

# The Betsie Current

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Mayo y Juno

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## Sauna Bard, Dude

“It’s pronounced ‘sow-na,’ like a female cow.”

By Jordan Bates

Current Editor

The bard is a storyteller, a sharer of experiences. So, it is fitting that my first experiences with a sauna were often filled with bards. Not in a figurative sense, but a literal one.

The host was Norm Wheeler, a Beach Bard: storyteller, teacher, musician. Each week, Wheeler would religiously fire up his sauna and invite guests over for dinner. His guests were friends and family, and often included his fellow bards—a group of storytellers, authors, teachers, deviants, and philosophers.

Back in high school, I had made fast friends with the sons of some of the Beach Bards, and so I had a standing invitation to join the weekly saunas.\* As a fairly uncultured boy from small-town Frankfort, these eve-

nings of philosophy, politics, literary references, and adult humor were intimidating, enlightening, and exhausting. The dinners after the sauna were always filled with homemade food, expensive cheeses, and wines from around the world. This was not the epitome of a bourgeoisie dinner, as the guests were teachers, builders, cherry-sellers, artists,



Hot on the inside, cool on the outside. Image courtesy of Noah Sorenson.

rogues, small-business owners (these are not mutually exclusive)—essentially guests who chose to spend their hard-earned money on a shared experience.

It was an occurrence that has gone back through time, perhaps to civilization’s very beginning: the young initiating into the adult world through fire, steam, smoke, and ritual dinners.

*\*In case you have never been, the Beach Bards Bonfire is a weekly gathering during the summer on Lake Michigan at The Leelanau School in Glen Arbor. The event begins every Friday at dusk, and it has been going for more than 30 years. Open to the public, anyone can perform poetry, songs, and music, with the only rule being that you must know it by heart if you plan to perform—no reading! Or just come and enjoy the performances of others.*

Please see Sow-na on page 7

## Garlic Mustard’s Takeover

A single invasive species has the power to change Michigan’s forests

By Emily Cook

Current Contributor

Tourists flock to Northern Michigan, in part because of the state’s incredible diversity of natural resources. Lake Michigan, mature hardwood forests, towering sand dunes, and endemic wildlife are just a few examples of the local conservation value. With spring nearly behind us and summer right on our heels, this season’s special focus is the carpet of spring ephemerals lining the floor of so many forests—trilliums, spring beauties, Dutchman’s breeches, trout lilies, and other wildflowers offer a stunning hike at any of the nearby nature preserves, and often, simply by driving along M-22.

Unfortunately, in many of these same

forests, an invader is taking over, crowding out sun-loving ephemerals and young tree seedlings that are trying to become established.

Garlic mustard is an invasive species that can rapidly take over a natural area, soon crowding out many of the native wildflowers and other native plants that are trying to grow. While garlic mustard often appears in disturbed areas and along forest edges, it is one of only a handful of invasive species that can actually spread into and thrive within a shaded forest stand—this gives it a



Crikey, it’s a hostile takeover! Photo by Emily Cook.

powerful advantage over neighboring plants.

History and (Bleak) Future

In the mid-19th century, garlic mustard was introduced to North America from Europe and parts of Asia for food and medicinal purposes. Named for its garlic flavor, the plant is high in vitamins A and C and was often used for cooking. Additionally, settlers believed garlic mustard was a good treatment for gangrene and ulcers. However, as better food options were developed and medicine became more advanced, the plant was allowed to escape cultivation and began to spread.

As a biennial, it takes two full years

Please see Crikey on page 2

## For the Love of Open Mic

Bringing music to life

By Beth Roethler

Current Contributor

You do not see her enter the restaurant. She comes in quietly with an old, tattered guitar case in her hand. She finds a table—not in the back, nor in the front, but somewhere in the middle of the room, with a good view of the stage. She orders a soda, and maybe something to eat. You can tell that she is waiting for something. She looks around the room for others like her. She spots a man with a small, rectangular case on the table where he is sitting. She sees a couple with a guitar case and a notebook, filled with pages of sheet music. She knows that she is in the right place.

It is open-mic night, and she is ready.

Open-mic night is something unique. It is

different from karaoke, or a band, or a solo performance. Open-mic night is more organic and is never the same show twice. You never know what you will see or hear when it comes to open-mic night, and you have to be willing and open to the new and to the unknown.

What is open-mic night? Traditionally, open-mic night is a time that is designated in which anyone can come on stage and share his or her talents. There is usually a host or someone in charge. People who are interested in coming on stage may sign up and then “go on” in the order that they are listed. Often, performances are musical or anything from playing and/or singing to dancing, but it can also include jokes, storytelling, and any other



Will this man grace the stage of an open-mic night stage near you soon? Photo by Aubrey Ann Parker.

performance art.

This is a time for people to take that giant leap of faith and give it a shot. If you have been spending hours writing your own poetry and have not shared it with the world, open mic is for you. If you are new to learning an instrument and have spent countless hours performing private concerts for your cat, open mic is for you. If you and your best friends get together in your garage and throw back a few and create musical works of art that only get better as the night progresses, open mic is for you. If you have a love of art or music but do not have the courage or the talent to perform on a “real” stage but want to share that love with the world, open mic is for you.

Please see Open Mic on page 3



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# Crikey

Continued from page 1

for garlic mustard to mature and grow seeds. However, even in its first year as an immature plant, garlic mustard has an advantage over native species. With darker green, kidney-shaped leaves, the invasive plant stays green all winter long, which allows it to photosynthesize when the temperatures rise above freezing—so, when spring finally arrives, garlic mustard is already leaps and bounds ahead of other species that are just starting this process.

In the second year, the plant shoots up a stalk that reaches two to three feet tall. Small white flowers give way to little black seeds, and each plant produces 600 seeds, on average, although particularly vigorous specimens have been found to carry several thousand.

The roots of garlic mustard are allelopathic, releasing chemicals that inhibit any other plant species growing nearby. This means that spring ephemerals and tree seedlings stand little chance, if garlic mustard begins to encroach. Since it has the ability to control the availability of light (through its height), water (again, through its height, not letting water reach the plants below it), and soil-nutrient resources to its neighbors, it takes very little time to notice a forest's landscape begin to change once garlic mustard arrives. But a healthy Michigan forest relies on tree-seedling regeneration, and pollinators need our early spring ephemerals.

## What Can Be Done

Fortunately, as humans at the top of the bio-pyramid, we have some power in slowing down the spread of garlic mustard and giving our special native landscapes a chance to continue flourishing.

Experimental trials have already shown that the removal of this invasive species can result in an increase in the biodiversity of other native species, including tree seedlings.

Despite all of its negative side-effects, there is one good thing about garlic mustard—it is very easy to remove. Some invasive species can grow to 12 feet tall and have root systems that travel another 60 feet underground; these plants require special tools and often, herbicide, to properly manage.

Garlic mustard, however, when targeted at the right time, requires only a pair of gloves and a trash bag. Even large plants can be pulled by hand, and this method has proven to be effective in many management areas.

The timing of doing your own “garlic mustard pull” is crucial, as removing them too early or too late can lead to accidental spread.

The Northern Michigan Invasive Species Network (ISN) recommends pulling in “year two,” when the plant has already sent up its tall stalk and may be starting to flower (early May to mid-June). Here are a few simple rules to follow:

- **Do not attempt to remove young plants.** Trying to pull rosettes during the first year can be overwhelming and sometimes leads to too much soil disturbance, which makes growing garlic mustard plants very happy.

- **Pull by the roots.** Grabbing a single plant at its base and pulling out the entire root is a great way to stop the growth of potentially hundreds more plants—what an incredible impact!

- **Avoid seeds.** Never pull garlic mus-

tard after it has gone to seed, as this almost guarantees spreading the plant more. Studies have shown that garlic mustard seeds can remain viable in the soil for at least seven years, so it is important to try to avoid further deposition.

- **Do not compost.** Garlic mustard should never be piled to breakdown nor disposed of in a compost bin. With the nickname of “zombie plant,” it has a reputation of re-sprouting, if given the opportunity. Landfills will accept invasive species, if they are double bagged and thrown into appropriate waste containers. For the last several years, the City of Frankfort has hosted a dumpster to be used specifically for garlic mustard disposal, and the city intends to have a dumpster in place for the 2018 season; look for it at the recycling station at the east end of Main Street, just past the marina and across from Family Fare. Additionally, there will be dumpsters available at the Lake Township Hall (Benzie), the Manistee Conservation District (Bear Lake), and the Grand Traverse Conservation District (Traverse City). Dumpster availability may vary—please contact ISN for more information on disposal and timing of dumpsters.

## Success Stories

Managing an invasive species of any kind takes time and patience. Rarely are you able to remove something once, as it often takes multiple years of repeating the same task to gain control. However, success stories exist, and with evidence of biodiversity bounce-back after removal, it is certainly worth the time and effort each spring to combat garlic mustard.

For instance, five years ago, garlic mustard was dominating the landscape on Tank Hill in Frankfort. Now, wildflowers and newly planted tree seedlings are getting a second chance. This is due largely to the dozens of volunteer hours that have been put forth at ISN's annual spring work bees on Tank Hill.

Each May, new and returning members of the community dedicate a morning to pulling the garlic mustard plants before they have gone to seed. Because of these efforts, the area is in a relatively healthy state—especially when compared to areas where garlic mustard has been allowed to run rampant.

Additionally, Nancy Baglan of the Congregational Summer Assembly (CSA) and the Frankfort Area Land Conservancy can attest to the positive change that results from dedication to garlic mustard removal—2008 marked the first year of management at a nearby former golf course. When they started, volunteers removed more than 650 bags of garlic mustard. By 2016, there were only 60 bags removed.

Eventually, you will see a reward result from all of the hard work that goes toward invasive species management—a healthier and more beautiful landscape in Northwest Michigan.

*Emily Cook is ISN's outreach specialist. If you want to participate in a work-bee session, there is no need to register beforehand, but any questions can be directed to 231-941-0960 extension 20 or [ecook@gtcd.org](mailto:ecook@gtcd.org). As these work bees will be held outside, volunteers are asked to bring work gloves, water, and sunscreen. For additional volunteer opportunities or more information on invasive species, visit [HabitatMatters.org](http://HabitatMatters.org).*

# Open Mic

Continued from page 1

Our community has long been home to many open-mic nights, and these great events go on year-round. St. Ambrose Cellars offers an open-mic night on Thursdays, beginning at 6 p.m., as does The Cabbage Shed in Elberta, beginning at 8 p.m., while Stormcloud Brewing Company in Frankfort has their “Storm the Mic” (hosted by Blake Elliott) on Sunday nights beginning at 6 p.m.

If you are not musically or artistically inclined, do not let that stop you from going to an establishment that is featuring open mic—local artists need you and your support. Moreover, going out with your friends and family to an open-mic night can be a very fun and memorable event. With so many talented people in our community, you never know what you will see or hear, or who might be there.

“It’s just a great time to spend with family and friends. It gives you the chance to play for fun, leaving all the pressure behind,” says local musician Paul May, who can be seen—and heard—at open-mic nights in the area. “We really want to enable young, talented people to share their talent. It makes others smile to see and appreciate music.”

Some of the most amazing open-mic nights usually end with everyone on stage together playing, while the crowd sings along. It is that moment when open-mic magic happens, and you might miss it if you do not attend. As a spectator, it is also your

voice that means the most to those people on stage. If you see someone perform and you enjoy what they do, find time in the night to tell them—you would be amazed at how much it could mean to someone who has only recently gotten up the confidence to get on stage. It is important that, as a community, we support and build each other up to become better people, and sometimes that can be through the arts.

“One of the great things about open-mic night is that you get to see newer musicians catch that feeling that comes with performing, and it’s priceless,” explains local musician Bill Frary.

Open-mic night is not for everyone, so if you go and feel like it just is not for you, that is okay. Music and performance is art. Art speaks to us in different ways and in different forms. What is so special about open-mic night is that it can empower and bring together so many people. Often you can see people with very different backgrounds come together on stage and create beautiful music and take chances that they never would have before.

So, if you sing along to your favorite song in your car, or dance while doing the dishes, or whistle while fishing, think about that young woman, her guitar case, and her sense of hope and courage. You might just find you have that spark within you—and if you do, we will see you

soon at a Benzie County open-mic night!

*Beth Roethler and her family own The Cabbage Shed in Elberta, where her husband, Tony, is the general manager. She is in charge of open-mic nights on Thursdays at 8 p.m. She can often be seen singing at open-mic nights, or in her car.*

If you love live music and have not experienced an open-mic night, you should take a leap and venture out on one of these nights. Be aware: there are some basic unspoken rules to open-mic night, though.

**1. Not karaoke.** Do not mistake this for karaoke. Do not be the person that plays a track from another artist and then sings over top of it. You will not find much respect from other artists when it comes to this.

**2. Ask before duet-ing.** Do not just assume that you can play with anyone while they are on stage. If you want to partner up with another person who is there performing, talk to them first; have a conversation. Perhaps the worst thing that you can do at an open-mic night is to jump on stage with someone who does not want you with them.

**3. Respect.** Respect others, yourself, and the establishment that you are in. Even if you do not know or like the person who is performing, empathize with the fact that it takes a lot of courage to take the leap onto stage. Do not be rude or disrespectful.

**4. Be a customer.** Purchase something, even if it is just a soda. The establishment has paid, in some form or another, to create and maintain this night. Help support them, just as they help support you and your fellow local artists.

**5. Be bold.** Do not be afraid to try new things and come back. Open-mic night is the time to take chances! Maybe you have a song that you recently learned but are not yet the best at—give it a shot! The best way to become better at anything is to practice, so do not show up once and then never come back. The “safe space” of an open-mic night is there for you to practice and to grow that love of music, together with other fellow artists.

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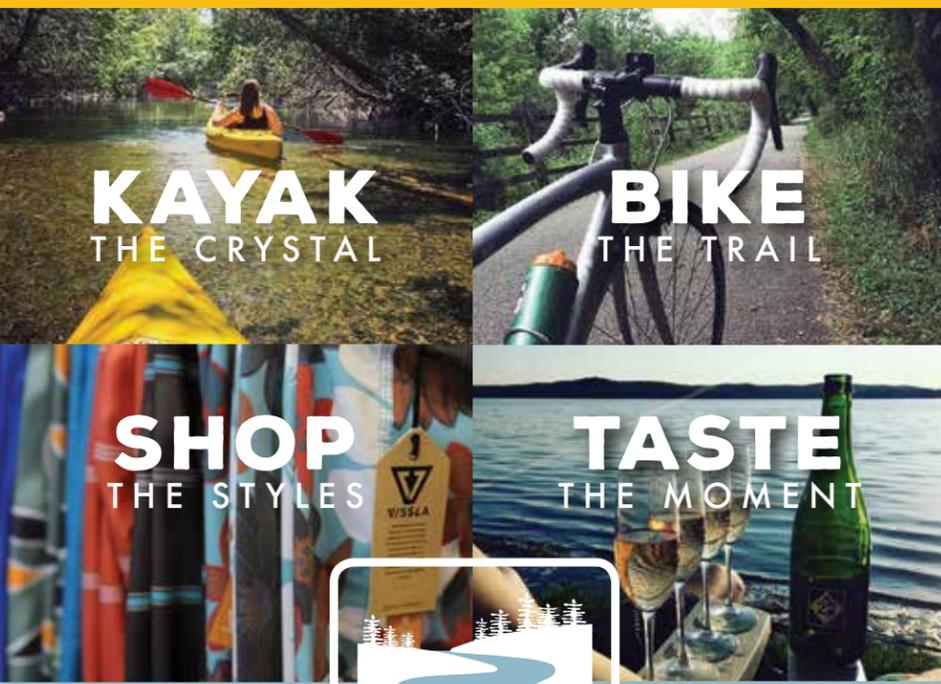
# The Betsie Current

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## CONSTANTLY FLOWING

### Mondays

Circle Time for infants and toddlers at the Benzie Shores District Library at 630 Main Street in Frankfort. Infants and toddlers (+ their parents/caregivers) will have fun rhyming and moving with Miss Char, as well as a focus on repetition. Each week, children build their repertoire of rhymes, both old and new. There is an informal playgroup following Circle Time. 10-11am.

Yoga class for seniors led at no charge by Michelle Leines at The Gathering Place Senior Center. 10579 Main Street in the Honor Plaza. 231-525-0600. 10-11am.

Cards at The Gathering Place. We have a dedicated group of card sharks who play Pinochle weekly during lunch, but we aren't limited to Pinochle: grab your friends and join us for euchre, cribbage, and rummy, too! 12-1pm.

Grow Benzie Farmers' Market: Beginning June 4, every Monday at 3:30pm and 5pm, there will be free cooking and nutrition-education classes. All are welcome! Fresh vegetables and fruits, baked goods, bread, jam, honey, maple syrup, artisan crafts, and more will be featured at each market! You can also tour our new edible trails and try out mini-golf! The Grill Benzie Food Truck will be there so bring the family for dinner! 5885 Frankfort Highway (M-115) between Benzonia and Frankfort. 3-7pm.

Qi Gong with Jessica at Oliver Art Center in Frankfort. 5:30pm.

### Tuesdays

Sunrise Rotary Club's weekly meetings are over breakfast at the Cold Creek Inn of Beulah. Come join us! 7:30-9am.

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. Email annamallien@gmail.com if interested. 9-10am.

Music by the Melody Makers at The Gathering Place. 10:30am-1:30pm.

Knitting Group at Benzonia Public Library. A "knit-along" project for those who want to work on the same project, or bring your own project if you prefer; we'd love your company! Need help? If you are having troubles with a current project, bring it along and we'll help you get it straightened out. Call Michele at 231-383-5716 with any questions. 1-3pm. Chair Yoga class for \$5 at The Gathering Place. 3:30-4:30pm.

Yoga flow with Lauren at Oliver Art Center. 6pm.

### Wednesdays

Mat pilates with props with Anna at the Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10am.

Stay Fit with Doris at The Gathering Place.



Random photo of Benzie girls soccer players. Because #coachingislife.

10-11am.

Gentle yoga with Lauren at Oliver Art Center. 10:15am.

Open studio at the Oliver Art Center. Participants are strongly encouraged to become members and to contribute a donation of \$2 per visit. 10am-4pm.

Bingo at The Gathering Place. Cost is \$1 per card or bring a prize. 12:30-1:30pm.

PLARN at the Gathering Place. Crochet plastic mats to donate for the homeless. For more info call Dawn at 231-525-0601. 1:15pm.

Yoga with Kari at Oliver Art Center. 231-383-1883. 5:30pm.

### Thursdays

Stretch and tone with Jean at Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10am.

Adult coloring at Benzie Shores District Library. All materials provided. All ages welcome. 10-11am.

Bible Study at The Gathering Place. 10-11am.

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Computers with Carol at the Darcy Library at 7238 Commercial Street in Beulah. Ask Carol computer-related questions. Read to Rosie, the cute little dog! 1-5pm.

Everyone is welcome to attend Open Clay Studio at the Oliver Art Center, including families! Per 4-visit block (12 hours total, used how you like), \$60 fees cover one adult or one adult and child pair. It can be as fun or focused as a student prefers, and all skill levels should consider taking part. Children

must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the studio. Price includes: 25 pounds of clay, glaze, and firings. 3:30-6:30pm.

Yoga with Kari at the Ware Farm of Bear Lake. Open to all levels; \$13 per session. 231-383-1883. 4-5:30pm.

Samporna yoga with Anna at Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 5:30pm.

Open Mic Night at St. Ambrose Cellars. 6pm.

Open Mic Night at The Cabbage Shed in Elberta. 8pm.

### Fridays

Bunco at The Gathering Place. 9:30-10:30am.

Yoga flow with Lauren at Oliver Art Center. 10:15am.

Tech Support to help you navigate the tech world. Please call in advance to schedule your appointment with Robert. The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

Wii Bowling at The Gathering Place. 1-2pm.

### Saturdays

Frankfort Farmers' Market at Open Space Park on Main Street, between 7th & 9th streets, along the beautiful waterfront. 9am-1pm.

Farmers' Market and Flea Market at the Interlochen Eagles #3503 at 20724 Honor Highway/US-131, three miles west of

Interlochen. Consisting of Michigan-grown fruits and veggies, flea marketers, cottage food vendors, artisans, arts & craft vendors, and independent reps. 12-4pm.

Body Sculpting on the ball with Deanne at Oliver Art Center. annamallien@gmail.com 9-10 am.

Gentle yoga with Lauren at Oliver Art Center. 10:30am.

\*Yoga classes at Discover YOU Yoga and Fitness in Frankfort every day of the week, except Saturday. For a complete schedule and more information on classes and rates, visit discoveryogami.com.

## ON DECK

### Friday, May 25

Meet the artist: Margaret Miller at West Shore Bank in Frankfort. Reception for "Landscape Echoes. 3-5pm.

### Saturday, May 26

Michigan Beer & Brat Festival: Kick off the summer with this Memorial Day Weekend tradition at Crystal Mountain. Enjoy live entertainment while sampling an enormous selection of Michigan's finest microbrews, local hard cider and mead, and gourmet brats from Northwest Michigan markets. Held slopeside. 855-995-5146. 4-8pm.

### Sunday, May 27

North Mitten Half Marathon 5K & 10K. Kick off summer with a running start at Crystal Mountain's 5th Annual Half Marathon, 10k, and 5k race! The North Mitten Half Marathon, 10k and 5k is a combination of paved roads, dirt roads and trails. The North

Mitten route consists of primarily flat, open trails on Crystal Mountain property and will not climb the mountain. Both races will start and finish at the white slopeside tent near the Crystal Clipper chairlift. This is a great spring race for beginners and experienced runners! Runners must register online. Entry fee is non-refundable. For more information, call the Park at Water's Edge at 888-968-7686, ext. 7000. Register: [events.bytepro.net/north-mitten-half2018](http://events.bytepro.net/north-mitten-half2018)

**Thursday, May 31**

The Benzie Democrats host a Blues Brothers Party at Frankfort's Garden Theater. Reception begins at 5:30pm and includes soul food snacks, local adult beverages, and music by The Sub-Prime Blues Band (a/k/a Standing Hamptons), with a costume contest and prize for best costume! Followed at 7 pm by "The Blues Brothers" movie, starring John Belushi, Dan Ackroyd, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, James Brown, Cab Calloway, John Lee Hooker, and others. 5:30-9:30pm.

**Saturday, June 2**

Bike Benzie's Up North Fondo & Tour. For the 10th anniversary of the one-day biking event, organized by the Benzie Sunrise Rotary Club and hosted by Crystal Mountain, we have exciting changes, including a new name and new scenic biking routes to provide challenges for riders of all abilities. [BikeBenzie.org/](http://BikeBenzie.org/) 6 am-12 pm.

**Monday-Sunday, June 4-10 Restaurant Week!!!!**

The inaugural Frankfort-Elberta Restaurant Week is Monday, June 4, through Sunday, June 10. The idea is to highlight the dynamic and growing culinary offerings along scenic M-22 and the historic Betsie Bay.

With more than 20 establishments participating, everything from fresh-based breakfast treats to full-service dining will be available at discounted prices for patrons—each participating eatery will have culinary creations available at fixed price points of \$15 and \$25. The pricing structure makes it easier for patrons to make simple choices, while chefs get to be creative with their menus.

This is a great opportunity to beat the summer crowds and discover what is new, fresh, and hot on this year's menus.

**\$25 Menu Specials**

- The Cabbage Shed
- Coho
- Dinghy's
- The Hotel Frankfort
- The Manitou
- Mayfair Tavern
- Port City Smokehouse
- Stormcloud Brewing Company
- Villa Marine Bar
- Watervale Inn

**\$15 Menu Specials**

- A&W
- Birch & Maple
- The Cabbage Shed
- Coho
- Conundrum Cafe
- Crescent Bakery
- Dinghy's
- Frankz
- Kilwins
- L'Chayim Delicatessen
- The Lighthouse Cafe
- The Manitou
- A. Papano's Pizza
- Petals & Perks
- Villa Marine Bar

*\*Non-participating sponsor: Rocks Landing. For more information, check out FrankfortElbertaRestaurantWeek.com or send an email to [info@FrankfortElbertaRestaurantWeek.com](mailto:info@FrankfortElbertaRestaurantWeek.com).*

**Tuesday, June 5**

Michigan Legacy Art Park's Golf Classic, presented by D&W Mechanical, is an excellent opportunity to enjoy a day of golf at Crystal Mountain. The funds raised at this event support art and education programs at the Art Park. 11am

**Friday, June 8**

Senior Expo at Trinity Lutheran Church in Frankfort from 9am-1pm.

**Tuesday, June 12**

Join Ron Rademacher, author of Michigan Back Roads, to discover beautiful trails and nearby treasures. 30+ walking trails that are easy and FUN, no special skills or equipment required, just a pleasant stroll in the woods. The Treasures - Since the trails are short, learn about nearby attractions to make a day trip of it. Program suitable for all ages and runs about 50 minutes, including time for Q&A. A hospitality and book-signing period will conclude the program, with books available for purchase. Enjoy an evening of fun as we explore Michigan. No charge for event, just come and enjoy. Sponsored by Friends of the Benzonian Public Library. 6:30-7:30 pm.

**Saturday, June 16**

Fairies & Forts at the Michigan Legacy Art Park. Enjoy free admission all day, a family concert, art projects, stories, and the traditional hike to the Fort at the annual summer kick-off event. 2pm

**Saturday, June 16**

Annual Outdoor Craft and Art Fair in Frankfort. 10am-4pm.

**Monday, June 18**

Nuts 4 Nature Day Camp. This collaborative program with the Benzie Conservation District will include visiting scientists, scavenger hunts, natural crafts, and gardening. Go to [AmaliaExplores.com](http://AmaliaExplores.com) for details!

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# A History of Vacationing in Benzie County

Pigeons, railroads, and sandy beaches

By Andy Bolander

Current Contributor

Arguably, the resort economy is the most important industry in Benzie County. For instance, Crystal Mountain Resort is our largest employer, and numerous resorts, campgrounds, recreational areas, and businesses attract throngs of visitors each year.

Since the beginning, the success of Benzie County's resort industry has been driven by the greater awareness of the natural assets of our region and by the accessibility to Benzie County by the available routes of transportation, starting way back in the 1800s.

The natural beauty of the Lake Michigan shore had been noted by passengers on Great Lakes boats headed to Chicago from eastern cities beginning in the 1830s. Routes to Benzie County in the 1860s were difficult, as the options were to hike in from the east on footpaths through the swamps, or to hop off a boat onto the pier at Frankfort and then take a raft up the Betsie River to Benzonia. By the 1890s, travelers were coming via railroad, and this evolved into personal automobiles by the early 1900s.

The hundreds of thousands of annual visitors to Benzie County nowadays are coming for many of the same reasons as they did nearly 150 years ago—to visit our lakes, rivers, and forests.

## Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing

Accounts of travelers coming to Benzie County for recreational purposes begin to appear in the 1870s. The hunting and fishing were excellent back then, due to the lack of inhabitants—stories of the local game's lack of fear to the presence of people was spread in travelogues and correspondence.

Passenger pigeons also drew visitors to Benzie County. A newspaper story published nationally in 1874 discussed the novelty of the Betsie River nesting grounds of passenger pigeons. Visitors to the nesting grounds arrived to Benzie County by rail to Traverse City or by one of the many passenger boats that traveled along the Lake Michigan coast. The population of the birds on the East Coast had been hunted to the point of scarcity, but in Benzie County, the local flocks of passenger pigeons would darken the sky, and trees would appear bluish, due to the concentration of the birds on the branches. Beechnuts were said to be a favorite food of the birds, and the hardwood forests of Benzie County provided an ample supply of food.

Locally, the birds were trapped by hunters and packed in barrels, which were shipped to Chicago as a cheap source of protein. (Interestingly: the term "stool pigeon" was derived from the decoy bird that was set up on a perch, called a stool, so as to attract other pigeons into the trap. Another technique was to use alcohol-soaked grain, which would inebriate the birds and make them easier to catch.) During the 1874 season, the dock of H. Woodward & Son at Frankfort shipped approximately 100,000 dead pigeons, and the New York State Sportsmen's Association shipped 40,000 live pigeons back east.

Moreover, Benzie County has also been a hot-spot for fishing throughout the years. Smelt were transplanted into Crystal Lake in 1912 to feed the salmon that had been previously stocked into Crystal Lake. The salmon died out, but the smelt thrived—the annual "smelt run" in the river in early spring would draw tens of thousands of visitors during the 1930s.

## Sandy Beach Resorts

As mentioned, getting to the heart of Benzie County prior to the 1870s proved difficult. But the lowering of Crystal Lake in 1873 helped in unintended ways—the original idea was to create a canal between the Betsie River and Crystal Lake, so that boats could reach inland to Benzonia from the Frankfort port on Lake Michigan. However, due to a

miscalculation by Archibald Jones and the Benzie County River Improvement Co. (read more of this history in a 2014 article on *The Betsie Current's* website at <http://bit.ly/archie-jones>), the level of Crystal Lake was dropped by about 20 feet, though the drop between the lake and river was originally calculated to be only 4.5 feet.

Moreover, the Congregational Summer Assembly was first held in Frankfort in the summer of 1904, and it became a permanent fixture on Crystal Lake, in large part because the Ann Arbor Railroad donated 100 acres and \$10,000 cash to bring the assembly to Crystal Lake on a permanent basis. (Previously, the Cleveland Congregational Conference had been held at: Bible College at Lakeside, Ohio, in August 1902 and Potawatomi Point in New Buffalo, Minnesota, in August 1903.)

## Railroads and Highways

Not only was Crystal Lake's sandy beach good for building resorts, it was also as hard as a plank road, which provided a level surface for the Frankfort & South Eastern Railroad to be built around 1890. The arrival of the Ann Arbor Railroad in 1892 was a major event, not only because of the new jobs created along the rails and on the car ferries, but it also made Benzie County much more accessible to visitors from population centers to the south.

The Ann Arbor Railroad promoted tourism to Benzie County in the interest of improving passenger traffic on the railroad. One way that the Ann Arbor Railroad did this was by building The Royal Frontenac Hotel right on the beach in Frankfort in 1902. The Royal Frontenac was a 250-room hotel that boasted a lake view and a telephone in every room. It was built to be an elite hotel, and it was operated as such when it first opened. However, there was stiff competition for this market, and in 1906, attention was instead directed toward middle class and business travelers, as well as doctors and rabbis who held conventions at the hotel and were return customers.

The Ann Arbor Railroad published booklets and newspaper ads that touted Frankfort as having an absence of mosquitos and the clean air as a relief from hayfever, in addition to opportunities for fishing and healthful exercise. But after less than a decade in operation, The Royal Frontenac Hotel burned down in 1912 and was never rebuilt.

Inland areas such as Beulah and Crystal Lake were also promoted by the Ann Arbor Railroad. The Ping-Pong—a small train with one passenger car—ran between Frankfort and Beulah to make the golf links and points on Crystal Lake more accessible. J.J. Kirby, the general passenger agent of the Ann Arbor Railroad, identified Beulah as "The Geneva of America" in advertising, focusing on the markets of Chicago and Toledo.

Passenger traffic on the Ann Arbor Railroad peaked by 1916, when use of the automobile as a means of recreation began gaining in popularity, in large part because state highways M-22 and M-11 (now US-31) allowed visitors to access the attractions within Benzie County with freedom from the rails. Thus, travel to the beaches, lakes, and state park became more popular with families.

These two roads got their start about 50 years earlier—the State of Michigan had started a program to provide a statewide system of roads in 1859 with an act passed by the Michigan legislature which created the Swamp Land State Road Commission. Locally, two roads that ran through Benzie

County were created by the commission: the Manistee and Leland State Road (M-22) and the Allegan, Muskegon, and Traverse Bay Road (M-11/US-31).



Early vacationers to Benzie County. Image courtesy of the Benzie Area Historical Society.

The roads were not completed until the mid-1870s, and north-south travel on what is now M-22 was limited until a corduroy bridge between Frankfort and Elberta was completed around 1871. (A corduroy bridge was made by placing logs perpendicular to the direction of the road, and the gaps were filled with edgings and sawdust from the local sawmills.) To get from Frankfort to Benzonia, or vice versa, rafting up the Betsie River was the preferred form of travel until the road was completed around 1870—this portion of road is now the western end of M-115, from the Stapleton gas station to the Lake Michigan beach.

Somewhat ironically, the Ann Arbor Railroad carried passengers who would lobby for highways that would mean its demise—in 1934, a group of more than 700 boosters from Northwestern Michigan travelled by rail to Lansing in an effort to convince the highway commission of the necessity of a highway connecting Clare and Frankfort. They rode on 14 passenger coaches, and the participants unloaded and paraded down Michigan Avenue to Prudden Auditorium. The Clare-to-Frankfort diagonal (M-115) was completed in 1957, while passenger traffic on the Ann Arbor Railroad ceased in July of 1950.

## Legacy

With the roads in place, it only took time for beautiful Benzie County to attract more vacationers. Benzie State Park was created in 1923, and the mouth of the Platte River became a popular attraction. The park was later included in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, which was authorized by Congress in 1970 and which was voted "the most beautiful place in America" recently by viewers of ABC's *Good Morning America*. Crystal Mountain started out as the Buck Hills Ski Area in 1956; the name was changed in 1960 to Crystal Mountain Resort, which is a huge contributor to our local economy today.

As of 2015, the resort industry accounted for one-third of all jobs in Benzie County. That percentage has grown, due to the loss of industrial and construction jobs in recent years. As development increases in population centers to the south, the attractiveness of Benzie County's beaches, forests, and natural areas is sure to increase, as well.

*Andy Bolander is a volunteer researcher with the Benzie Area Historical Society. This summer, the Benzie Area Historical Museum has put together an exhibit called "Summer Fun," which tells the story of recreating in Benzie County over the years. For instance, a 1914 Old Town sailing canoe is on display, as are 100-year-old swimsuits and sporting equipment. Check it out during museum hours: Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Or call 231-882-5539 if you have questions. Visit the museum online at [BenzieMuseum.org](http://BenzieMuseum.org) or at its physical location of the old Congregational Church at Traverse Avenue in Benzonia, one block west of US-31.*

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# The Buzz

## Frankfort Resource Center

From Staff Reports

Last fall, the Frankfort City Council formed a committee of dedicated community members to research potential opportunities and benefits associated with a community resource center. From that initial meeting, many volunteers stepped forward to define the critical needs of the community, as well as to look at existing resources that are already available through our established community partners within Benzie County and the greater region. In January, the group branched out into several subcommittees to further establish an efficient means associated with the delivery of essential services and needs within the community.

The center will be located at the site of the former Senior Center in Frankfort, located at 832 Main Street. Preliminary drawings have been prepared, including a basic floor plan, however, changes will be performed to meet the needs of the community.

Some of the uses being suggested include, but are not limited to, the following: educational-based childcare center; summer day camps; indoor entrepreneurial and farmers' market; full commercial/incubator kitchen; history center; senior citizens' meals and congregation site; office space; conference center and event space that can facilitate conventions, expos, weddings, graduation parties, educational seminars, mentoring programs; and much more.

Next steps: the committee is looking for input to substantiate the needs of the community. Surveys are currently being created and will be available June 1 in several locations, including Frankfort City Hall. Please take the time to fill out a survey, so that we have as much community input as possible, enabling us to move forward as we strive to meet the essential needs of the community. Surveys are due June 11.

*Meetings of the Frankfort Community Resource Center Committee are held the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 10 a.m. at Frankfort City Hall. Meetings are open to the public.*



Random soccer photo. Because #puppiesarecute

# Sow-na

Continued from page 1

### The Sauna

The sauna (pronounced "sow-na," like a female cow), for those who are not familiar, is an ancient tradition that goes back really, really far and crosses multiple cultures, and, well, that is not really important at this point. It is the experience that is important—heating the body to high temperatures, then rapid cooling, or slow cooling. Whichever you prefer.

The sauna is a heated structure, generally the size of a small shed; it is purposefully small, so as to contain the heat. In this tiny building is a stove, often wood-fired. Upon the stove are loose rocks. The room heats up. The rocks heat up. People climb in (sometimes naked), and then water is tossed onto the rocks, creating a steam. The steam in the air then transfers the heat to your body, creating a near-instant feeling of increased temperature. (For the wonky among our readership, it is called convective heat transfer.) Traditional saunas are hot.

The Bards, of course, like a hot sauna: 200 degrees Fahrenheit. At 200 degrees, when you throw water on the hot rocks, you can barely breathe. Inhaling through the nose feels like your nose hairs are burning off, so you take short, quick breaths through the mouth. This is a good experience. Others like a cool sauna — 160 degrees or so; you can sit for a long time in a sauna this temperature.

The best way to rapid cool is to jump in a body of water—a river, a stream, a pond, a lake—but oftentimes a bucket of cold water over the top of the head will do just fine, making your heart skip a couple of beats and have you questioning your life choices. A moment later, a sense of euphoria (or perhaps just the joy of a renewed heartbeat) will rush over you. A snowbank is, surprisingly, a middle ground; the snow cools your body, as your body melts the snow.

Some like being beaten with birch boughs. Not boughs, really; more like twigs with the leaves still on them. Choose your partner wisely. A gentle slap of a bough on the super-heated skin is mostly pleasant.

Essential oils are not essential to the sauna experience, but gosh darn it, they really are pleasant. Eucalyptus and peppermint both give a refreshing, menthol-like smell to the air. Just add a few drops to the water that you pour over the rocks. (Apparently, this is totally safe, but I am not a nose-and-throat doctor.)

The constant cleaning (heat, water, heat, water, heat, water) means the sauna experience is one that gets you cleaner and cleaner as you sauna. Some folks will tell you about the health benefits, too. About the sweating out of "toxins." If that tickles your fancy, then go for it. To me, it is just a pleasant experience that should never be done alone.

### Enter: The Sauna Dude, A Continuation

Matt Nahnsen is the Sauna Dude. I have known him for many years. (A stinking advertisement?! What can I say: when you love something, or someone, you promote it/him. And, I own a newspaper, so...) I would list all of the things that Nahnsen does, but that would lead you to all sorts of assumptions (and that is assuming that you do not already know the guy).

What is relevant, above all else, is that he is a good person and an enjoyer of life. He tells stories, he knows people, he shares his life experiences, he is open and honest. If he

is not a true bard, he is close; so bard or dude, he is, for me, a continuation of something that truly makes me happy—the joy of a good sauna with good people.

Earlier this year, in a fit of passion, Nahnsen purchased a mobile sauna (and then a big truck to pull it around). It can go almost anywhere, and we have taken it to a few boat launches (Crystal Lake, Betsie River), and enjoyed the death-defying dip in April waters—there was still ice on most of Crystal Lake when we dove in the shallow waters. A scream is often appropriate in these moments.

"I love where I live and wanted to make it even better," Nahnsen says. "Taking a sauna is like meditating, with friends, while wearing towels. When saturated with so much heat, nothing feels better than to step outside and begin to give it away. A night swim in the lake, having a friend pour water on you, or just sitting in the winter sun are all transcendental."

Nahnsen has created a website and a Facebook page for his mobile sauna, and it is already gaining quite a following. He rents the sauna out by the day, the weekend, or the week—\$325 for a day, \$500 for three days, or \$900 for a week. (Yes, I know, a stinking advertisement.) It comes with all the firewood you need, plus some essential oils; it can be dropped off anywhere, and Nahnsen is someone who



The Sauna Dude's mobile sauna is 12 feet long and can hold eight people (six comfortably). Rental includes firewood, essential oils, and delivery. Image courtesy of Noah Sorenson.

will make sure that you have a wonderful experience.

You have full control over the experience. Go fully naked, or covered in a towel, or fully clothed (if that is your thing). Share with family, or friends, or strangers. Make it a bachelor/bachelorette party, a weekend meditation, or a star-gazing/midnight sauna, and then dip into your favorite body of water to cool off.

After each use, the sauna is cleaned with baking soda and water, and then it is sanitized with hydrogen peroxide. The sauna is made of cedar, so, combined with eucalyptus, it has a very pleasant smell.

Water, earth, fire, wind—it may sound downright cliché, but it will, in the end, help you to pause all other thought and just think/meditate. Or scream. Both are good.

*The mobile sauna is 12 feet long, with an attached changing room, and it can hold eight people (six very comfortably). For more information, visit SaunaDude.com or call 231-651-0287. The mobile sauna was built by The Sauna Guys (TheSaunaGuys.com) in Pelkie, Michigan, which is located near the base of the Keweenaw Peninsula.*

**Editor's Note:** Thank you to all of the original bards who inspired me to enjoy life and wake up from auto-pilot—Norm Wheeler, Jacob Wheeler, Dave Early, Bronwyn Jones, Anne-Marie Ooman, Ray Nargis, Jason Nargis, and the best host you could ask for, Mimi Wheeler. Beach Bards website: <https://bit.ly/2ICq17S>

**Editor's Other Note:** It was at one of Norm Wheeler's weekly saunas that the name *The Betsie Current* was workshopped and approved!

**Editor's Final Note:** Jacob Wheeler founded the *Glen Arbor Sun* in 1996 and was essential in making *The Betsie Current* successful.

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