

Find flow for hefty northerns

Editor’s note: Following is a report from Rice Lake Tourism, with fishing tips provided by Jordan Marsh of Marsh Outdoors.

The Wisconsin winter is back in full force with cold temperatures and more snow to add to the landscape. This is great for outdoor enthusiasts of all types, but it’s sure creating a harder time for ice anglers.

Lake travel is difficult right now, so make sure to have a back-up plan if you’re going to try venturing out to a new area or spot to fish.

The big game fishing season is coming to an end soon. But there’s still a little time to try and catch a big fish. When looking to find a big prespawn northern pike, go to areas with water flowing into the lake. The northerns like to stage in shallow areas where creeks and rivers run into them.

Set up on the flat area where sediment over the years as made these flat shelves. The pike will be roaming around them ready to feed. Use large bait right now to target the biggest of the big.

Walleyes are still hard to find as they are roaming in deep water areas. Deep structure is the best go-to area right now, but don’t expect to catch numbers of fish.

You’re going to have to put some time in, and if you’re a jig angler using electronics, don’t be afraid to hit those suspended marks. Many times those marks are roaming walleyes up high. If you mark fish at a consistent depth, set your tip-ups there to intercept these pelagic fish.

Keep searching the deep mid-lake basins for crappies and bluegills. They will be holding there for a few more

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PHOTO BY DAVE GRESCHNER

Kris and Bjorn Hanson begin waxing 120 sets of Birkebeiner skis Tuesday at Rice Lake’s Out There Nordic shop on North Main Street.

Waxing up the Birkie

SKI SHOP OWNERS MATCH WAX WITH SNOW AND TEMPS FOR SMOOTH SLIDING

BY **DAVE GRESCHNER**
sports@chronotype.com

A skier had just left Out There Nordic, and a brief moment of quiet filled the downtown Rice Lake ski shop as warm sunshine slanted in the south windows, belying the cold hanging above the snow piles outside.

The skier left behind what will be his precious mode of travel on Saturday, a pair of skis that will carry him 31 miles through the woodlands between Cable and Hayward in the American Birkebeiner cross-country ski race.

This skier, and more than a hundred other men and women skiers, are entrusting Out There Nordic owners Bjorn and Kris Hanson to come up with the right wax, and applied expertly.

“We’ll be waxing all week,” said Bjorn, who genuinely appears to be looking forward to the hectic schedule. “It’s fun to work together to help pull off an event of this magnitude.”

That event would be the Birkebeiner and all the events that go with it, including Friday’s sister race, the Kortelopet. In all, more than 10,000 skiers will take part in the Birkebeiner and its companion races in the Hayward area starting Thursday.

By Tuesday, after the chit-chat visits with skiers during skis drop-off day Monday, the Hansons were in the shop’s basement wax room. Each standing over their own wax table, the pace wasn’t frantic but it was rapid and efficient as skis were scraped of old wax, cleaned and then took on a prep wax, a first layer

applied with an iron.

A few years back, said Bjorn, he and Kris went from waxing 20 or 30 pairs of skis to 80 sets. Their expertise in waxing, combined with their visibility in the Midwest ski scene through serving as youth coaches, led to more and more waxing requests.

Now, the Hansons limit their Birkie week work to 120 sets of skis by reservation. The prep work and waxing was done Tuesday, making up 70% of the job. That last 30% is what makes or breaks the race for skiers.

“By Wednesday we’ll be honing in on the weather and what finish waxes we will use,” said Bjorn.

The waxers caught a bit of a break in

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JOURNAL ...

I still like to play in the falling snow, drifting down so softly and silently, gathering on my shoulder, dizzying, in a fun way, my sight and thoughts.

As a kid I tried to catch snowflakes with my tongue, then notice while I was looking up how dense the flakes appeared passing the yard light in waves. And then it was back to forming a fort.

My snow play now is mostly on snowshoes in the falling snow when it all falls right, which has been several times this month as the snow days keeping marching in.

On my past outing, snow was drifting softly at times, then nearly blinding for short periods when I came to an open, windy spot as the trail wound its way.

I thought about days in snowy woods as a youth, the whiteness gathering in the air for as far as I could see, covering branches and bushes. Landmarks disappeared, disorientation crept in, the fear of being lost seeping into my thoughts.

I remember twice, first in a woods with which I was unfamiliar. I heeded the warnings and immediately began backtracking on a path quickly becoming faint dimples. But not so faint as to not find a field I knew.

The second time, I knew the woods well and wanted to keep hunting, my thoughts on sneaking up on a deer in the heavy snowfall. I suddenly realized I was losing light and focus as whiteness obscured the past and future and was working on the present. I found my way out.

These days, my snow playgrounds are smaller and so familiar. Chances of getting lost are slim. A little less exciting, I’d say.

—Dave Greschner

ALMANAC NOTES

February 20, 2019: It’s snowing again. After a week’s reprieve following the three snowfalls of 20-plus inches in early February, another snowstorm moved into the area today, with as much as 9 inches forecasted. And that’s not all. Another significant snowfall is predicted for the weekend. It’s all adding up to one of the snowiest Februaries on record after a nearly snowless January. Temperatures are forecast to be below zero nightly for a spell starting in the middle of next week. Deer are still moving freely through the snow, since what we’ve received so far this month was of the light variety. But any heavier, wetter snow will begin to tax their movements, and even more so for turkeys. Bears don’t care right now, snug in their winter dens, with sows sleepily caring for their newborn cubs.

Snowmobile and cross-country ski trails are in excellent condition, but lake travel has become difficult for ice anglers. For those wanting to snowshoe along deer trails, the hunt for shed antlers is on, though some dropped antlers are covered by snow. Fox, bobcats and coyotes are in their breeding season. Some great horned owls have begun incubating eggs, while bald eagles can be seen carrying sticks to old and new nest sites. The moon was full last night; the last quarter moon will be joined by the orange star Antares before dawn on the 25th.

FISHING-HUNTING TABLE

Rice Lake Area - Longitude: 91.45, Latitude: 45.3

SOLLUNAR TIMES						LUNAR TIMES			
Date	Minor a.m.	Major a.m.	Minor p.m.	Major p.m.	Sunrise a.m.	Sunset p.m.	Moon Rise	Moon Above	Moon Set
21 Thu>	6:33	12:19	6:59	12:46	7:00	5:40	8:32 p.m.	1:57 a.m.	8:27 a.m.
22 Fri>	7:31	1:18	7:57	1:44	6:58	5:41	9:47 p.m.	2:50 a.m.	8:56 a.m.
23 Sat	8:28	2:16	8:54	2:41	6:57	5:43	10:59 p.m.	3:41 a.m.	9:24 a.m.
24 Sun	9:24	3:11	9:49	3:36	6:55	5:44	no moon	4:31 a.m.	9:53 a.m.
25 Mon	10:17	4:05	10:42	4:30	6:53	5:46	12:09 a.m.	5:20 a.m.	10:24 a.m.
26 Tue-Q	11:08	4:56	11:33	5:21	6:51	5:47	1:16 a.m.	6:10 a.m.	10:59 a.m.
27 Wed	11:57	5:44	-----	6:09	6:50	5:48	2:18 a.m.	7:00 a.m.	11:38 a.m.

Major Activity: 2-hour duration F=full moon
Minor Activity: 1-hour duration >=peak activity period of week
Note: As February nears its end, the night’s brightest star Spica arcs across the southern sky, and the orangish star Antares is below the last quarter moon at dawn on the 25th.

DATES

Film, snowshoeing for Leopold event

A snowshoe hike and viewing of the film “Green Fire” are planned at the Department of Natural Resources service center in Ladysmith on Saturday, March 2.

The events on Aldo Leopold Weekend in Wisconsin celebrate the 70th anniversary of the release of the conservationist’s classic book, “A Sand County Almanac.”

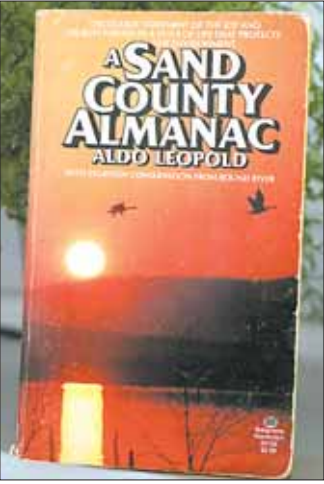
The program in Ladysmith runs from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. A discussion period after the video will be followed by a snowshoe hike on the reclaimed Flambeau Mine property. Snowshoes will be available for use, and snacks and refreshments will be provided. Copies of “A Sand County Almanac” will be available. The book is widely-known for shaping conservation efforts in Wisconsin, leading to state officials creating Aldo Leopold Weekend to celebrate Leopold’s vision and efforts.

The Ladysmith DNR center is 2 miles south of the city on Hwy. 27. For more information, call Ron Weber at 715-353-2993.

Bluebird nest box class at Interstate

A class on building a bluebird nesting box is Sunday, Feb. 24, at Interstate State Park near St. Croix Falls.

During the 1:30-3 p.m.



Ladysmith DNR plans event on Leopold Weekend (at left).

program, participants will have the opportunity to construct their own bluebird box. Box kits are \$10.

Representatives from the Bluebird Restoration Assn. will give a free presentation on what habitat attracts bluebirds, how to minimize predation and the value of nest box monitoring.

A vehicle admission sticker is required to enter the state park, and can be purchased at the park.

Festival at Pattison

Pattison State Park Winterfest is Saturday from 4-8 p.m. at the park south of Superior. Events include sledding, candlelight hike/ski and craft making. Call 715-399-3111 for more information.

Birkebeiner

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recent years when the popular Kortelopet was moved up a day to Friday to relieve some congestion on the trail on Birkebeiner Saturday. It also relieved some waxing congestion.

“By Thursday we’ll have all the Kortelopet skis done. That’s about 30% of the skis we’ll do,” said Bjorn.

From there, the day-and-night push is on to prepare the Birkebeiner skis so they can be picked up Friday or delivered to the starting area Saturday morning. The skiers trust that the Hansons will again successfully match the wax with the air temperature, the snow temperature and the snow texture.

And there’s one more factor: each skier’s ability and expectations. While fractions of a second count for junior racers in short races, Bjorn said that the Birkie offers a change-up in that the wax should provide a good ride over 30-some miles, whether the skier is going classic style or skating.

And there’s all of Mother Nature’s factors and whims to deal with. For example, said



PHOTO BY DAVE GRESCHNER
Kris Hanson clamps another ski to waxing table at Out There Nordic.

Bjorn, if it snows on Saturday morning, that new snow and its denseness will probably wear away during the race, leaving skiers on the colder snow beneath.

Back to Monday, the calm before the storm as skiers brought in their sets of slats. Between customers, Bjorn had a little time to explain waxing and the excitement and

economic impact of the Birkebeiner in Rice Lake, some 50 miles from the race’s Ground Zero in Hayward.

And then his phone rang. “I have to take this,” said Bjorn, a twinkle in his eye.

It was Ben Popp, executive director of the American Birkebeiner, asking if the Hansons could wax the skis of Finlander Juha Viljamaa, the

president of the Worldloppet Ski League, who wants to ski Friday’s Kortelopet during his visit to the Birkebeiner.

Arrangements were made to get the skis to the corner of North Main and West Evans streets in Rice Lake, and then back to Hayward before the start of the Kortelopet on Friday morning.

Bjorn smiled. Just another part of hectic Birkie week. And, at the end of the week, it will be Kris taking Viljamaas’s skis to the Kortelopet, because she’s skiing it too, classic style.

On Saturday, it’s Bjorn’s turn as he pushes off in the Birkebeiner Classic race. The waxers are skiers, mixing in with all those skis they prepared.

Rice Lake hotels filled

Rice Lake hotels will be filled this weekend with Birkebeiner skiers and their families, according to Rice Lake Tourism, which helps fill those lodging spots with their free busing offer.

Free shuttle from Rice Lake hotels to the Birkebeiner start is offered.

“Sign-ups are limited and almost at capacity for the Birkie,” said Nicky Repka,

executive director of Rice Lake Tourism.

Birkie Week starting

Festivities leading up to Saturday’s American Birkebeiner cross-country ski race begin this Thursday with the Barkie Birkie Skijor at 9:30 a.m., the Birkebeiner Expo opening at 10 a.m., and the kids’ Barnebirkie at 11:30 a.m., all in Hayward.

Afternoon events Thursday include the Junior Birkie at 1:30 p.m., Junior Birkie Relays at 3:45 p.m., and the Birkie Bash including a pasta and salad buffet and live music at 5:30 p.m.

On Friday are the Birkie Adaptive Ski Events at 10 a.m., the Kortelopet 29-kilometer classic and skate races at 10:30 a.m., and the Prince Haakon 15K at 1:15 p.m.

Saturday’s Birkebeiner 50-kilometer skate race and 55-kilometer classic race begin at 8:15 a.m. at Telemark near Cable. The elite skiers, including foreign skiers and U.S. national ski team members, normally reach downtown Hayward about 2 hours later.

For a complete schedule, see birkie.com.



Spring Coupon Book

The Chronotype will be inserting a County wide Coupon Book into the March 29th edition of the Early Bird (20,000 copies). In addition, the coupons will be put up online with a link on our website, www.chronotype.com.

The cost is **Only \$65.00** per coupon.
You may purchase more than one coupon but may not combine space. Coupons must be formatted as shown.

Coupon Deadline is Friday, March 1, 2019

Rice Lake

Company Name

Coupon
Information

Coupon Expires???

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