

Still awhile before swimming season



Prior Lake ASSOCIATION
LAKESMARTS

With a few days of temperatures reaching into the 40s and 50s, both Prior and Spring lakes started the ascent into spring by melting piles of snow into pools resting atop the ice.

Ryan Borman, a Prior Lake resident who in the past two weeks experienced the many escapades of people getting their ice houses off the lake and who also witnessed the drastic weather conditions from one weekend to the next, described the current ice conditions. He said in the areas where there were fish houses or where roads were plowed to remove the houses, the ice melted faster than in other areas. With warmer weather conditions, these areas were covered by 6 or 8 inches of water.

With people having to plow out their ice houses to get them off the lake before the deadline, the snow ended up getting piled into large mounds, similar to the snow banks we see on the roads. These mounds can be difficult to see on overcast or snowy conditions, and Borman cautioned those still snowmobiling and four-wheeling that some mounds are still 3 to 4 feet high. And because of the tough conditions before the deadline, some items ranging from a door to an ice house to a running board from



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Though changes in the ice conditions are evident, the ice depth in areas away from the shoreline, as of March 16, remained at over 30 inches.

a truck were left behind, frozen in the ice.

The lake accesses, he said, have a lot of water where people have driven on and off the lakes. With the 6 to 8 inches of water on top of the ice, the waves eat at the ice and weaken it. Borman saw the shoreline as being the most unstable area on the lake, where “some spots of the tire ruts can be a lot softer than others.”

He said, “It’s hard to know until you’re on it. When you’re on it, whether walking or driving, you suddenly find you’re in 6 to 8 inches of water.”

Near the Spring Lake north access, water flows from the road into the lake where people drive on and off, causing the ice to deteriorate even more.

Though changes in the ice conditions are evident, the ice

depth in areas away from the shoreline, as of Sunday, March 16, remained at over 30 inches. And a few people are taking advantage of the last ice-fishing days this winter. Jacob Robinson of Shakopee smiled as he held up one of the seven sunfish he’d caught on Spring Lake on Sunday.

“My girlfriend went shopping... and I went fishing!” he said.

If you go out on the ice, check the weather conditions first. With warmer weather conditions fast approaching, the lake conditions will likely deteriorate quickly. Stay safe.

As of March 16, the tributary between Spring and Prior lakes was not yet running.

In other news, the watershed has petitioned the Minnesota Department of

Natural Resources to open the outlet bypass at 902 feet (above sea level). This is due to the significant water content of the current snow pack in the watershed. Without additional spring precipitation, the current water content in the watershed is estimated to result in a 3-foot rise in the level of the lakes as it melts. As this would potentially push the lakes above flood stage, the DNR agreed with the district and granted the district permission to open the outlet bypass when the level of Prior Lake reaches 902 feet. The outlet is typically opened when the level reaches 902.5 feet.

This column is written by members of the Prior Lake Association, at www.priorlakeassociation.org.

COMMENTARY

Raingarden workshops arrive with spring

BY MEGHAN LITSEY

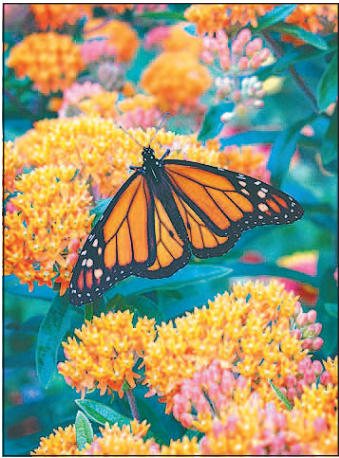
April showers bring May flowers, but they also create stormwater that carries pollutants to our streams and lakes.

You can help prevent these pollutants from reaching your favorite water body by adding a simple and attractive feature to your yard: a raingarden.

Raingardens help to slow down and clean stormwater. A raingarden is a shallow depression used to capture stormwater and is planted just like a regular garden or flowerbed, but the difference is in the roots.

Raingardens are planted with deep-rooted native plants that enhance the soil’s ability to filter water into the ground.

This spring, your local Blue Thumb partners from the city of Prior Lake, the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District and the



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A Monarch butterfly enjoys butterfly weed, a Minnesota native plant.

Scott Clean Water Education Program are hosting workshops for residents to learn about raingardens, native gardens and other beautiful, water-saving practices. Consider attending a free local Raingarden-in-

a-Box workshop and learn about how easy it is to create and maintain a raingarden in your own yard – and get reimbursed for it.

Raingarden-in-a-Box is a unique opportunity that will allow residents to purchase a raingarden kit containing materials and information they will need to complete a project. Simply attend a short workshop on raingardens, order a kit, and afterward participants will automatically qualify for an incentive program that provides residents with a grant of up to \$250 for completing a raingarden.

The Raingarden-in-a-Box kit contains a raingarden design suitable for your yard, instructions for installation, a copy of the book “The Blue Thumb Guide to Raingardens,” plants for the raingarden and a list of local resources to find additional plants, mulch and equipment

to successfully install a raingarden.

The Blue Thumb partners are hosting raingarden workshops on the following dates and locations:

- Tuesday, April 22, 7-8:30pm at Valley View Golf Club
- Saturday, April 26, 9-10:30am at Scott County Fairgrounds
- Thursday, May 8, 7-8:30pm at Prior Lake City Hall
- Saturday, May 17, 9-10:30am at McColl Pond Environmental Learning Center

The raingarden workshops are free and available to all Scott County residents, but registration is required. Visit www.scottswcd.org/ workshops to register or contact Meghan Litsey at (952) 378-2163.

Meghan Litsey is the outreach specialist with the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District.

WEATHER

Not so fast — March still has cold in store

Last week started mild, with the warmest reading since November as we reached 48 degrees on Thursday, March 13. It then turned cool over the weekend as we dropped below 10 degrees again. In northern Wisconsin it dropped to about minus 10 degrees on Sunday morning, March 16.

Then the week ended on the mild side again. For the period, temperatures were above average, albeit by only



Jonathan Cohen

1 degree. The week ended with another snowstorm, though the heavy snow fell in a narrow band from southwest to northeast Minnesota, with amounts up to about a foot.

The outlook is for a return to the cold pattern of most of the winter, though we have now reached astronomical spring. After a couple of relatively mild days, temperatures should return to well below average for the

rest of March, with highs generally in the 20s, nearly 20 degrees below average, and lows in the teens and even single digits again.

There is a good chance of some more mixed pre-

cipitation heading into the weekend and then some snow early next week, as well.

By Jonathan Cohen, Prior Lake observer for the Scott County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Date	Melted precip.	Snow-fall	Snow on ground	High	Low	Dew pt. midnight	4" soil temp
March 13	0	0	14	48	20	31	38
March 14	0	0	13	41	25	10	38
March 15	0	0	13	31	19	5	37
March 16	0	0	13	28	9	11	36
March 17	.03	.1	12	38	21	22	37
March 18	.25	3.2	14	37	28	27	38
March 19	.04	.5	14	37	25	21	38

Hidden Oaks students to talk with Space Station

Students at Hidden Oaks Middle School will have the opportunity to speak directly to an astronaut aboard the International Space Station.

Hidden Oaks was selected by NASA’s Teaching from Space Office to participate in a program known as ARISS (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station.) Through the program, students will use HAM radio to

talk directly with astronaut Koichi Wakata, the current Commander of the ISS, during an event occurring between April 28 and May 4.

To prepare for the event, students at Hidden Oaks will be learning about living in space, the scientific research being conducted by astronauts on the ISS, space travel, and the science behind amateur radio operations. Students will

be involved with all aspects of the contact, from creating a commemorative mission patch to helping local HAM radio operators set up equipment for the event.

During the contact, students in grades sixth through eight will gather at the school and have the opportunity to ask Wakata 10 to 15 questions as the International Space Station makes its pass 250 miles

overhead traveling at speeds in excess of 17,000 mile per hour. Students who submitted the selected questions will have the honor of speaking directly with the Wakata via HAM radio. Questions will revolve around his experiences on the Space Station, the science being done on the station and what daily life is like for astronauts living in outer space.

Help city update strategic plan

Residents and business people are invited to help the city of Prior Lake to update its 2040 Vision and Strategic Plan.

The public can attend a meeting from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Tuesday, April 22 at Club Prior, 16210 Eagle Creek Ave. Former Scott County Administrator Dave Unmacht will facilitate the discussion.

Register by calling the city

at (952) 447-9800 or emailing lfolie@cityofpriorlake.com.

City leaders consider the vision and strategic plan to be an important part of shaping Prior Lake’s future. Council members and city staff have frequently pointed to the previously approved 2030 Vision in their decision making about future development within the city.

Lori Carlson

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