

## Work days slated at local bike trails

Volunteers are welcome to participate in trail work days at two mountain biking and hiking trail systems in Barron County.

A volunteer work day is planned at the Silver Creek Springs trails on Saturday, Sept. 22, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Silver Creek Springs is a new trail of the Chippewa Off Road Bicycle Assn. It is located on Barron County forest land along 5th Street, off Hwy. D, in the Town of Vance Creek 9 miles south of Alma.

The next work day at the Pipestone Quarry Trails is Saturday, Oct. 6, from 9 a.m. to noon.

Pipestone Quarry Trails are located on county forest land at the end of 27 1/2 St., off the big curve on Hwy. C, east of Rice Lake.

Volunteers are advised to wear long sleeves, pants and sturdy footwear. Tools can be provided, though volunteers are welcome to bring their own rakes, shovels, hoes, loppers, etc.

## Deer bow seasons starting Saturday

The fall hunting season kicks into another gear this weekend when the bow season on deer opens along with small game seasons for ruffed grouse and squirrels.

In addition, the bear hunt continues as hunters using hounds picked up the chase this Wednesday after the first week of hunting for those hunters sitting over bait.

Opening Saturday is the deer archery and crossbow seasons, along with ruffed grouse, turkey, squirrel and cottontail hunting.

The Youth Waterfowl Hunt in Wisconsin is Saturday and Sunday, and Sunday also marks the opening of the regular Canada goose season, coming right on the heels of the Sept. 1-15 early goose season.

The bear hunt runs through Tuesday, Oct. 9, though the final week of Oct. 3-9 is for hunters using dogs only.

## Hunter safety class set at Brill

A fall hunter safety class will be sponsored by the Brill Area Sportsman's Club, with class dates of Monday, Sept. 17; Wednesday, Sept. 19; and Friday, Sept. 21, all at 6 p.m.; and Saturday, Sept. 22, at 8 a.m.

Registration can be completed on the DNR website in the Go Wild section. On the first night of the course, students must have a DNR customer number and \$10 in cash for the course fee.



PHOTO BY DAVE GRESCHNER

Lisa and Tony Kofakis transforming a Vance Creek dairy farm into their business pursuits of bicycling, skin care products and camping.

# Wheelin' in the farm valley

Couple's search for homestead leads to Vance Creek and mountain bike trails in county forest

BY DAVE GRESCHNER  
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It seems Lisa and Tony Kofakis have found the hub for their life's style and work.

That hub is off the beaten path, in a valley among the farm fields, woodlots and creeks of southwestern Barron County, on 4 1/2 Street, a few farm fields south of Silver Creek Church on Hwy. D.

The hub's spokes reach out to several small communities, almost equal distance to Clayton, Turtle Lake, Alma, Prairie Farm and Reeve.

For the owners of Silver Creek Springs Wisconsin Bicycle Farm, the most important spoke is the shortest, the one that pokes over the hill and along the dirt road just a half mile eastward to the 1,000-acre Silver Creek County Forest.

That forest is where Tony Kofakis is carving out mountain biking trails when he's not living his other dream of

operating a bicycle shop. That would be The Creeky Wheel shop on the Wisconsin Bicycle Farm.

So we've covered the name origins of Silver Creek Springs—the creek runs a stone's toss from the back of Kofakis' house on its way to Silver Creek forest—and the bicycle part of the Wisconsin

Bicycle Farm.

The farm part, well, Kofakis' home was a dairy farm in its first heyday, and now in its transformation is a farm again as Lisa Kofakis grows herbs and plants for her botanical skin care products.

Oh, the Kofakis also offer tent camping on their property, using the website

hipcamp.com to reach silent sports enthusiasts who want to camp and pursue outdoor recreation.

Clearly, there's a lot going on in the valley of the old farmstead, where the short driveway passes the "Silver Creek Springs" sign with a chicken crest, sharing space along a rail fence with eight bicycles of days past.

"We fell in love with this place immediately," said Lisa, who also owns the tattoo studio Crimson Heart Designs in Turtle Lake. Her and Tony are both tattoo artists.

Turns out that Tony, a former BMX off-road bicycle racer, is an artist in the forest, too. He hand grooms trails with a keen sense of following the lay of the land to avoid erosion while mindful of what he calls being symbiotic, that beneficial interaction between humans and nature.



PHOTOS BY DAVE GRESCHNER (LEFT) AND BJORN HANSON

Tony Kofakis is developing mountain bike trail system in county forest.

SEE SILVER CREEK, B5

## ALMANAC, DATES, JOURNAL ...

### JOURNAL ...

Sometimes I don't want to know. Don't want to see it, don't want to hear it. Sometimes I wish what Greek philosopher Heraclitus said applied to nature's missteps and tragedies: "Nature is wont to hide herself."

A monarch butterfly lay twitching on the blacktop, dying in the sunshine of late summer. One wing was sliced away by a car, I assumed.

The missing wing doomed it. There would be no migration flight. I carried it to the grass beneath the bushes, to die in the shade of greenness.

And then there was the bird, crouched and wings spread slightly. It was unable to do any more to escape my approach.

I was not a hunter or a danger of any kind. Simply a runner on a woodland trail. The bird didn't know. And it didn't matter. It couldn't move.

The bird was near a foot bridge, at the side of the trail. It was unable to even crawl into the grass and leaves. I made a mental note to stop on the way back, knowing, however, that human intervention regarding sick songbirds rarely turns out well.

I made 10 minutes north, turned around and covered another 10 minutes south. Back to the bridge. My feet plopped on the wooden planks, and then I looked down to my right, to where the bird was.

The bird was dead. It had died in the 20 minutes I was gone. I knelt down, knowing I could not have helped this bird. It appeared to be a juvenile catbird by its slate gray color and long tail.

There are many reasons songbirds die, and they do die in alarming numbers, especially the young of the year. I left this bird on the quiet, shaded trail. I ran away from the facts of nature.

—Dave Greschner

### ALMANAC NOTES

September 12, 2018: Autumn is in the temperatures and colors this week. Some night-time temps have dipped into the low 40s, while there is color in some early changing maple leaves. Birch leaves are also turning yellowish and starting to drop. After a rainy late August, we've now gone more than a week without rain as the first half of September has offered up mostly pleasant weather with cool temperatures and blue skies. Warmer, cloudier weather is on tap, but there's little chance of rain until next week. Acorns, butternuts and hickory nuts continue to fall, as deer, turkeys, squirrels and other wildlife well know. Deer are feeding on acorns under white oak trees. Bear hunting is on now, while other hunting seasons are opening—archery deer hunters can start Saturday, along with shotgunners for grouse.

Hummingbirds have mostly left but a few were seen this past week. Some monarchs are also around yet but are in the process of starting their long migration to Mexico. Large groups of migrating monarchs roost together in trees overnight. More red-breasted nuthatches and purple finches have been seen locally, while orioles, warblers, tanagers and flycatchers continue to depart. Snapping turtle eggs are hatching, so be on the look for tiny turtles crossing roadways. The crescent moon forms a triangle with Venus (lower left) and Jupiter tonight, while Jupiter is again close to the moon as night falls on the 13th.

### FISHING-HUNTING TABLE

Rice Lake Area - Longitude: 91.45, Latitude: 45.3

Date	SOLUNAR TIMES				LUNAR TIMES				
	Minor a.m.	Major a.m.	Minor p.m.	Major p.m.	Sunrise a.m.	Sunset p.m.	Moon Rise	Moon Above	Moon Set
13 Thu	8:54	2:42	9:19	3:06	6:42	7:22	11:07 a.m.	4:32 p.m.	9:50 p.m.
14 Fri	9:49	3:36	10:13	4:01	6:43	7:20	12:14 p.m.	5:21 p.m.	10:22 p.m.
15 Sat	10:42	4:29	11:06	4:54	6:45	7:18	1:18 p.m.	6:10 p.m.	10:58 p.m.
16 Sun	11:33	5:20	11:57	5:45	6:46	7:16	2:17 p.m.	6:59 p.m.	11:39 p.m.
17 Mon-Q	----	6:09	12:21	6:34	6:47	7:14	3:11 p.m.	7:48 p.m.	no moon
18 Tue	12:44	6:56	1:08	7:20	6:48	7:12	4:00 p.m.	8:36 p.m.	12:24 a.m.
19 Wed	1:29	7:41	1:53	8:05	6:49	7:10	4:43 p.m.	9:24 p.m.	1:15 a.m.

Major Activity: 2-hour duration F=full moon  
Minor Activity: 1-hour duration >=peak activity period of week  
Note: The bright orangish star Antares is directly below the moon as darkness falls on the 15th, while creamy planet Saturn is to the moon's left on the 16th and to the lower right on the 17th.

### DATES

#### Barronett fest includes trail hike

A hike on the Grassy Lake segment of the Ice Age Trail is Saturday, held in connection with the Barronett Colorfest.

Hikers should meet before 9:30 a.m. where the trail crosses Lehman Lake Road north of Pershing Road, northeast of Barronett.

For more information and to give organizers an estimate on the number of hikers, contact Dale Cardwell at 715-645-0234 or dale6@prodigy.net.

#### Work day Sept. 29 on Blue Hills Trails

The Blue Hills Trails annual fall work day is planned for the morning of Saturday, Sept. 29.

Volunteers should gather about 8:30 a.m. at the warming house along Firelane Road north of Christie Mountain to begin work on the 20 miles of nonmotorized trails. Workers should wear blaze orange and have gloves, spade shovels, chainsaws, branch clippers and ATVs if possible. There will be extra tools.

Directions to the trailhead are at [www.bluehillstrail.com](http://www.bluehillstrail.com).

#### Power Sports Expo slated Sept. 29

The Rice Lake Snow & Dirt Club's fifth annual Power Sports Expo is Saturday, Sept. 29, at the Barron County Fairgrounds in Rice Lake. The



Ice Age Trail's Superior Lobe Chapter sponsoring hike.

site can be accessed from the nearby Wild Rivers Trail.

The show, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., features ATVs, UTVs, side by sides, snowmobiles, trailers and related merchandise. There will be displays, vendors and demonstration rides.

Representatives from snowmobile and ATV associations will be on hand. The event also includes the Dairyland Garden Tractor Pull at 10:30 a.m.

Swap meet space is available at no charge. There will be door prize drawings, food and refreshments. Admission cost is \$2, with children under 12 admitted free.

For more expo information, call 715-296-3130 or 715-410-1436 or email [drcraw4d1@charter.net](mailto:drcraw4d1@charter.net).



# Silver Creek

CONTINUED FROM B12

“I don’t force my way through the forest,” said Tony.

So far, with county forest officials’ approval, Tony and his nephew, Peter LeCuyer, have “quietly” cut 6 miles of trails through the hills and hardwoods in the Silver Creek unit of Barron County Forest, off of Hwy. D and formerly known as the Vance Creek forest after the township in which it lies.

(Locals still call the vast forestland Mesenbring’s Ranch, named for Frank Mesenbring, who farmed and pastured cattle there in the 1930s and 40s.)

## County gives trails go-ahead

Tony’s trail efforts have not only been blessed by the powers of Barron County forestry and economic development, but also by Chippewa Off Road Bike Assn.

Silver Creek trails are now affiliated with CORBA, a system that includes trails 30 miles away in the Rice Lake area at Pipestone Quarry and Hiawatha Park. Along with Scott Chapin of Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Assn. (CAMBA), Tony pushed the economic impact of trails to a community, county and region.

“Barron County impressed me with its foresight of trail-based recreation to make the county more of a draw,” said Tony, now the CORBA liaison for Silver Creek trails. “Trails are the cheapest amenity with the greatest return.”

Some mountain bikers come to Barron County to do the “Tour de Barron” by riding at Silver Creek, Pipestone and



PHOTO BY DAVE GRESCHNER

At 6th Avenue and 4 1/2 Street in Vance Creek Township, sign points way across fields to The Creeky Wheel.

Hiawatha, said Tony.

CORBA is the second largest off-road bike trails organization in Wisconsin, second only to CAMBA in the Hayward area with its nationally-known network of 250 miles of trails.

Silver Creek’s affiliation with CORBA has helped spread the word of the trails on county land. Tony and Lisa host a weekly group ride each Thursday at 6 p.m., inviting anyone interested to try out the 10 miles of trail riding, for which there is no fee on county land.

Tony’s 5-year goal is to reach 20 miles of trails, including access roads.

“Tony is a great trail builder,” says Lisa, as the couple sit on the open porch of the bike shop in a Quonset hut that the couple made use of on the farm.

While Tony offers that the trails feature 100 vertical feet of elevation per mile, and that he also developed trails

near Casper, Wyoming, in the 1990s, he mostly deflects his adept trail building to his trail philosophy.

“Trails are my way of giving back, to give access to everyone to enjoy trails,” said Tony. “The trails are my labor of passing and love. My saving grace in all situations has always been, ‘Go for a bike ride.’”

Using trails to help draw people to the Clayton area and entire surrounding community—the Kofakises mention Reeve’s new restaurant Escape on 2nd Avenue—is the goal.

“Trails gave the whole community a sense of identity. They leave a legacy,” said Tony.

Not only are the trails used for fat-tire biking over three seasons, they will also be used for the growing sport of winter biking on “balloon” tires. Other nonmotorized uses include hiking and snowshoeing.

The Kofakises note that Silver Creek county forest also has two trout streams and is popular during fall hunting seasons—thus their note that riders should wear some blaze orange this time of year and be respectful of hunters, especially bow hunters in early morning and late afternoon.

“We want to be good stewards of that piece of land,” said Lisa.

The trails will be closed during the deer gun season.

He went to high school in Detroit before he moved back west and got heavily involved in bike racing and as a bicycle mechanic.

Lisa got to Carolina with the Marine Corps, then on to Eugene, Oregon, where “it rained most of the time.” She took up a friend’s offer in 1991 to move to Phoenix where she became a tattoo artist.

That’s how Lisa and Tony met, in 1995 in Phoenix when Lisa gave Tony his first tattoo. Eventually, they wanted to get back to Lisa’s hometown, and landed in Clear Lake, half an hour from Stillwater.

In 2008, they went looking for their own homestead. What they found in Vance Creek Township was a foreclosed farm with grass 4 feet tall and buildings that needed plenty of work.

“We loved this place immediately,” said Lisa, thinking back on the sunny fall day that they first saw the property.

They loved it so much, laughs Lisa, that even before they made the purchase plunge they returned with lawn mowers so that even if they didn’t buy, the property would appear better to the next lookers.

But they bought, 10 years ago now, and have remodeled the house and other buildings, using boards from the farm’s broken-down barn for some renovation.

“We are continually cleaning the property and committing ourselves to our role as land stewards,” writes Lisa on the

Silver Creek Springs website.

## Gardens, animals and bikes

Thirty chickens and a big rooster roam the yard, while six turkeys have their own space and shed. Three dogs—German Shepherd sisters Laycee and Tessa and the white golden retriever Willy—appear happily on yard patrol.

Growing in the gardens are Lisa’s skin care ingredients, including calendula, comfrey and chamomile. She also wild harvests yarrow, plantain and prickly ash for medicinals uses. She started her own skin care line because of a need for a natural healing product in tattoo work. The products are sold online and in her retail shop.

Tony’s bicycle business is known as a boutique bike shop because he custom builds high-end enduro, trail and fat bikes—starting at just shy of \$2,000—from USA-made frames by Foes Racing in California and other parts from Fatback Bikes in Alaska.

He also has fat-tire rental bikes and works on any rider’s bike that needs fixing or a tune-up.

“The nice thing is they can go for a test ride here, just a half mile to the trails, and come back and let me know what worked and what didn’t,” said Tony, adding, “I want to build customer relations one customer at a time.”

From the farm yard, mown trails lead away toward the woods, where there are four campsites. In late August, the Kofakises hosted a group of campers from the Twin Cities, who not only rode the Silver Creek trails but also went kayaking on Hay River, southward from Prairie Farm.

An old farm homestead, bike shop, bike trails, herb and plant gardens, campsites and Silver Creek gurgling nearby. It would seem the hub is perfect.

Tony and Lisa both laugh, saying, they don’t have enough time.

“Our challenges are the by-products of success. We run out of time,” said Tony.

It’s a good problem, a good challenge.

“There’s a lot of work and only two of us,” said Tony. “But it’s not for ourselves. We’re creating a destination, and it takes time.”

**For more information, see the website [www.silvercreeksprings.com](http://www.silvercreeksprings.com).**



PHOTO BY DAVE GRESCHNER

Bicycles of days gone by welcome visitors to Silver Creek Springs farm and The Creeky Wheel bike shop, a half mile from county forest trails.

## Lot of miles to get here

Lisa grew up in Stillwater, Minnesota, Tony in Montana.

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