for the race.



My friends, Jhony, Valmir and Renato, at the local Churrascaria similar to Fogo De Chao in the United States except in the States the price is \$54.95/person and in Brazil it is \$11/person.

Throughout Brazil the German influence can be seen in many towns. This is the town of Gramado



Florianopolis

One of the items on my bucket list was to pick bananas off my own tree. My banana tree.



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FIELD TRIP



Top left: Brazilian parrots enjoying the sun

Top Center: In Brazil they have pizzarias (Rodizio de Pizza) where for \$3 you can eat various pizzas until you yell uncle. They even have desert pizzas, and this one is a pizza with strawberries and chocolate

Top right, there is a small town in the mountains called Nova Veneza (New Venice) and they have a Gondola in the middle of the town square

Left: Giant geodes in a marketplace

Right: Our dogs in Brazil. They are French Bulldogs and their names are Antoniella and Francisca











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HISTORIC POSTCARDS

Historic postcards depict rich scenes of our area’s past

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 web-site: www.arcadiapublishing.com

In this edition of Neighbors we have selected postcards showing images of various places around Cass County. In future issues, we will couple additional cards from one or more of the area’s lakes with views of nearby communities, lakes and countryside.



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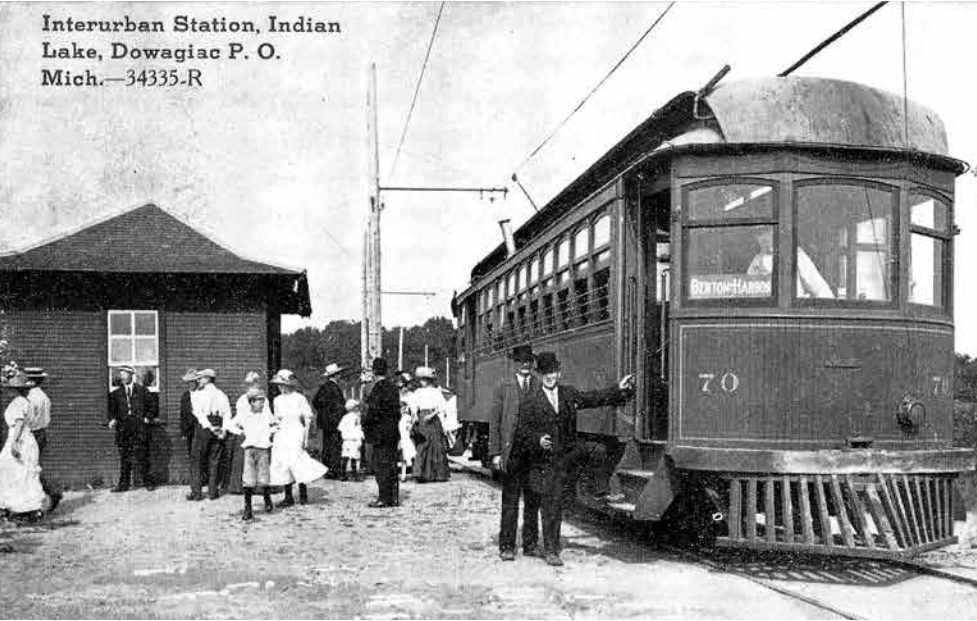
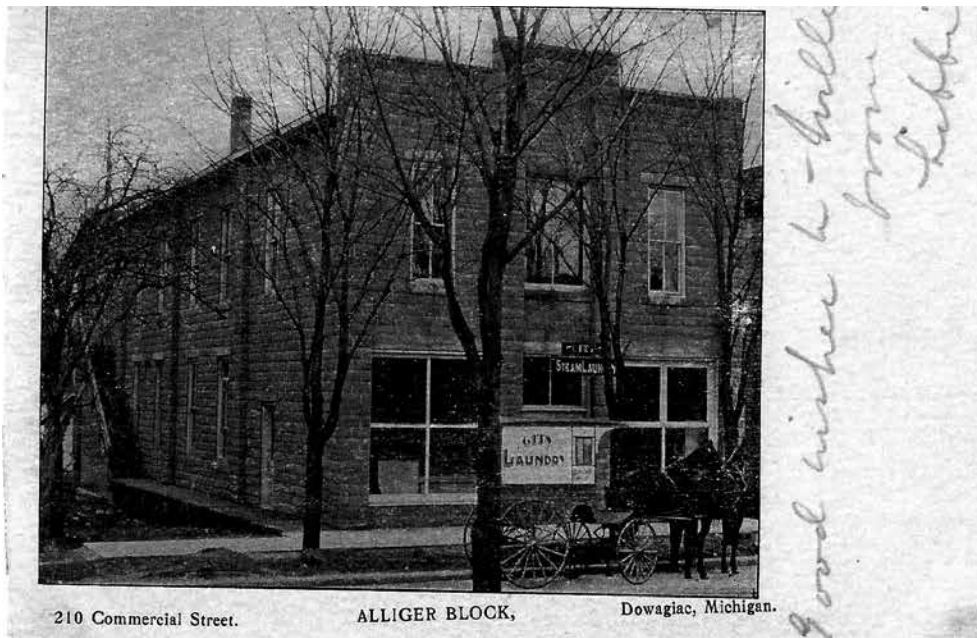
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NATURE NOTES

Spring birds galore!

Provided by Cass District Library
Local History Branch

Great horned owls have returned to a nest in Baroda that has been in use over the course of the last several nesting seasons.

Brad Anderson located the active nest on April 1, and took some photos. Anderson said the nest is located among a group of tall trees east of the Baroda City Mill building on Lemon Creek Road.

In Anderson's photo we can see one adult great horned owl on the nest. It is not known if the egg, or eggs have already hatched.

Young great horned owls are cared for by both parents until late fall or early winter when they disperse. Adult great horned owls pair bond for life and may reuse the same nest for several years. The technical term for reusing nests is site fidelity.

Much of Southwest Michigan is mostly open farmland with woodlots interspersed here and there, which is prime habitat for the great horned owl. The species can be found throughout Michigan but is more common in the southern Lower Peninsula.

The month of April is the time when yellow-bellied sapsuckers can be commonly found in our area as they work their way to Canada and northern Michigan where they will spend the summer. On April 1, Jim Ollis of Lincoln Township provided a photo of a sapsucker in action in his Lincoln Township backyard.

This aptly named woodpecker has been documented to drill for sap from over 200 species of native trees. Sapsuckers also eat insects that have been attracted to the sap holes.

Sapsuckers prefer to excavate nest holes in aspen trees which are more common to our north. The species is most common here in April, but by May local numbers dwindle. Yellow-bellied sapsuckers located after May 20 are noteworthy. Southbound migrants arrive as early as late August but by October most have moved to southern US. A few over-winter locally.

The brown thrasher is a songbird that arrives in Southwest Michigan in early April, and spends the summer nesting season here before departing in September. I received several reports of the species last week, including one photographed on April 6 in the backyard of Dick Schinkel of Oronoko Township.

Brown thrashers prefer semi-open areas and forest edges, and avoid large tracts of unbroken forest. Thus, they are more common in southern Michigan where this type of habitat is abundant.

On April 5, a golden-crowned kinglet hit the window of Edgewater Center in St. Joseph, and while stunned, was photographed by Kathy Burch before regaining its senses and resuming its northward migration.

Gary Kunkel of Royalton Township reported an exceedingly early male rose-breasted grosbeak in his yard on April 2. Kunkel also discovered an eastern bluebird egg in a nest box on April 1, and a second egg the next day.

On March 31, Claire Gillespie of St. Joseph sent me a video of a bald eagle, taken on the grounds of Berrien Hills Golf Club, not far from where a pair of eagles nested last year.

American toads have emerged from winter hibernation last week, as I have heard calls of male toads during recent warm nights, coming from ponds and



Top left: Great Horned Owl on nest, Baroda, April 1, 2020; Top center: Yellow-bellied sapsucker on April 1, 2020 at Lincoln Township backyard of Jim Ollis (who took the photo); Top right: Brown thrasher on April 6, 2020 in backyard of Dick Schinkel, of Oronoko Township; Center left: Stunned golden-crowned kinglet on April 5 at Edgewater Center, St. Joseph by Kathy Burch. This bird hit the office widow and was stunned

a short time before resuming it northward migration; Center center: Drake wood duck, April 9, 2020 at Higman Park, Benton Harbor by Lynn Kellogg; Center right: Louisiana waterthrush at Kesling Preserve, April 11 by Kenneth Bishop; bottom: American White Pelicans, April 7, 2020, Klinger Lake near Sturgis by John Cassady (Sturgis). There have been more reports than normal this spring across the region.

other wetland areas. Males emit a trill-like call lasting from ten to thirty seconds.

Several large flocks of American White Pelicans have been reported in the region over the last couple of weeks, including one flock on April 11 numbering between 70 to 80 individuals seen over Shoreham, as reported by Peter Plikaitis.

Additional reports of up to 50 white pelicans were made on April 11 from both Grand Mere and Warren Dunes State Parks, by several observers.

American white pelicans have a nine foot wing span, the largest of any bird likely to be encountered in not only Michigan, but all of North America.

White pelicans nest over much of western North America, through the prairies of the Great Plains, and east into Wisconsin. In recent years white pelican nests have been documented on islands off the mainland of the Upper Peninsula.

The species is observed during spring in Southwest Michigan from late March through early May, with the majority of the birds coming through in mid to late April.

Louisiana waterthrushes have returned to Southwest Michigan over the last seven days. This songbird is actually a wood warbler, not a thrush, typically arriving in early to mid-April along our rivers and streams where it is usually observed by ear.

Matt Hysell of Royalton Township reported a Louisiana waterthrush on April 9 along the Galien River at Warren

Woods State Park, relocated by Michael Shelton on April 11 by Michael Shelton of Stevensville. Another was nicely photographed on April 11 at the Kesling Preserve, Three Oaks Township by Kenneth Bishop.

The Louisiana waterthrush northern range limit is south half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The Galien River and St. Joseph River river basins are the best areas in which to find this species.

A drake wood duck perched in a Higman Park tree on April 9, photographed by Lynn Kellogg. Wood ducks are another conservation success story, as populations were alarmingly low in the mid-20th Century but through protection and the placement of nest boxes, they have recovered.

On the afternoon of April 7, David Ferris observed a common raven while kayaking Little Paw Paw Lake in Coloma Township. Ferris stated the raven was being chased by an American crow, and was last seen flying south.

Common ravens are much larger than crows, sporting a four and a half foot wing span to the crows three and a half foot wing span. Ravens appear over all much bulkier than the crow, and when in flight at first glance resemble a large raptor, but they are in fact a passerine, or in layman's terms a songbird.

The common raven ranged over most of eastern North America including all of the Great Lakes until European settlement. The species shies away from human habitation, replying on vast wilderness areas, and thus as settlement

increased, ravens gradually disappeared from settled areas. Early settlers in Michigan would have seen many ravens throughout the region, but would not have found the American crow, which didn't become common in our region until the 1870s-1880s.

By the early to middle 20th Century, the raven was confined in Michigan to the Upper Peninsula. As second growth forest began to rejuvenate in the northern Lower Peninsula, ravens began to reappear, and co-existed with its close relative, the American crow.

Over the last 30-40 years, ravens have inched their way south in the state, reclaiming their former range. In the 2000s, they were seen regularly in Muskegon County, and in the 2010s at the Allegan State Game Area.

Over the last five years, ravens have nested in the 1500-acre Ross Coastal Plain Marsh Preserve in Covert Township, Van Buren County, and observed in the median along I-196 which is adjacent to the property.

In addition to Ferris observation, ravens have been reported in Berrien County in Hagar Township, just a few miles south of the Ross Preserve.

I would expect common ravens to turn up in Cass County at Dr. TK Lawless County Park and Crane Ponds State game Area.

Please report your sightings to Jonathan Wuepper at wuepperj@gmail.com.

LOCAL HISTORY

Old photo shows original Cass courthouse

Provided by Jon Wuepper,
Local History Branch Manager
Cass District Library

One of two known photos of 1841 courthouse while still on site at northeast corner of Broadway and State Streets, before moved (in May 1898) to south side of West State Street. The other photo of the courthouse at this site was featured in the April 2020 edition of Neighbors.

The primary subject of the photo is a brass band, presumably from the village of Cassopolis, which were common in Midwestern small towns during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

The brass band was probably part of a holiday parade, possibly Decoration Day, now called Memorial Day; or possibly a 4th of July celebration. If you look closely you can see people sitting atop the roofs of buildings in the background.

Behind the brass band are buildings located on the southeast corner of Broadway and State Streets, which were all torn down during the 1960s or 1970s to make way for a bank building which has since served as the Village of Cassopolis offices and a law office.

At the very north end of the south-east row of buildings along Broadway was the Charles E. Voorhis grocery store. This building is partly shown in the photo just to the right of the courthouse with the "E" and "V" of the "CEV" grocery store sign visible.

To the north of the CEV grocery store is State Street, running east-west,



Parade along Broadway Street, Cassopolis, showing brass band and 1841 Courthouse in back ground. Date circa 1890s.

Photo provided by Cass District Library.

but the street is not visible due to the angle of the photo.

The courthouse is prominently visible in the background, located at the northeast corner of Broadway and State

Streets. Notice that the south shutter of the bell cupola is damaged. The damaged cupola was also visible in the photo of the building at its original location featured last month. After the courthouse was

moved in May 1898 to its final location along West State Street, the cupola was repaired.

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THE LAST WORD

Cheer up, things could get worse ... it could be raining too

Then, as if to add insult to our communal incarceration, it rained all day Saturday, the day after the governor said it was ok to go back out on our pontoon boat and "toodle" our hearts out on the lake as an acceptable alternative to lethargically numbing our minds in the Coronavirus self isolation.

Ok, it was not the best of times, but for me at least it wasn't the worst of times either, since I managed to spend some quality hours enjoying the peacefulness and absence of ambient light from the homes and piers of my snowbird neighbors who are still trapped in their winter digs in Florida, California, South Bend or wherever else snowbirds flock to avoid Michigan weather and worries.

Of particular note that week was a memorable Tuesday night, the night that the Internet had advised was going to be the peak of the Lyrid meteor showers.

Having probably spent more time in the last 20 years star gazing than most people do in a lifetime, I had made no special plans to attend that show ... but on that particular night the insipid Covid fever was particularly rabid, so after my beloved spouse retired at 10 pm, I found myself with the unenviable options of either over eating in front of the tele-shrine that threatened me with something inane I'd most likely seen before and wouldn't remember in the morning, endless and pointless computer games, or continuing the slog through a completely unremarkable book that I've been trying to finish for a week or more.

That's when I just happened to tear my eyes away from the blue light emanating from the far wall and casually

glanced out across the dark lake in front of my house ... and noticed that the stars were shining with such eclat that I was certain they were beckoning me to join them in welcoming spring.

So, in spite of the rather chilly temperature on the front deck, I grabbed an insulated coat, pulled on my winter boots (which I still haven't moved from their winter resting place by the front door), pulled on a heavy stocking cap and gloves, grabbed a beer out of the fridge (you never know when the urge to have a beer might strike while stargazing, after all), felt my way out to a soggy, cold lawn chair near the railing, plopped into place and tipped my head back to achieve the optimal star-watching angle.

After orienting myself to the positions of the Big Dipper, North Star and Orion's belt, I relaxed into a bit of self-indulgent minimalism, letting my eyes defocus and my mind wander among the playground of the various sci-fi adventurers who have been lifelong companions.

I'm not sure how far I traveled in my semi-somnambulant space journey, but at some point around 11 pm, while I was enjoying the quiet and the absence of airplanes (the fewest I've seen at any time since the week after the 9-1-1 disaster), I was startled by a flash of moving light somewhere off to the right. Unable to hold my eyes steady, my head jerked toward the streak, only to have it go dark before I could properly focus on the area.

Not to worry, seconds later a second streak broke the plane of my vision off to the left, and my head swung around like that little girl's head in the Exorcist movie (without the green vomit of all that other icky stuff).

For the next half hour, I counted no

fewer than 15 meteors (I'm assuming they were meteors, and if they happened to be Area 51 escapees I apologize to ET) blazing out in front of me, giving me a show worthy of an IMax (without the popcorn and Dolby surround sound).

I sipped my beer and congratulated myself for having opted for the great outdoors over the confines of my living room, not to mention congratulating myself for putting on my gloves (as I mentioned, the evening air was pretty chilly, and without gloves that beer can would have probably bitten the frost off the tips of my fingers).

For a while I just sat there enjoying the show, but like all shows, after the half-time intermission (during which I chose to visit the facilities indoors and grab a second beer) the cold started working its way into me, and I realized that if I fell asleep on the deck, my BS would likely find a Phil-sicle sitting rigidly in that folding chair come dawn.

Better get up and go to bed, I reluctantly thought to myself as I tipped my head back and swigged the dregs of liquid hops and barley through the tiny pop-top opening ... when what to my wandering eyes should appear but a blazing flash in the sky off to the northeast, magically rubbernecking my head around like I was passing a horrible crash on an Interstate highway.

This time though my eyes caught up with the streak of light ... and time froze (it was getting colder than a two-day old bucket of penguin poop).

Through my peripheral vision I was aware that the only two things moving in the entire universe at that time were the streak of the meteor and my eyes as they followed its arc nearly the entire length

of the sky over the lake, until it finally blinked its eye somewhere over Storey Hill Road, way down to the southwest of my vantage point.

For several seconds I sat stunned to silence, my pupils gradually dilating after the brilliance of the night visitor.

I thought of applauding, of cheering or whistling, or of thanking the heavens for the spectacular show ... as if the heavens would somehow hear or care that I'd been entertained.

Slowly I unfolded my tired, sore, cold, old body out of the folding chair, aware that I'd probably have some stellar arthritic aches in the morning, and made my way to the sliding door. But before I went inside, I turned just one more time and looked to the night sky.

Milky Way, check.

Big Dipper, check.

North Star, check.

Orion, check

None of the major stars seemed to have fallen. Despite all the earth-shattering changes that have befallen we earthlings over the past couple of months, all was right with the night sky.

Better go to bed, I thought to myself again. Tomorrow's another day.

Tomorrow, maybe I'll watch some TV or read a book, or if it's nice, I'll take my dog for a nice, long walk along some of the empty roads near my house. Or maybe if it's nice, I'll just go outside and do a little work in the yard to break the boredom that has been trying to break me ...

Cheer up, I thought, things could be worse ... so I cheered up, and sure enough things got worse and before week's end the weather came roaring back. Now I'm bored and it's raining, too.

Guess I'll go wash my hands.

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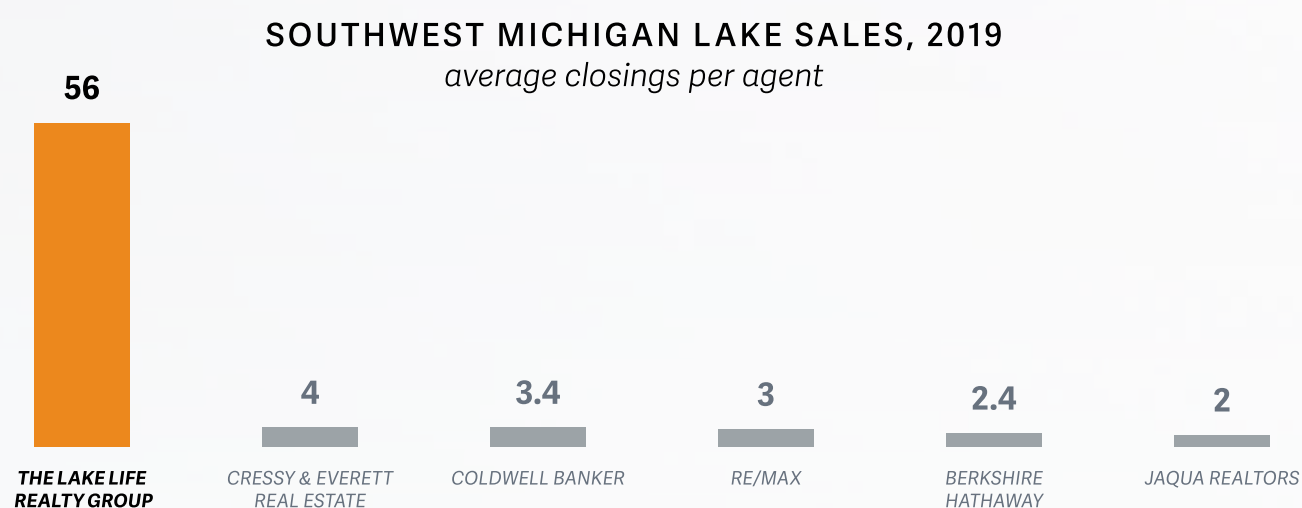
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