

Lake Maxinkuckee ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

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NAUB, THE SPLIT-ROCK BASS

By Barton Warren Evermann
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When Naub was just a little fish he lived with many others of his kind in a great overflow pond down by the place called Quincy, where his father and mother had been left when the Father of Waters subsided after the great spring flood. At first the pond was large and fine, the water deep and cool, and the bottom no more muddy than a large-mouth black bass thinks is the proper thing. Moreover, there were small fishes in great abundance—silver-sides and chubs, hickory shad and young suckers, carp, catfish and creepy crawdads, and hellgrammites—all sweet and delicious, according to the bass's way of thinking. And the two old bass felt that there might be worse places than the Quincy Bottoms in which to bring up a family. But by the time their several hundred young were born, which was early in June, they noticed that the water was becoming shallow and more shallow, day by day, and that it did not seem fresh and cool like it used to feel. While



FROM THE DIRECTOR New leadership is now in place at the Lake Maxinkuckee Environmental Fund with Carol Zeglis taking over the reins as President of the Board of Directors. She replaces out-going President Mary Anna Swennumson who is taking a Board position after serving in the leadership role for three years. Newly elected as Vice President is Litt Clark, with Tom Story staying on as the Board's Treasurer.

Carol has been an adamant supporter of the LMEF/LMEC mission statement of "working toward the preservation of an ecologically sound Lake Maxinkuckee and its surrounding watershed" since moving here with her family twenty five years ago. She is passionate about our cause and very focused on ensuring the lake's health for generations to come.

Welcome aboard Carol, we at the LMEC look forward to following your lead!

The LMEC would like to take a break from some of the details of environmental work this summer and give you and your family something that combines history, science and good old fashion story-telling. Our friend Jeremy Price at the DNR sent us a wonderful story full of both Lake Maxinkuckee history and a wonderful marauding fish.

We can imagine many of you trying to figure out the details of this great piece; and if you think you know where the rocks are - call us!

You will find a map on our website that can be used with the story. Click on the Newsletter Section and you will find a map from 1900 drawn by Mr. Blatchely that shows the Weed-Patch, the Kettle-Hole...well, I'm giving away too much.

While you, your children and grandchildren are laying around some summer evening by the lake, we hope you enjoy this lovely story! .

Kathy J. Clark, Executive Director

OUR HERO OF THE SEASON Mr. Richard Chambers, who moved to West Shore two years ago, has chosen the DNR landing as his mission. He read our article about the trash being dumped there and says he wants to adopt the landing as his own project. He sent me some pics of the mess after the fourth of July weekend when he "caught" a big bag full of trash. You've got my vote for this year's hero of the season Dick!

His other idea is to eliminate the tires being used by DNR as bumper guards on their docks. We've been trying to stop people from using tires this way since they end up in the lake, which is not good. Perhaps some other Lake Max users could find a way to donate some bumpers to DNR? Call us with your ideas!



searching for a suitable place to build their nest they had gone on many a long journey about the pond, but now when they swam away from their home in any direction they soon came to places where the water was very shallow and very warm, and the muddy bottom was very muddy, indeed. And when they went the same way a month later they found they could not go quite so far, and the water was warmer and the mud muddier than before. Fishes of many kinds were crowding about them, many floundering in the foul water, gasping for fresh air. Then some of the fishes could endure it no longer—the water was so

warm and the mud so bad, and they began to die in great numbers and their dead bodies in the stagnant, muddy water made it very unpleasant indeed.

Many of the young bass were among those that perished and Naub did not know what it all meant. But he was too young to know much about anything better in this world, so he was not unhappy. He spent his days catching and swallowing every *Daphnia*, *Cyclops*, *Gammarus* and any of their kin that came within his reach. And he grew very fast and soon began to swallow some of the smaller fishes about him—shiners and silversides they were, and even some of his little brothers and sisters that had not grown quite so fast as he, went along with the rest of them; for Naub and his kin came from the Cannibal Islands of Fishland and see nothing wrong in a thing like that. One day Naub caught a mad-tom which he proceeded to swallow, but Tom said, "I wouldn't do that if I were you," at the same time straightening out his arms and giving them a little twist—and there he was! stuck fast in the bass's throat; and do what he would, Naub could neither make him go down nor come out; for you must know that a mad-tom is a catfish, and every boy knows how a catfish can lock his spines. So there he stuck, and the world began to seem cold and cheerless to Naub.

We can be very sure what would have been his fate if nobody had interfered. But just then a great seine swept through the shallow, muddy pond and Naub was much astonished to find himself and the mad-tom in his throat—with many other fishes of many kinds—lying on the shore in a muddy mass. Then a man picked him up, and while washing him in a tank of cool, clean water, discovered the mad-tom in his throat. And as this man had played with mad-toms when a boy, he knew just what to do to make Tom unlock his spines. So he reached into the fish's mouth and, taking hold of the spines, gave each a little twist; then they lay flat against the fish's sides just as they ought to lie, and it was then easy to pull the catfish out of the bass's mouth. This the man did, and then he dropped Naub into a large can of nice cool water where he found many other young bass, not one of whom ever knew what it all meant, or that every one of them would have perished miserably had they remained a week longer in the muddy pond. Nor did they ever know that thousands of their kind, less fortunate than themselves, are left behind every year and perish with the annual drying up of these overflow ponds and bayous in the Mississippi bottoms.



But Uncle Sam, through the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, is doing all he can to reclaim these fish, and he transplants to better waters every year many thousands of bass that otherwise would perish miserably. And thus it

happened that Naub and the others in the big can were put on Fish Commission Car No. 1, which, attached to a train on the Vandalia Line, was hauled many miles away to **the beautiful lake called Maxinkuckee**, on the shore of which is "The House of a Thousand Candles" - a lake with an interesting history, some parts of which you ought to know.

ΦΦ

When old Sol put to flight the hosts of the Great Ice King and drove them northward from the upper Mississippi Valley, small detachments were cut off and left behind. These great ice-masses occupied the deeper depressions in the land and there they remained, slowly melting, long after the general ice-sheet had disappeared.

Finally, they all melted entirely away, and in the low places where they had lain so long there are now found hundreds of little glacial lakes, among the most beautiful and most interesting of which is Maxinkuckee.

When forces of the King of Cold came down from the North they brought with them from the Laurentides many fragments of the granite rock of which the Laurentian Hills are made; some large, some small, but all were held in an icy embrace. As they were carried southward they were rubbed more or less against each other and against the bedrock over which they were pushed along. The rough points of all were worn off, and some of the larger ones which rubbed against the bedrock had one side nicely and evenly smoothed like the top of a table. Over all the Mississippi Valley you may now see these rounded, smoothed or striated granite rocks.

Among those which the melting ice dropped into the depression now occupied by Lake Maxinkuckee were two of unusual size and beauty; each more than fifteen feet in length and nearly as wide, and each with one surface nicely smoothed like a floor. And as it happened, when released by the ice the two rested upright upon the bottom of the lake, face to face and only twenty inches from each other. There they have remained to this day; and if you should go to Maxinkuckee and are curious to see these peculiar rocks you may find them, but I doubt if you will succeed in doing so. All cottagers on the lake and the farmers round about have heard of the "Split-Rock," but only a few have ever seen it. Some may tell you to go out on the lake until a certain oak on the south shore is in range with the west end of a certain house, and then go north until the steeple of the little church and the red cottage on the east side are in range. When you have reached this point, you must look down into the depths and ten feet or more below, if the water is clear and still, you may see the "Split-Rock," looking like two great toothless jaws ready to close upon and crush any one who perchance falls between them.

ΦΦ

When Fish Commission Car No. 1 reached Maxinkuckee, Naub and all the other bass in the many cans were put on board the little steamer "Lloyd McSheehey," and Captain Knapp was asked to put the young fish in the lake at a number of suitable places—two cans in Aubeenaubee Bay, two at the Sugar-Loaf, two by the Flat-Iron, three at the Kettle-Hole, four about the Weed-Patch, and the rest of them in other likely places.

And thus it happened that Naub found himself among some fine plants of large-leaved pondweed near the Split-Rock. At first he was very much astonished—the water was so clear and cool, the plants about him so nice and clean and green, the marly bottom was just right, and he tingled through and through. After his surprise had passed away he began moving about a bit and he liked the place very much, indeed. Besides the cool water, pretty vegetation and clean, marly bottom, there were small crustaceans, mollusks and little fishes which seemed good to have about. True, there were some larger fishes—yellow perch, bluegills and rock bass, but he



was not much afraid of them, for he was now quite a fish himself, too big to be attacked by any save the largest goggle-eyes and perch, and it was easy to avoid them by keeping well among the broad leaves of the pondweed where it was so shady and so cool when the sun was hot. So Naub liked the place and there he took up his home. In a clump of pondweed with ample leaves, he was wont to stay, venturing out now and then as occasion required, in search of food or exercise. Food was abundant and he grew very rapidly. By the time he was two years old there was not one among all the fishes of the Weed-Patch that equaled him in size and beauty.

And as he grew in size and strength he became more brave and daring. He roamed the Weed-Patch a dauntless marauder. There was not a fish in that part of the lake that would not flee at his approach. But when he began to wander then his troubles commenced. One day, as he was swimming leisurely along in the deeper water just off the bar, he saw a small creek chub acting queerly. The law of the water knows no mercy. The disabled or distressed are shown no favor; they belong to any other animal that can destroy them. So Naub picked up the chub and began swallowing it leisurely. Just then he discovered that it seemed to be fastened to something and he felt a slight pain in the edge of his upper jaw. But he swam slowly away with the chub in his mouth when suddenly there was a quick jerk and the pain in the jaw became more pronounced. At first he was surprised, then angry that anything dared thus interfere with him. So he started toward his unseen enemy and gave his head a vigorous shake just to show how mad he was, when both the minnow and the hook



were thrown from his mouth; and the man in the boat, when he returned to his hotel, told his friends of the great bass that he lost by failing to keep his line taut. Though he resolved to have that fish and spent many a day tempting it with many kinds of lures, he met with no success.

The autumn days came; the air grew chill; one by one the cottagers returned to their city homes; and Naub was left undisturbed. Another season came and went, and yet one more. Smaller fishes were abundant in the Weed-Patch and Naub, growing marvelously, had become the terror of that part of the lake. Various anglers had heard of the giant bass of the Split-Rock and some had seen him break water when chasing minnows or yellow perch, but none had found him off his guard until one day a young man came up from the south. Though not an expert angler, he loved the lake and was wont to spend many an hour in the balmy days of the glorious Indian summer, rowing about over its placid waters or lazily drifting with the gentle breeze; always, however, with rod and line and baited hook.

One day as his boat drifted slowly over the Split-Rock, his hook baited with an unusually large and attractive river chub, the temptation proved too strong for Naub. Rising quickly from the shadow of the Split-Rock he met the chub as it approached his hiding place and seized it by the head. But as he began to swallow it he again felt the stinging pain in the jaw and knew that he must fight for his life. So he again tried the tactics which had once before proved so successful. Rushing madly forward, with a sculling motion of his strong tail he threw himself out of the water and savagely shook his head, but the hook had taken a deeper hold than before, and, do what he would, he could not shake it out. But Naub was a resourceful fish. So he decided to make the circuit of the Weed-Patch and, as he unreeled yard after yard of line, the man in the boat was mightily pleased; for had ever a fish allowed itself to be played more beautifully or did a humming reel ever make sweeter music, and for a longer time?

After playing the fish for sometime, allowing him to circle and double, now going to the bottom, now coming near the surface, but always keeping the line taut, our angler now began reeling in. Then real trouble and danger began. Naub was not one of those who can be led. Every turn of the multiplying reel renewed or increased the stinging sensation in his jaw. And he soon learned that he could avoid this somewhat by rushing forward, but in this he was not always successful, and then he was more angry than before. Then he circled about again, doubled, and went to the bottom in forty feet of water just off the west edge of the bar, came to the surface again that he might see more clearly what it was all about; then, heading toward the Split-Rock, he circled about it once, twice, and yet again, passing twice between the rocks, wrapping the line firmly about them, first going over the previous fold and the next time under it, which tied the line so securely that, when the man in the boat became impatient and gave the line too severe a strain, it broke where it cut against the sharp edge of the rock.

Now thoroughly frightened, Naub dashed madly away as the boat passed over the rock, tore the hook from its hold in his jaw, and was free again.

And when the angler peered down he saw many yards of line wound inextricably about the Split-Rock.

Naub is now very wise and very wary. Though many anglers have fished the Weed-Patch with many kinds

of lures, not one has tempted him. One thing Naub has learned most thoroughly—although he makes the Split-Rock his home he is never tempted by any of the minnows or other animals he sees about that place. When hungry he seeks his food in distant parts of the lake and in the depths; or else at night goes into the shallows near the shore where fishes of large size and many kinds are feeding. And only those of good size appeal to him, for he is now eight pounds and more in weight and a half-pound perch, pickerel or sucker is none too large for him. During the day he usually remains quietly in the shadow of the great rock.

Should you ever go to the Maxinkuckee, you will doubtless seek to learn more of the great Split-Rock Bass. Though you may ask all the anglers whom you meet, you may not succeed in finding one who can help you much, for they may not know the secrets of the lake or the ways of the water-folk.

But if you have infinite patience you may find some one who knows where the Split-Rock is, and who has not forgotten how to find it. And then you may see the great Split-Rock Bass resting solemnly in the clear, cool water near its base. In him is stored up all the bass wisdom of the ages.

Reprinted from the original.

AQUATIC CONTROLS CONDUCTS INVASIVE PLANT SURVEY The company that has performed hydrilla searches for the LMEC the last two years will be looking for evidence that the invasive plant may have made its way to our lake. The search will take place August 12th so please respect their dive team and stay out of their way as they do both a rake and dive search along plant beds around the lake. Thank you for your help.

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