

The Weld Observer

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Committee

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Grateful for Purse's People

by Lisa Drapeau

My parents, Purse and Phil Drapeau, bought a small camp on Hutchinson's Beach Road in the late 1980s and made it into their forever home. Dad found solace walking in the woods with his dog. When he could no longer walk, he transitioned into cruising up and down the fire lanes in his electric wheelchair. He was led by his mighty Chihuahua, Brutus, who may or may not have been providing auxiliary power. The two of them were quite a sight! Dad enjoyed going down by the lake to talk with Duncan, cruising over to the Kawahnee Inn to check in with Mom and the summer folks and heading up to The Weld General Store where Wallis and Jerry would meet him outside for a soda. He had even been spotted venturing up the Temple Road to see what projects people up there were working on. I frequently saw people pulled up next to him on the side of the road, their windows rolled down, leaning out toward my Dad, touching base, saying hello, connecting.

When my Dad was no longer able to get out, Wallis Tyler would visit him every morning to play a game of cribbage, complain about world affairs, and laugh at one another. My Dad couldn't walk far, but the people of Weld found ways to come to him. They befriended him and were kind to him for many years. He was fortunate to be part of the close-knit Weld community, for decades, until Covid claimed his life.

When my Mom moved from Mexico



to Weld, supporting my father was a priority. We were fortunate that she was a devoted wife and mother who did everything in her power to enhance our lives. She gave her all working in the Weld community at the Weld General Store, Kawahnee Inn, Kawahnee Boys Camp, Skoolhouse Variety, and providing personal care for many citizens of Weld. She volunteered as President of the Weld Ladies Extension and was an active member of The Weld Historical Society, and the Weld Recreation Committee and the Bicentennial Committee. She enjoyed dancing, singing along with the guitars, and playing on the beach while sharing glasses of wine. Echoes of her joyous

laughter will forever ring in the ears of the people she loved. She touched countless lives, and all would say that it was a blessing to know her.

The last three years of Mom's life were very challenging. She had a heart attack and then a stroke, twenty-four hours later. The stroke left her with aphasia, so she was unable to speak. This was the harshest of blows for such a social butterfly.

However, Mom never lost her vibrant spirit; she continued to love and interact with others throughout the remainder of her life.

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A Weekend with the York Sisters, August 1957

by Anne York Agan

When word got around that we were back at Henry Swett's rental camp on the lake for our customary last two weeks of August, friends and relatives randomly dropped by to sit on the porch, enjoy the view, and catch up on "the news." Among the visitors this particular year were my father's spinster cousins, Ruth and Mary York, who summered across the lake from our place. I'd never met them before, but over the years my father had recounted many stories about the eccentric York sisters, and I'd always wanted to meet them.

One morning, Mom and I were sitting on the front porch snipping a mess of green beans when I caught the faint sound of someone singing. I looked up to see two small figures in a wooden rowboat making their way across the lake. One was bent over the oars, the other seated astern. Both wore straw hats, bathing suits, and orange Kapok life preservers.

"Mommy, look," I said, pointing toward the lake, "two boys in a boat—looks like they're coming to visit."

She dropped the beans from her lap and ran inside, slamming the screen door behind her.

"Bob! Bob! The girls are on their way!" It sounded like a warning cry.

Of all the tales Dad had shared about his cousins, he'd failed to mention that they were four feet ten inches tall. What appeared to be two young boys were in fact his dwarf-sized female cousins: Mary working the oars and Ruth singing "Oh What a Beautiful Morning," flailing her arms to the heavens. I was six and a half—too young to understand that my mother thought Ruth and Mary were certified nutcases.

Dad was in the living room, lost in a novel. "Fine, Virginia, fine. Just calm down," he said absently. But my mother acted as if this were some kind of emergency. "I'm not here! Do you hear me, Robert? I'm not here." She took refuge in the back bedroom, locked the door, and hid in the closet until they left.

In retrospect, I think she was intimidated by Dad's "favorite girls"—brilliant, open-minded, and boisterous, they'd made a life for themselves after losing their mother in the 1918 flu

epidemic, and eleven years later their father, a local doctor, to suicide when he lost everything in the Depression. Maybe my mother was simply jealous of the happiness they'd found without the encumbrance of marriage and children. I'll never know. But I did get a taste of their lifestyle, and it changed my way of thinking forever. Their free spirits won me over in a heartbeat—remarkable, considering this was years before the "independent" 1960s awakening. They were way ahead of their time. My mother was still going to bed in her girdle.

On the day of the sneak attack, their motive was simply to invite me to spend the weekend at their camp. There was a full moon the following night—we'd swim, have a cookout, talk, sing, and walk in the woods. I'd sleep on the daybed near the Rumford fireplace. "Wouldn't Anne enjoy a little getaway?" I have no idea why my mother acquiesced.

The next day, my father rowed me over. As we neared their cove, the little white cottage came into sight—and gave me the creeps. Our camp was a sturdy, well-kept two-story brown shingled structure with a metal roof, tucked into a pine grove above a sandy beach.

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Purse's people from near and far gathered around her in those final three years to enrich her quality of life. Mom's local friends visited with her regularly, brought her homemade meals, went out for lunch with her, took her shopping, made puzzles, invited her to dinner, baked cookies,

painted her walls, rearranged furniture, brought groceries, sat with her to watch tv when she was tired, and shared unconditional love. Mom's "summer friends from away" sent cards and packages. We know how much she loved mail. A trip to the mailbox or the Post Office was always a highlight of her day. In the end, friends from near and far gathered at the Hospice House to hold her

hand, say goodbye, and comfort her during her sacred journey. They say it takes a village.... I am so thankful for our little village of Weld that is filled with kind and caring people who find ways to be supportive and share their love. My brother Phil and I are grateful for all of you who supported our family throughout this journey. We want to extend a heartfelt thank you.

Wild About Mah Jongg

by Liz Boyle

Every Tuesday afternoon throughout the year, a group gathers in Weld to play Mah Jongg. The original Mah Jongg is a Chinese game from the mid-1800s. There are several versions played internationally now, each with its own traditions: Chinese Classical, Cantonese, Riichi (Japanese), and American. Here in Weld, the American version is played, a variant of one that first came to the US in the 1920s.

The Weld group originated in Rumford in 2017 and solidified during the period when COVID-19 had spread. The current group has about seven players in the winter and eleven in the summer months. The names will be familiar to many: Ina Toth, Ursula Woodrow, Debbie Stewart, Wendy Ames, Jean Biondo, Dee Brown, Gayle Davis, Joanne Bradbury, Pauline Maloney, Avis Pulkkinen, and Barb Stephenson.

A standard American Mah Jongg set has 152 tiles and an official printed card. The game is usually played with four people. Players draw tiles and discard tiles, like in a Rummy card game. Each person works towards a winning hand as depicted on the printed Mah Jongg card. A winning hand typically has 14 tiles in specific combinations.

The Mah Jongg tiles are patterned with colorful motifs that can be divided into four sets: Suits, Honors, Flowers, and Jokers. The printed card changes each year and is published by the National Mah Jongg League in New



York City. One player described the card as “going extinct” at the end of the year. The annual card depicts all possible winning hands for that year, divided into different categories. It’s standard practice to buy new cards each year. So, as time goes on, you must start all over again learning new hands on the card, which surely keeps players on their toes. Expert players may have the card memorized, but an average player references the card throughout each playing session.

At one game I observed, Ina Toth told me, “I had to study quite a bit the first year. This is probably one of the few games that I ever really studied other than chess.” Conversely, Joanne Bradbury said, “The only way I could learn was by repeatedly playing the game.” One player who will remain unnamed said, “Oh my gosh, this is

what you people do?” She never returned for another game.

“God save us if we have questions,” Ina said. “We have to call the number on the card and a woman, I think in a closet in a basement in New York City, kind of answers. And she’s not nice at all, and she always makes you feel like, why did you not know that? How do you not know that?”

The regular players in Weld unanimously agree they’re hooked. Mah Jongg is enormously fun once you get the hang of it. It’s a balance of strategy and luck—and, as in life, those without a Plan B rarely beat the odds.

Contact Wendy Ames at The Weld Free Library if you’d like to join the weekly game or learn to play at the next Town Hall Game Night.

What's Up Outside: Spring Birding Joy

by Lise Bofinger

Step outside and see the world coming back to life. You can feel a gentle energy as everything starts to move again after winter. If you enjoy winter's snow, this past season was a good one. The cold kept the snow light and powdery, perfect for crisp mornings or quiet walks in the woods. But once the first warm days of spring came, the snow disappeared quickly. Now, in mid-April, only a few patches remain on the high slopes of Tumbledown and the Jacksons. The Webb Lake ice has turned dull gray, almost ready for the wind to push it toward Carthage and along the river.

Saying I love winter doesn't quite cover it—I really miss it when it's over. Still, I try to enjoy what spring brings, even if that means dealing with mud, blackflies, and the promise of warmer days. I've always noticed that birdsong gets louder as the snow melts, but I never paid much attention to birding until this year. The nice thing is anyone can start birding. You just need some curiosity and a willingness to go outside. Recently, Scott Ischerwood took me on a bird walk and showed me Merlin Bird ID. I was surprised by how quickly I got interested. Now, that ski season is over and the days get longer, I find myself looking for flashes



of color and listening for new songs in the trees. It's different from winter, but it gives me another way to enjoy being outdoors.

Already this April, I've been lucky to see and hear many birds: Evening Grosbeaks, Red-winged Blackbirds, Purple and Chipping Finches, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, American Robins, Eastern Phoebes, Black-capped Chickadees, Pine Siskins, and Dark-eyed Juncos. And that's just the songbirds. If you've watched the Bald Eagles near East Brook, you might have seen their new nest right next to last year's. I think there are eggs inside. Down at the lake, the waterfowl are back too—Canada Geese, Mergansers, Mallards,

Goldeneyes, and others are making themselves known.

If you've ever been curious about the songs or flashes of color outside your window as spring arrives, try birding. Merlin Bird ID is easy to download, or you can join a local bird walk to see what you find. The Webb Lake Association will be hosting two Birding Walks with Scott Ischerwood on May 23rd and June 6th. Watch Facebook for details on times and meeting spots. There's something special about hearing a new bird song or spotting a bright wing in the trees as the season changes. Migration is still happening, so now is a great time to go outside and see what's in your own backyard.

Try This One!

submitted by David Law

How quickly can you find what is so unusual about this paragraph? It looks so ordinary that you would think nothing was wrong with it at all—and in fact, nothing is. But it is unusual. Why? If you study and think about it, you may find out, but I am not going to assist you in any way. You must do it without any coaching. No doubt if you work at it for long it will finally dawn on you. Who knows? Go to work and try your skill. Par is about half an hour. *(The answer appears on the back page)*

A Bridge to Our Backyards: The Town Office Pollinator Garden

by Sara Shifrin

“To be a part of nature, through touching and understanding, is to strive to understand the principles of how nature operates. And to know those principles is to be able to work for the good of all.” – Bernd Heinrich, *One Man’s Owl: Abridged Edition*

In March, we heard a collective yes at the Annual Town Meeting to steward a shared resource—the Town Office gardens. In Weld, generations have looked upward to our dark skies and outward to our deep woods. This project, “Pollinators for a Purpose,” asks us to look downward at the smallest parts of our ecosystem. By approving the Webb Lake Association to steward this space, we are acknowledging that the health of our boreal forest depends on the success of the tiny creatures Bernd Heinrich spent a lifetime observing. An anonymous Weld donor is generously funding this project.

This transformation will not happen overnight. All gardens take time; they require the slow patience of the seasons. We are currently in the planning phase, guided by the “Habitat for All” ethos of Master Gardener Barbara Murphy of the Mahoosuc Land Trust. With each plant decision, Barbara reminds us that we are building more than a flower bed; we are constructing a functional home for the wild.

Weld is home to so many tucked-away garden experts —people who understand the specific rhythm of the soils, insects, and weather. This

project is an invitation to build an intentional community that shares both its horticultural skills and its deep reverence for the natural world. Whether you are a seasoned grower or someone who simply loves the smell of dirt, there is a place for your

hands and help. And a way for you to live the motto: Bee Wild. Bee Weld. When we plant for pollinators, we plant for ourselves.

Are you inspired to dig into your own pollinator patch? Here are a few plants to consider:

• The Spring Awakening (April – June)

These plants provide the first critical nectar as the boreal forest wakes up.

Plant Name	Role in the Garden	Why it Thrives in Weld
Wild Columbine & Zizia aurea	Early Pollinator Fuel	These natives provide the high-energy sugar needed for queen bumblebees starting their colonies.
Corydalis	Early Sign of Life	Offers delicate foliage and color when the ground is just waking up and queen bees are on the move.
Amsonia (Bluestar)	Seasonal Transition	Displays pale blue stars in spring, followed by golden foliage in autumn that mimics the changing leaves.
Penstemon (Beardtongue)	Early Summer Nectar	Features tubular flowers perfectly designed for long-tongued bees and hummingbirds.

• The Mid-Summer Bloom (July – August)

These species provide structural height and high-impact color during the warmest months.

Plant Name	Role in the Garden	Why it Thrives in Weld
Echinops ‘Ritro’	Geometric Interest	The steel-blue “globe thistles” are incredibly resilient against dry spells and cold snaps.
Rudbeckia ‘Little Henry’	Texture & Height	The unique quilled petals add fine detail that stands up well to all kinds of weather.
Liatris ligulistylis	Monarch Magnet	Widely considered the best nectar source for Monarchs moving through the migratory corridor.

• The Autumn Finale (September – October)

The “heavy lifters” that sustain life right up until the snow flies.

Plant Name	Role in the Garden	Why it Thrives in Weld
Joe Pye Weed & New England Aster	Reliable Powerhouses	These are the essential “heavy lifters” for late-season pollinators and migratory birds.
Solidago ‘Fireworks’	Height & Span	Arching stems look like golden explosions, providing a vibrant contrast to the purple asters.
Raydon’s Favorite Aster	Late-Season Bloom	A powerhouse of purple nectar that feeds butterflies just before the first hard frost.
Heath Aster ‘Snow Flurry’	Ground Cover	This low-growing aster creates a “white carpet” that smothers weeds and protects the soil.
Sedum ‘Autumn Joy’	Structural Anchor	Succulent leaves hold moisture, and the blooms provide a late-season bridge as temperatures drop.

Ephemeral Plants

by Carol Conant

Here in Weld, we all look for signs of spring. Roads get posted, ice goes out, snowbanks retreat, and forest floors are easily accessible. Being able to spot the first trillium, lady slipper, and trout lily — to name a few — are signs that spring is here to stay, with warm sun beating down through the leafless canopy. Who doesn't shout out, even to yourself, "Trilliums are blooming!"

Ephemeral plants are defined by their very short active growth period, emerging only when moisture, temperature, and light conditions are ideal. Most of the year they are dormant. Outside this window of opportunity, they thrive as seeds, bulbs, rhizomes, or other underground structures, allowing them to survive long stretches of unfavorable weather.

Most of an ephemeral plant's life is spent in dormancy, waiting for the right environmental cues. Their seeds are often extremely hardy, capable of resisting drought or cold. Some species even have growth inhibitors in their seed coats that wash away only after heavy rainfall, ensuring germination happens during a truly wet period.

For spring ephemerals, warming soil triggers quick germination. They can detect environmental signals that predict favorable conditions, such as increasing soil temperature or moisture.

Growing at remarkable speed, ephemerals must produce leaves, photosynthesize intensely, flower,



and set seed all within a few weeks. Many species can self-pollinate, ensuring reproduction even when pollinators are scarce.

Because their active growing window is short, ephemerals produce large numbers of seeds to secure the next generation. After seed dispersal, the above-ground parts wither, leaving only underground organs or dormant seeds behind.

Besides their varied and beautiful blossoms, ephemerals matter within the forest environment. They provide early-season nectar for pollinators

emerging from winter and stabilize soils in niches of the forest where other plants often do not grow. Their strategy — grow fast, reproduce fast, disappear — is a remarkable adaptation to environments where opportunity is brief, and competition is fierce.

Ephemeral plants are nature's sprinters — fast, efficient, and perfectly timed. Their brief appearance each year is a reminder of how life adapts to even the most challenging conditions. Though they may be short-lived above ground, their impact on ecosystems is lasting and essential.



Peace and Quiet

by Barbara Hardenbrook

When I was a child, I would ask my father what he wanted for his birthday, and “Daddy, what do you want for Christmas?” His answer to both was always the same. “Peace and quiet.” I would laugh, never really understanding.

Now that I am told I am a senior citizen, I understand my father’s wanting the peace and quiet. I never would have thought that the most noise I would enjoy would be the call of the loon and the quack of the duck.

I am very fortunate to be on such a quiet lake! Mornings, there may be a kayaker passing by, or a paddleboarder. The days of rowboats and canoes seem to be in the past.

I enjoy my quiet lake and finally understand my father’s wanting and enjoying peace and quiet.

Canoe Memories

by Hal Bradbury

It was the spring of 1983. I sat in my living room looking out the window at the melting mound of snow. I could see my 15-foot Grumman canoe becoming visible through the spring melt. It became obvious to me at that point with my young children now coming along, that my canoe was too small to take the whole family. I needed to make an investment and procure a larger canoe.

A quick call to Old Town Canoe Company revealed the availability of an 18-foot fiberglass Laker. The sales agent explained that having a keel would make the boat easier to handle. It would track in a straight line more readily and would be less likely to be pushed off course by wind or waves on Webb Lake. I wasn’t a highly skilled canoeist, and I’m safety conscious, so this sounded good as far as carrying passengers. The passengers would not always be my young family but would quite possibly be my non-paddling young English Setters.



My Old Town Canoe ownership was the beginning of a lifetime of outdoor sporting and recreation entertainment, skimming the surface of Webb Lake, enjoying the calm waters and the calling of the resident loon. We explored other bodies of water throughout the state of Maine, including camping trips on the Saco River when the children were small.

The Old Town Laker can carry a ton of weight and is very stable through aggressive water. Now that my children are grown and my gundogs have long since passed, this wonderful canoe only carries those memories. My wife and I reminisce about our times in the canoe. We are making the canoe available with the hope that someone else will experience the peace and beauty on the wonderful waterways of Maine that this Laker will surely deliver. The price we are asking is \$500, and if you are interested, please call Hal or Joanne at 585-2623.

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Ruth and Mary’s was dilapidated, tilting precariously to one side, sitting in a swamp, tall grasses rising from murky water. In later years, Dad admitted he’d been afraid the roof might cave in while I was there, or that the sisters would forget their responsibilities and let me drown while

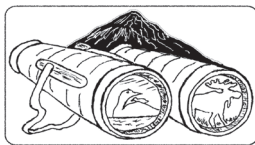
they were lost in their cups. Homemade dandelion wine was their elixir of choice, at any hour, when on vacation. “I was afraid I’d lose you before you had a chance to live out your life.”

As primitive as the camp was—no electricity, no phone, no indoor plumbing—by Sunday, when Dad came to retrieve me, I didn’t want to leave. Never in my life had I skinny-dipped under a full moon, stayed up until ten

o’clock listening to “old people” (Ruth and Mary were in their forties) tell stories around a campfire, walked a meadow picking wildflowers, or slept in a more comfortable bed—which, unbeknownst to me until I tucked in the sheets the following morning, held twenty-dollar bills between the mattress and the box spring.

And that, dear reader, is another story.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN



The Weld Observer

2026 Submission Deadlines:

August 1st | November 1st

Articles, letters, drawings, cartoons, photos, Jokes, puzzles, recipes.... All submissions will be published in black and white.

Via e-mail: **weldrecnews@weld-maine.org** or drop your submission in the Weld business box in front of the **Weld Town office, 23 Mill Street** in Weld. Attention: **Weld Recreation Committee**

<https://www.weld-maine.org/weld-observer>

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Try This One! answer: There are no Letter E's.