



# The Current

For the Town, by the Town



TOWN OF KINNICKINNIC

Spring 2020

## The Twists & Turns of Our Town's River

by Tom Andersen & *The Current* Staff

“A large portion of the Township is good farming land, but thinly timbered, the quality of which is poor, composed mostly of small B. Oaks. It is well watered by a beautiful stream, clear and swift, with gravel bottom, the banks on either side being hard and dry.” (Marsh) This is how James Marsh, government surveyor in the Fall of 1847, described land that first became Dayton, then Malone, and eventually Kinnickinnic Township. (Easton)

The name of our river, The Kinnickinnic, was a word for a mixture of bark used by the Native Americans to give their tobacco a stronger “kick”. (Weatherhead) It is a word from the Ojibwe *giniginige* meaning “what is mixed” referring to the plant materials that Indian people mixed for smoking. Those favored ingredients were inner bark of certain willows, dogwoods, or sumac leaves. Locally this perhaps refers to the red osier dogwood inner bark which was dried over a fire and then ground up for mixing. (Milwaukee County Museum)

The Kinnickinnic River watershed drains an area of 170 square miles (almost 110,000 acres). (KRLT) The river covers more than 22 miles before it enters the St. Croix river. All 23,000 plus acres of Kinnickinnic Township fall within the river's watershed. Follow all the twists and turns and you'll come up with well over 15 river miles in our Township. The most notable tributaries to the Kinnickinnic River are Parker Creek, Nye Creek, Tidd Creek (now called Ted Creek), Kelly Creek and several unnamed creeks and springs. All flow in to the “Kinni” in our Township.

The exact source of the Kinnickinnic is somewhat difficult to pin down. Using visible flowing water as a definition you

The Twists & Turns of Our Town's River (1-12)

A Love Affair (13-16)

The Oak Valley School (16-18)

For the Birds, Uncommon Finds in Kinnickinnic Township (19-20)

On the Road Again (21-22)

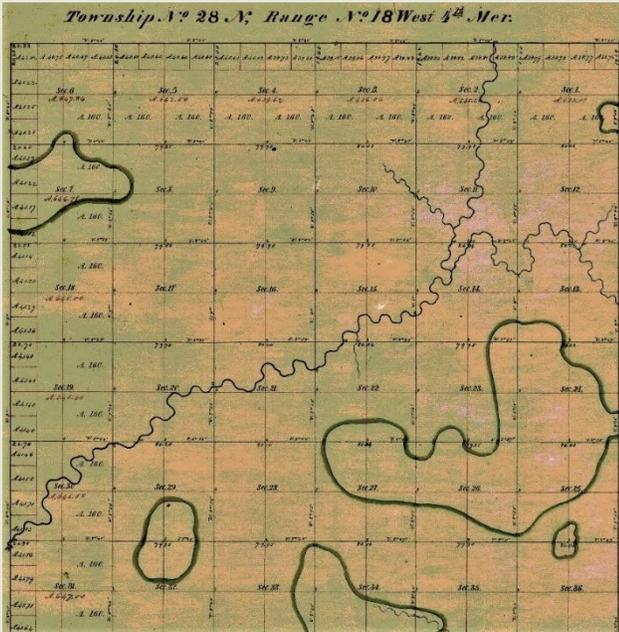
Guidelines for Submission of an Article (22)

The Town Board authorized the renewal of *The Current*. The goals are to increase elector involvement in Town affairs, inform electors on Town business and timely topics, and increase awareness of what the Town of Kinnickinnic has to offer residents.

Submissions will first appear in the Community tab under Current News in the Town Website. When sufficient content is reached in Current News a print copy of *The Current* containing those submissions will be made available at the Town hall.

Interested in writing for *The Current*? See Page 22 for more information!

would conclude that the river starts in some springs up in Warren Township just north of Highway I-94. (1968 Plat Book) Another explanation would say the river begins in the north end of Casey Lake up in Erin Prairie Township in St. Croix County. This would be considered the farthest from its mouth where the watershed begins. (Foster)



Township 28N – Range 18W Dayton Township, then Malone, and finally Kinnickinnic. From the 1847 James Marsh's surveyor journal. The "Kinni" shown running diagonally from upper right to lower left. The irregular shapes are wooded lands with the balance being rolling prairie or oak savanna.

Clarke Garry, in his book, [In The Kinnickinnic](#), provides us with a good explanation of the source. *"The Kinnickinnic is a model cold-water river, its thermal regime and mineral content a result of its origins in rocky subterranean spaces. This is a river brought to life by omnipresent seeps and springs. Here surfacing groundwater supports optimal temperature conditions for cold-adapted fish and invertebrate life. One may hike to see the location where Kinni surface water starts to flow, but they should appreciate the fact that the river has countless "headwaters" that contribute to its volume and physical characteristics"*. (Clark Garry, [In The Kinnickinnic](#))

The Kinnickinnic River is a story of two rivers, the Upper Kinnickinnic and the

Lower. *"If it were not for the fact that they are connected, you might mistake them for separate streams"*. (J.R. Humphrey) Most of the upper river lies within our Township and is a narrow, sandy rubble bottom river meandering through farm country. The lower river is much different.



The present day Kinnickinnic at Cty. Road J Photo – TA

While we may never know exactly what the Kinnickinnic River and land surrounding it in our Township looked like pre-settlement (except for James Marsh's brief description) we are able to glean some information from local sources after settlement began. Walter and James Mapes were two of the first to settle in our Township in 1849. They had stopped to visit with Joel Foster and then made their way toward the Monument looking for a place to settle (the Monument being the well-known natural landmark located in the Township). (Easton) They found a place near the river to their liking in what is now Section 20 of Kinnickinnic Township. That location would have been right across the road from the present day WDNR Hwy. 65 parking lot. In later years this was the Lester Gibson property. Across the road was the old Kinnickinnic School also known as the 1900 School.

People who initially homesteaded along the Kinnickinnic River, first and foremost, concerned themselves with surviving, raising crops and livestock. The first year of farming for the Mapes brothers proved to be quite successful. They raised 200

bushels of buckwheat on 8 acres, 100 of corn, and 75 of potatoes. And on two acres, 80 bushels of oats remained after blackbirds and prairie chickens took their toll. (RF Journal, June 8, 1876) The Township filled quickly after that and by 1878 the plat map shows all the land had been claimed. The 1876 plat map shows that James Mapes still owned 160 acres at the site the brothers originally settled 30 years earlier.

By 1870, farm density was approaching 25% of the land in St. Croix County. By 1890, the density of farmed land had grown closer to 50%. (Nesbitt) Much of Kinnickinnic Township had been rolling prairie with some oak savannah. (Marsh) The lack of trees would have made breaking ground and farming much easier. By 1909, there were 1500 cattle, 484 horses, 2100 sheep and lambs, and 370 swine in the Township. There were 4738 acres of oats, 190 acres of wheat, 2905 acres of corn, 1744 acres of rye, and 2078 acres of cultivated hay. There were 909 acres of standing timber and 265 bearing apple trees. (Easton) In the 60 years that followed the Mapes brothers first settling our Township, the changes to the land and to the river were dramatic. By the 1930's the Township looked little like what James Marsh had recorded in 1847. The Kinnickinnic River had changed dramatically too.

Grist mills on the Kinnickinnic were mostly confined to the lower river. However, one small grist mill, the Clapp Mill was established by Newell H. Clapp, a native of Vermont, at the north end of Kinnickinnic Township. Later, Dr. & Mrs. Macnider Wetherby, formerly of St. Paul, Minnesota owned the mill site for a summer home. The mill was built around 1860 and abandoned about 1900. (Weatherhead) The Clapp mill was the furthest mill upstream on the Kinnickinnic River. That location was about seven miles northeast of River Falls near present-day Interstate 94. The Clapp Mill was a grist mill used to grind feed for farmers at that end of the valley. (Foster) The Wisconsin Geological Survey of 1908 listed



1876 Plat Showing Clapp Dam in Section 2 of the Township

the mill site but reported that the dam was out at that time.

The pre-settlement Kinnickinnic River was considered an excellent Brook Trout stream. (WDNR) It has been said that there were no trout above the falls at River Falls until one of the Mapes brothers caught some and brought them up in a pail and planted them in the Upper "Kinni". (Foster) Other sources would indicate that this was not likely the case. Unfortunately, the first surveyor, James Marsh, apparently didn't stop and fish the river for a few trout for lunch. No journal notes were found regarding the contents of the river. Perhaps he did fish and just didn't want to "let on" to a newly discovered fishing hotspot!

The two main players in the angling history of our river are the Brook trout and the brown trout. Brook trout are native to eastern North America from Hudson Bay to the Appalachian-Mountains and westward through Michigan to Minnesota.



Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) – A local specimen  
Photo – TA

Brook trout are the native trout to our river. Brook trout are actually not a trout at all. They are a member of the Char family. Included in that family are Lake Trout, Arctic Char, Dolly Varden, and Bull Trout. Brook trout are considered an indicator species as they indicate the health and overall quality of the waters they inhabit. Brook trout depend on cold, clear, well-oxygenated water of high purity. As we have seen, their near demise was the result of habitat degradation.

While Brook trout are native to the Kinnickinnic River it is not known at this time for sure if there are any “native” *strain* Brook trout left in the river system today. If there are any, they most likely would be found in the tributaries or the upper limits of the river from above Cty. Trunk N to the headwaters. As early as 1958, a Wisconsin Conservation Department report noted that from Cty. N upstream to the iron bridge that there was no stocking for several years and that the fish there were “wild” and products of natural reproduction. It is important to note that fish that were stocked and then reproduce naturally in the stream are not the same genetically as native strain fish. Wild strain Brook trout are important because they are the beneficiaries of natural selection and are better suited for survival in the stream. Hatchery strain fish do not survive as well under the rigors of a natural stream environment. Truly wild strain Brook trout are barometers of cold, clean waters, and wild places which may be reason enough to celebrate their existence.

Brown Trout are not native to North America. They were first brought to the United States in the 1880’s from Germany. They were first stocked in the Kinnickinnic River in the 1930’s. Brown trout have almost completely displaced the Brook Trout in the Kinnickinnic River except in the very upper reaches of the river and in a few of the tributaries.



Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) – A local specimen  
Photo – TA

Fishing was important as a source of food in the earliest settlement period but it grew in recreational value as more settlers arrived and farms provided other sources of food. The Kinnickinnic became a popular trout stream and the exploits of early fishermen were often reported in the newspapers of the time. (Foster)

It was reported in the River Falls Journal on June 1, 1859; “Messrs. Gibbs and Eames who by the way, are regular disciples of good old Izaak Walton – on a recent fishing excursion caught 225 speckled trout weighing, when dressed, eighty pounds – forty of which weighed one pound apiece – and this was done, too, in a day and a half’s fishing! What do our eastern friends think of this? It is not hard to beat? Yet we are informed that it is no uncommon occurrence for our sportsmen to catch from 100 to 200 per day of these delicious fish”.

A newspaper clipping from the St. Paul Pioneer Press in the “News of Yesteryear” section reported that in 1862 William Morris of Hudson, Wisconsin fished from the Kinnickinnic 160 fine speckled trout in three hours; 22 of which weighed 29 ½ pounds. (Badger Sportsman)

There were few laws to protect fish at that time but some did exist. In 1853, an act called the Trout Law was passed by the legislature. The law prohibited the taking of trout from any streams in the state between November first and March first. It defined the equipment which could and could not be used for fishing and made the sale of

trout illegal. There were fines of from two to five dollars for each fish sold by violators.

(River Falls Journal, 1858)

The story of our river, the Kinnickinnic, is one that has played out with rivers all across our country. It is a story of loss but also a story of restoration. Certainly, historically, no one meant to do harm to the river but harm, nevertheless, was done.

In the 1930's the first Wisconsin Conservation Dept. fishery survey on the upper Kinnickinnic River showed that the trout population was greatly reduced by habitat degradation, siltation, overgrazing and severe bank erosion. Cattle could be



An early picture showing severe bank erosion on the Kinnickinnic River

Photo – Wisconsin Conservation Department

seen in the river and crops in some cases were planted right up to the river bank. The river had become wider, sluggish and warmer. The river was no longer a pristine trout stream filled with native Brook trout. Brook trout had retreated to the headwaters and tributaries where water quality still remained suitable for them.

In spite of the degradation that had and was occurring to the river, angling for trout was very popular. Anglers from all around, especially from the Twin Cities, came to the river. The 1897 plat of Kinnickinnic Township shows a Trout Brook Summer Resort on an eighty-acre parcel owned by Clint Williams. That property included the Kelly Creek tributary. It is said anglers from the city came there and stayed to fish the river. The Minneapolis gang which opened at Jake Weatherby's place averaged 4 fish each.

They landed 27 brown and brook trout for the group. Jim Peterson's (Outdoor writer) party landed a 17" Rainbow weighing 2 1/2 pounds. (Minneapolis Tribune)

It would not be a stretch to conclude that as the popularity of the Kinnickinnic continued to grow, it was fueled by the amount of fish stocking that was being done. The Kinnickinnic had become a warmer more fertile stream which relied on stocking of trout for it to remain a viable trout fishery.

**TROUT STOCKING – SELECTED YEARS (WCD)**

Year	Quantity	Species/Size fish
1933	90,000	Brown trout fingerlings
	10,000	Brook trout fingerlings
	31,500	Rainbow trout fgl.
	3,000	Rainbow (20 month)
1937	1650	Brown trout (20 mo.)
	60,000	Brook trout fingerlings
1950	21,000	Brown trout fingerlings
	148,200	Brook trout fingerlings
	8,100	Brown trout yearlings
	8,100	Brook trout yearlings

Between 1933 and 1950 over 1.5 million trout were stocked in the Kinnickinnic River. Rainbow trout were first stocked in 1937 and were stocked at least as late as 1958.

As time went on, the popularity of the river for trout angling increased significantly.

To some, springtime on the river these days might seem rather crowded with anglers. Angler numbers on the upper Kinnickinnic River in the mid-1900's were astounding by today's standards. So popular was angling on our river, it is said that Lawrence Dawson, former Superintendent of River Falls Schools and a well-known local trout angler, closed school for the opener of trout season. (Foster)

During the May 15, 1941, opening day creel census, nearly a thousand anglers were on the river in Kinnickinnic Township between the hours of 4 A.M. and 7 A.M.

Nearly 6000 trout were caught during the day. The largest fish reported was a 3 ¼ lb. Brown trout. (WCD)

On May 17, 1947 (opening day of trout season that year) an angler count was made. The survey started just above River Falls. Between the hours of 4 a.m. and 6 a.m. 328 cars were counted. It was estimated by Leon Johnson and Warden Lawrence Hope that there were over 1200 anglers on the river in our Township. A few of the fishermen had a catch of four or five fish and a few had caught their limit of fifteen trout. (WCD-Johnson)



Opening Day, May 17, 1947 at Quarry Road Bridge  
Photo – Leon Johnson, Fisheries Biologist, – WCD

The River Falls Journal, in 1949, reported that some 2000 fishermen sought trout along the 10 mile stretch north of town on opening day, May 1. (Prucha)

In a 1950 WCD memo it was noted, *“For the last several years, the Kinnickinnic River has been stocked with trout on the justification that it was fished extremely heavy. It is our opinion that this situation has resulted in the creation of fishing pressure on the Kinnickinnic river; a situation to which there appears to be no end. Briefly, the stocking policy for this river seems to have got out of hand. As fishing pressure is increased, more trout are stocked and as a result the fishing pressure becomes greater”*. (WCD)

A statement from the Fisheries Superintendent in 1958 noted the intention

to eliminate all stocking of trout in the Kinnickinnic River in favor of returning angling to a natural state. By 1974 trout stocking was eliminated. Trout in the Kinnickinnic from that point on are reproducing naturally.



Opening Day May 17, 1947  
Photo – Leon Johnson – WCD

From 1935 through 1948 the trout season opened at the end of April to mid-May depending on the year. It closed variously from the end of August to the beginning of September. The daily bag limit in those years was 15 trout & the minimum size limit was seven inches. In 1949 the bag limit was ten trout with a minimum size limit of seven inches. From 1950 to 1955 the bag limit was still 10 trout but the minimum size limit was reduced to six inches. (WDNR)

Over the early years there were many notable catches of sizeable trout from the Kinnickinnic. About 1937, it was noted that the author, in the book, Kinnickinnic Years, caught a five-pound ten-ounce brown trout that won the local fishing contest in River Falls. (Foster) The June 3, 1948 issue of the River Falls Journal noted that an 8 ¼ pound brown trout was caught in the Churchill hole. It measured 27 ½ inches in length. Another large brown trout was caught by Newton Larson in 1954 that weighed in at nine pounds and nine ounces. (WDNR file) The River Falls Journal of June 1, 1967 noted former Town of Kinnickinnic Chairman, Gerald Larson, caught a 6 lb. 14 oz. brown trout.

Like most rivers, the Kinnickinnic has an angling history complete with a mystery. In our case, the history and mystery centers on, of all things, a mayfly. The mayfly in this case is the *Hexagenia limbata*, also referred to as the Giant Michigan Mayfly. Local anglers called them shad flies. For those not familiar with them, think of the legions of these critters on summer nights littering the streets and bridges along the Mississippi River from Red Wing, MN on south. At one time, from around 1930 to sometime in the 1980's this mayfly was important to trout anglers and trout alike.

In his 1993 book, *Kinnickinnic Years*, John Prucha writes, "*It is an impressive insect. The head and body – never mind the tail – antenna, and wings are 1 ¼ to 1 ½ inches long. When you see one flying at dusk you'd think it might be a butterfly. They hatch from nymphs under water and pop up to the surface as if they were oiled. They float briefly, then fly off and roost on bushes to molt again. They mate, lay eggs (in the stream) and die. All stages are usually present in a given evening. Sometimes there are four or five shads on each square foot of water and eight or ten big trout vigorously working. This fly is big and meaty enough to interest the largest minnow-eating old brown trout that may not bother with insects at any other time. They are big enough to use as bait*".



The *Hexagenia limbata* Mayfly – Photo TA  
ACTUAL SIZE

On warm summer evenings, usually around mid-July through mid-August each year, thousands upon thousands of these mayflies would emerge from the river. As noted by John Prucha, this caught the

attention of the trout. It also captivated the attention of local anglers and others from all around the Midwest. Fishing the "shad hatch" became somewhat legendary.

My first experience fishing the "Shad Hatch" was in 1970 with retired Wisconsin Game Warden, "Corky" Hope. We fished together on numerous occasions on a stretch of river we called Gibson's (across from Lester Gibson's in section 20 in Kinnickinnic Township). John Prucha's description of the action was spot on! You could not put your hand in the water without touching a mayfly. As they emerged from the water you could hear the wings of the mayflies beating. Of course, many trout were caught on those warm summer evenings.

Trout anglers usually had their special flies to imitate that mayfly. Trout relished



A typical fly angler's imitation – Photo TA

these mayflies and lost all caution when feeding on them. I vividly remember wading behind Corky and catching a trout on a fly less than a foot behind him. Something unheard of during daylight hours. We laughed about that for many years.

And then, mysteriously the Shad flies disappeared. Sometime around 1990 they had all but vanished! Some have blamed pesticides and others have pinned the blame on the increasingly colder water in the river. Likely neither one of those factors is responsible. Water temperatures on the middle and lower sections of the river in our Township were easily reaching 70 degrees on warm summer days in the 1950's. (WCD) Those temperatures were not acceptable to Brook trout. They were, however most

acceptable to the *Hexagenia limbata* mayfly. By the 1970's, mean water temperatures in those sections of the river had dropped by more than 10 degrees. Recent water temperatures show this clearly to be the case. On July 22, 2019 Kasey Yallaly, Area Fisheries Biologist, found the daytime surface temperature to be 59 degrees Fahrenheit at the Cty. JJ bridge. The water temperature closer to River Falls was 57 degrees Fahrenheit on August 12, 2019. (Yallaly) My personal fishing diary over a six year period in the late 1970's shows water temperatures between 57 and 62 degrees. On an exceptionally hot July evening in 1980 (air temperature in the upper 90's) I measured a water temperature of 62 degrees Fahrenheit. The *Hexagenia* were still there then and the fishing was good.

During the last portion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kinnickinnic was "enriched" with large quantities of manure and fertilizers as well as a great deal of soil and nutrients from eroding river banks. As it turns out, this was an ideal environment for this mayfly. As we "repaired" the river from 1950 onward it appears we have altered the habitat enough for this mayfly to no longer find it suitable. As a contrary example, one might look at the nearby Mississippi River which drains a large agricultural basin. The *Hexagenia* still thrives there. The *Hexagenia* mayfly has a much higher tolerance than most invertebrates to marginal water quality.

Today, many anglers still ply the waters of the Kinnickinnic in our Township. There is a very robust population of naturally reproducing trout thriving in the river thanks to the many who worked so hard to improve it. The Department of Natural Resources conducted a tremendous amount of habitat work and fencing from the 1940's through the 1970's when many leases and easements were first taken. That effort changed the degradation of the river habitat and temperature regime to a positive one. (Engel)

A new river use has emerged in recent years. Kayaking the Kinnickinnic River in our Township has become very popular. On warm summer days the river now sees far more people in kayaks than anglers wading the stream for trout.

There is some conflict between anglers and Kayakers. Approaching kayaks disrupt the angler's fishing by scaring feeding trout. Fortunately, during the summer, angling for trout is best done quite early and then later in the day when anglers might likely find themselves alone on the river. It is important to remember that we all have equal rights to use the resource.



Enjoying a float on the "Kinni" in our Township Photo – TA

While we have equal rights to use the resource in our Township, it is important to note that there is much private land adjacent to the river. People using navigable waterways (the Kinnickinnic is) have to return to the old "Keep your feet wet" test, as created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Members of the public may use any exposed shore area of a stream without permission of the riparian (i.e. landowner) ONLY if it is necessary to exit the body of water to bypass an obstruction. Obstructions could consist of trees or rocks, shallow water for boaters, or deep water for wading anglers. THE BYPASS SHOULD BE BY THE SHORTEST POSSIBLE ROUTE. Picnicking, etc., on private shorelines without permission is trespassing. In Wisconsin, it is not necessary for landowners to post their land. See [Wisconsin Act 16 on the Wisconsin Legislature Website & WIDNR Public Access Fact Sheets on the WIDNR website](#).

Potential future threats like increasing air and water temperatures, the increasing number of high capacity wells and especially nonpoint pollution may still face our river. Nonpoint pollution has in the past and continues to be a primary threat. Nonpoint pollution is runoff from the surrounding watershed to the river. How the land is used in the watershed will affect the river in the future.

A severe example of nonpoint pollution that affected the waters of Parker Creek and the Kinnickinnic River in the Township occurred in 1998. On May 20, 1998, the area game warden received a report of dead fish in Parker Creek as well as in the Kinnickinnic River near the Highway 65 parking lot. A near 100% kill occurred in the area of County Trunk W. Dead trout were found throughout Parker Creek and in the Kinnickinnic as far down as Liberty and Quarry Road. The fish kill on Parker Creek was caused by applications of liquid manure on wet ground followed by heavy rain. (WDNR) That, coupled with weak regulations regarding liquid manure application, resulted in the fish kill.

The Clean Water Act of 1972 does not deal with non-point pollution issues. The State Legislature created the Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program in 1978. The goal being to protect the water quality of streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater by reducing pollutants from urban and rural nonpoint sources. Pollutants from nonpoint sources are carried to surface water or ground water through rainfall or seepage, and snowmelt. Sources of nonpoint pollution include:

1. Runoff from development
2. Eroding agricultural lands
3. Eroding streambanks
4. Concentrated manure runoff
5. Agricultural practices

The Kinnickinnic Priority Watershed Project and the Nonpoint Source Control Plan within the Project was created in April

1999. The Mission Statement is *To Preserve and Enhance the Cold Water Kinnickinnic Watershed Ecosystem*. The Town of Kinnickinnic was a participant in the creation of this plan. This is a very worthwhile read and WT-522 can be obtained from the WDNR website.

One area of continuing concern directly related to nonpoint pollution is the frequent flooding on the Kinnickinnic River. Certainly, flooding is no stranger to our river. Significant, if not historic flooding has occurred in the past. Three memorable flood events occurred in the 1890's, 1956, and 1965. Bert Apelgren, who was then the Area Fisheries Manager, noted that during the period from May 31, and June 1, 1965, one of the hardest rains on record occurred in the Kinnickinnic watershed.

Approximately seven inches of rain fell in the Parker Creek watershed in less than 24 hours. Highway J and JJ bridges were closed to traffic the morning of June 2, 1965. Several of the town road bridge approaches were badly washed out.

While flooding has occurred in the past and some catastrophic events may not have long term effect on the river, there is some concern that the frequency of significant flooding events is increasing. Observed flooding events in recent years are somewhat sobering.

The most recent example of extreme flooding in the Township occurred in the Spring of 2019. On April 17, 2019, a heavy rainfall over partially frozen ground caused considerable damage to property within our Township. There was significant damage to culverts and road shoulders. Culverts and road ditches were filled with field debris. Many portions of town roads were covered by flood waters throughout the day.

Normally quiet little brooks and tributaries had in some cases turned into raging torrents. Bank erosion, flooding and subsequent fine sediments cause habitat impairments on the Upper Kinnickinnic.



Parker Creek (over the road) at Cty. Rd. J on the Eastern Boundary of Kinnickinnic Township 4/17/19 Photo – TA

The quiet little tributary that runs under the small spur (30<sup>th</sup>) between Highway 65 and North River Road was extremely high.



The small tributary prior to high water Photo – TA



At flood on 4/17/2019 Photo – TA

Even tiny little Ted Creek (normally 2 feet wide) that runs under River road just before County JJ rose well over the road.



Ted Creek on 4/17/2019 Photo – TA

In 1977, the Wisconsin Trout Stamp program was initiated. An inland Wisconsin Trout Stamp is required in addition to a fishing license in order to fish for trout in streams. The first trout stamp cost \$2.50 and has increased to \$10 in 2020. Trout anglers were and always have been in support of this initiative. Trout stamp funds generated from stamp purchases are earmarked for stream improvement work. Each year well over a million dollars is collected to be used on Wisconsin trout streams. Waters in OUR Township have been the beneficiary of these funds.

The “Red Cabin Site” is an excellent example of a recently completed project. This site is on East River Road. The sign highlights the restoration project and those involved in the completion of it. Once the property was acquired, the land was cleared. Work included extensive bank stabilization and in-stream work. Fencing and a parking area rounded out the project. Besides WDNR employees working the project, much volunteer effort was provided.



The Sign at the Red Cabin Site Phot – TA



The Completed Red Cabin Site Photo – TA

Another important project involved the largest tributary of the Kinnickinnic River, Parker Creek. Parker Creek originates just above County Road W just outside the boundary of Kinnickinnic Township. Just before County Trunk J, Parker Creek enters our Township. With the support of local land owners, extensive restoration work has been completed starting near County Road J all the way to Pleasant Avenue.

Numerous organizations and individuals are and have been involved in maintaining the quality of the waters in the Kinnickinnic watershed. A local Trout Unlimited Chapter,

KIAP-TU-WISH, has been involved in projects on the Kinnickinnic for almost fifty years!



WIDNR and volunteers work on the Parker Creek Project  
Photo – KIAP-TU-WISH



A beautifully restored portion of Parker Creek Photo – TA



A KIAP-TU=WISH work crew doing winter "grunt work" on a section of the Kinnickinnic near Hwy. 65  
1985 Photo – WDNR

Founded in 2003, TUDARE, Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort, works to enhance and restore rivers and streams throughout the unglaciated Driftless Area. The Kinnickinnic River watershed is included in this effort.

The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT) is a community-based land trust dedicated to working with the community to conserve and protect the beauty and health of the Kinnickinnic River and its watershed. The Kinnickinnic Watershed Public Recreation Map from KRLT is an excellent source to locate public access.

There is still plenty of work to be done. Habitat work is a never-ending task. Both woody and non-woody invasive plant growth along the river are a major problem. Enhancing buffer zones along the river and especially tributaries is an issue. Mitigating the effects of flooding and the sediments they bring to the river will be important.

Thanks to the persistent efforts of these organizations and especially the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources there is a great deal of access along the river and tributaries for public use. The Upper Kinnickinnic lies within the Kinnickinnic River Fishery Area which allows the DNR to purchase land for conservation easements for public access, stream bank protection and trout stream restoration. There are approximately 11 miles of stream protected by state owned lands, fishing easements, and leases. (WDNR)



Photo - TA

Funds for these purchases comes from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. Created in 1989 by the Wisconsin Legislature and named for two former Wisconsin Governors – Warren Knowles and Gaylord Nelson, the fund is designed to preserve valuable natural areas and wildlife habitat, protect water quality and fisheries, and expand opportunities for outdoor recreation.

The Kinnickinnic River has received national attention in at least 7 books and numerous magazines. It was designated an Outstanding Resource Water and it is a State of Wisconsin Priority Watershed. The stream itself is a Class one (highest rating) cold water fishery.

*“When you put your hand in the flowing stream, you touch the last that has gone before and the first of what is still to come”.*

*(Leonardo da Vinci)*

**What is still to come is up to us.**

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- \_ Kinnickinnic Years, John J. Prucha & Norman Foss, 1993
- \_ Zachery Driscoll, Fisheries Database Coordinator, WDNR
- \_ Special thanks to the staff at the WDNR in Baldwin, especially Kasey Yallaly, Fisheries Biologist and Barb Scott, Fisheries Technician and Retired Fisheries Mgr. Marty Engel

Note: In 1967 the Wisconsin Conservation Department, (WCD) was merged with The Department of Resource Development to become the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR).

*Tom Andersen is the Editor of The Current. He has lived in the Township for 25 years and has been fishing the Upper Kinnickinnic River for 56 years.*

# A Love Affair

## With the Kinnickinnic River

by Jonathan Jacobs

I lived the first few years of my life on a farm in northeast Iowa. That rural life instilled in me a love of the outdoors. Those were the glory years of pheasant hunting, but angling, something that I loved to do on my family's yearly trips "Up North", was difficult to find nearby. My appetite for angling was further whetted by reading my Uncle Leonard's outdoor magazines. I was particularly taken with the articles about fly fishing for trout, but those stories always seemed to be set in the mountain West – a world away for me. Nonetheless, my parents gave me the grand gift of a fly rod, reel and line for my ninth birthday. I put that gift to good use through my high school years fishing for bass and panfish in the lake where my parents resided after relocating to central Minnesota.

My interest in angling went dormant for several years, but when friends invited my wife and me to visit them at their home in the Black Hills and after catching my first trout on a fly there, the fire was rekindled. By then we were living in Minneapolis. I tried some of the streams in southeast Minnesota and had some minor success, but the going was tough. Then in about 1983, I enrolled in an on-stream fly-fishing class offered by a now-defunct fly shop. The class was held on the Kinnickinnic River just upstream from River Falls. This stream and the valley through which it flowed were like nothing I had experienced before. I had driven through the flat farm country west of the St. Croix, which was familiar enough, but in Wisconsin the steep-sided hills bordering every farm field, lush with green early-summer foliage (except where exposed limestone suddenly appeared)

were new to me. Even less familiar was the spring creek used as a classroom that day.

When we students were turned loose to try our luck, I headed upstream. I was wearing hip boots and to avoid the depths of the stream, I waded its margins. I hadn't gone far before I encountered a watercress-choked tributary. I took one step forward, sank into its marl bottom and felt ice cold water pouring into the leg of my wader. It was so cold that I wondered how it could be liquid. I recovered as best I could and continued upstream. I'd never been in a stream so clear that at the same time had large weed beds in it. I learned later that the weeds weren't weeds at all, but instead were plants such as *Ranunculus* and *Elodea*, both indicators of high water quality and well-adapted to coldwater environments. Further upstream I found a patch of white sand bubbling underwater. That, I learned, was a submerged spring. Those were some of the first things I learned about on the Kinnickinnic, but not nearly the last.



An Angler Does Battle with a Trout Photo – TA

Primary among the things the river taught me were lessons in how to fly fish for trout, lessons that continue on that river to this day. The Kinnickinnic was a demanding teacher. I quickly learned that the river's brown trout were wily creatures, descended from their forebearers in Europe, where anglers had pursued them for centuries. The river's spring water was high in dissolved carbonates, a primary building block of aquatic life and the weed beds I mentioned made terrific foraging grounds for aquatic

insect larvae and tiny freshwater shrimp, which are commonly called scuds. Both are primary food sources for trout. Trout eat terrestrial insects such as beetles, crickets, ants and grasshoppers that have the misfortune of falling into the stream as well. The grasses and bushes made fine habitat for them and they, too, formed a part of the fishes' diet. The trout's innate wariness, coupled with a superabundance of natural food, made the Kinnickinnic's trout tough customers to fool with an imitation of their natural prey, much less one that was presented unartfully by a clumsy angler. The result of all this was that I drove from my home in Minneapolis to the river, found fish feeding vigorously on the surface and went home – skunked, or nearly so.

I'd never known such sweet sorrow. In the long, slow process of decoding the river's secrets, I fell in love with it.

I was so taken with the Kinnickinnic that when my wife wanted to move from our troubled Minneapolis neighborhood, I suggested that the three of us (by then we'd been blessed with a baby daughter) head to Wisconsin. We found a home in Hudson and I've been commuting to the Twin Cities and to the Kinnickinnic ever since. The drive to the Kinnickinnic, one I've taken several hundred times in the last thirty-five years, has produced better results. Out of sheer persistence I've become a somewhat competent angler, although the river still has the capacity to humiliate me. The tough lessons the Kinnickinnic taught me have served me well on many trout streams extending to the Rocky Mountains, but most especially those in St. Croix and Pierce counties. However, I return to the Kinnickinnic time and again. I primarily fish it from four locations: the public accesses on Highway 65 and along Quarry Road near River Falls and the state-owned parcels adjacent to Cemetery Road and River Drive.

I return to the Quarry Road stretch mostly to pay homage to where it all began for me. It remains one of the toughest spots on

the river with a change of habitat and depth often. The river runs on bedrock just above town, then on cobble, then on sand then back to cobble, then to unwadeably deep water that I suspect has something to do with the remains of an ancient beaver dam and finally back to a lively riffle running over cobble.

The access on Highway 65 at Liberty Road is convenient in two ways: I can get to it quickly and the parking lot offers immediate access to the river. I've found that the water in this stretch is particularly suitable for winter angling. The length of the trout fishing season has changed over the years and now opens for catch and release fishing on the first Saturday in January. The remarkable percentage of spring water in the Kinnickinnic's flow keeps it ice-free except in the most brutally cold weather (Spring water issues forth at about forty-six degrees Fahrenheit in our climate, year around). That's why the river is relatively warm in the winter and cold in the summer. It's also one of the reasons that trout reproduce in the Kinnickinnic so well – trout spawn in November and the eggs develop quickly in the temperate water, thus fewer fall victim to predation or fungal diseases, etc.

Often one of the larger challenges in winter fishing lies in fighting one's way through waist-deep snow just to get to the river. That's not so in the case of the Highway 65 access. Winter fishing can provide surprisingly fast action. There are aquatic insects specifically adapted to emerging from the water as flying insects in cold weather. On the Kinnickinnic there are stoneflies (Despite the name, these bugs make their underwater home primarily in leaf litter or similar habitats.) that emerge in large numbers in March and early April. They are a delight to both the angler and the trout. The creatures are clumsy fliers and their egg-laying ritual of half-flying/half skating on the water's surface is entertaining to watch and an easy opportunity for the trout to grab a fairly

sizeable morsel. The river above and below the Liberty Road bridge is a great place to find these insects.



The winter stonefly shown here resting on the ice. Photo – TA



The angler's imitation Photo - UFM

The stretch of river parallel to Cemetery Road is a delight to me at two times of the year: In the dead of winter (when the snow isn't too deep) and in the heat of August and early September. That may seem contradictory but let me explain. Lying nearer the headwaters and the substantial spring water input there, makes this one of the warmer stretches of water in the winter and one of the coldest in the summer. The river is generally narrow and deep there, but there are enough sudden changes in depth and enough rocks and wood submerged in the depths to make wading a tricky proposition. Winter angling can often require the use of weighted flies fished deep to garner success. While that's not my favorite angling technique, such are the charms of the Kinnickinnic that I'll do whatever it takes to interact with the browns and the occasional brook trout that one finds there.

Angling in the late summer is just the opposite. The most effective flies are often imitations of land-based insects such as grasshoppers and beetles. I like grasshopper imitations especially. They make for whimsical fishing. I can cast to what I think are likely spots and get no response from the trout for twenty minutes and then in a spot that seems no different than any other slick or seam running tight to the bank that I've cast to, there will be an explosive rise to my fly.

There's another aspect to fishing this river, especially above County J, that awes me every time I'm there. It's the scenery. That may seem surprising to you. At first glance when you look downriver, it looks like pleasant farm country, but nothing extraordinary. But, if you're like me, a person with rural roots who spends too much time in cities, the sight of farm country is always pleasant. An immediate sense of calm descends over me and my pace slows, and my senses become invigorated. That allows me to really see what I'm looking at – the remains of an ancient seabed spared by the scraping and leveling effect of the last glaciers, massive sheets of ice that stopped their advance just to the north. The Kinnickinnic here runs through glacial outwash deposited between gently eroded sandstone and limestone hillsides.

The stretch roughly parallel to River Drive is one of my favorites for multiple reasons. It's a long stretch of river, for one thing, so when I have time, I can cover some distance and encounter different challenges along its length. It's also meaningful to me because, along with several of my fellow Trout Unlimited members, I was active in the stream restoration efforts performed there after the Department of Natural Resources acquired the property. Every time I go there, I'm reminded of winter Saturdays spent removing box elders, a species of tree that's the bane to land managers everywhere, and alder brush on the banks. Alders do provide some overhead cover and shade, but that shade prevents the growth of native prairie grasses, plants that form erosion resistant root mass on the banks, an important factor in these times of more frequent heavy rains.

I am also reminded of the many deep and lasting friendships I was fortunate to find among my fellow volunteers in the winter and among anglers I encountered in the summer months.



The Author's Daughter Enjoying the River Photo – JJ

Here is one last story that I hope conveys at least in part what the Kinnickinnic River means to me: I wrote earlier about moving my family, including my baby daughter, to Wisconsin. My daughter grew up to be, in her youth, one of my best and most frequent angling partners. We developed a good portion of the deep bond between us on the river and while on our travels to and from it. In her later teen years, she naturally became too busy elsewhere to fish very much. She came home her freshman year in college during spring break tired of school and more than a little disappointed that she was stuck in Wisconsin and not on a tropical beach somewhere. Unsure of what her response might be, I asked her if she might like to go fishing. Primarily to please me, I think, she agreed. This was in the very early part of April and the winter stoneflies I mentioned earlier had been present in good numbers when I had last fished. We went to the Kinnickinnic and fished in the state-owned stretch along River Drive. Fishing was slow at first, but as the day progressed and the early spring sun warmed both the day and us, the stoneflies appeared. By then she'd been casting long enough to "knock the rust" off her casting stroke. The fish were rising splashily in the pursuit of insects. She would locate a fish by its rise, cast, and more often

than not be rewarded with a strong take from the fish. By the time we left the river that day, her face was flushed both by the effect of the sun's rays and the renewed enthusiasm she'd found for both angling and her return to school. I have the Kinnickinnic to thank for that.

*Editor's Note:*

*For over 120 years the Kinnickinnic has been a popular trout angler's paradise. Jonathan Jacobs is a true friend of the river in our Township. He has fished the river for over 35 years. He has also spent countless hours working on stream improvement projects on the Kinnickinnic and its tributaries here.*

## The Oak Valley School

by Kathy Hunter

There are still a few people around who remember the one-room "Oak Valley" schoolhouse in Kinnickinnic, one of seven in the Township. Standing at the southeast corner of the intersection of County Roads N and SS, what became known as the Oak Valley school operated from about 1868 until it was closed in 1952. But few know that this school district originated even earlier and at a different location.

A book containing original, hand-written school district records, was recently discovered on Kinnickinnic property first developed by Christain Bonnes, one of a group of Prussian immigrants who arrived in this area in 1852. This book records the first meeting of "School District No. 5 in the Towns of Warren and Malone", Malone being the earlier name for Kinnickinnic Township.

On May 4, 1861, a group of residents met (location not recorded) and chose officers and a schoolhouse site: the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of section

six in Town 28 Range 18. That describes a 40-acre parcel in the Town of Kinnickinnic on the WEST side of that intersection and probably north of County Road N. The parcel is currently owned by Mike Delander.

The tax roll for 1861 listed a Sylvester Walker as owner of that parcel, having received the original land patent from the government in 1855. In 1862, however, ownership was listed as “unknown”. By 1863, Seth Colbeth, who had arrived in Warren Township some 10 years earlier, had acquired the parcel, and it remained in the Colbeth family for the next several years.

Seth Colbeth was elected clerk at that May 1861 meeting. Mathias Ross, who lived about a mile south on what is now County Road SS, was chosen director, and W.D. Hartwell, treasurer. Jne. (sic) Hartwell chaired the meeting. Residents voted to raise \$100 to build their school and hire a teacher, with Seth authorized to buy the necessary materials. The electors specified that a “female teacher” be engaged to teach a three-month summer session. A woman named Johnson was subsequently hired at \$16 per month.

On Oct. 29, electors gathered again for their first annual meeting, chaired by Charles Colbeth, the adult son of Seth. They decided to forego a winter school session but have four months of classes beginning May 1.

It was agreed to raise an additional \$75, with 60 percent apportioned to residents of Malone (Kinnickinnic) and 40 percent to Warren, based on the taxable property of the school district lying within each township.

Like Sylvester Walker, the Hartwells soon disappeared from the record, but the Colbeth and Ross families, along with the Bonnes family, dominated the elected positions during the early years of what became known as the Oak Valley school.

By March of 1862, the treasurer’s office was vacant, and Christian Bonnes was appointed to fill in until the next annual meeting on Sept. 29. At that time, Bonnes

was elected clerk, with Seth Colbeth taking over the treasurer’s post. Mathias Ross chaired the meeting.

Minutes are unclear as to the specific responsibilities of the annual meeting chairman. No “president” of the board is ever mentioned, but sometimes the minutes say the meeting chairman was also elected a “director” for a three-year term.

The records of the next few years tell an orderly story of contracting with teachers, soliciting bids to supply firewood, and paying local residents for work on their school, such as \$9 to Dennis Mahoney for plastering and banking (piling straw or other insulating material against the building). A stove and pipes were purchased for \$18. A blackboard cost \$2, and a lock \$1. Chalk and a broom came to sixty cents. The state supplied a Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, but the district had to pay \$3 freight to get it.

Trying to avoid the busiest farming seasons, the rural community separately authorized summer and winter sessions for three or four months each. Summer session usually began in mid-May and winter session in early November.

At least eleven different teachers were employed in the six years recorded in this book. Most, but not all, were women. By the mid-1860s, wages had risen to between \$26 and \$30 per month. Teachers were awarded one-year licenses by the state after passing examinations in orthography (spelling), orthoepy (pronunciation), reading, mental arithmetic, written arithmetic, geography, history, grammar, and penmanship.

Another book from that era, a student attendance record, gave rise to the mistaken assumption that Oak Valley classes did not begin until May 1868. The “Teachers’ Daily Register” shows Jennie Jewell welcoming 26 students. Six more started in June or July. Classes were held Monday through Friday and every other Saturday. Saturday classes later were largely eliminated.

The “Teachers’ Daily Register” was designed to record each student’s attendance both morning and afternoon. The book’s author wrote, “These (twice daily) spaces are large enough to record in them the number of minutes each pupil is tardy...This Register is specially designed to remedy this greatest of evils in our Schools, by showing the time even to a minute that any Pupil is absent from School. Parents not unfrequently become dissatisfied with their Schools, because their children do not make more rapid progress in their studies. Might they not find the true reason by consulting the Record of Attendance? (N)o inconsiderable part of the funds so generously appropriated to school purposes, is absolutely thrown away in consequence of the Irregular Attendance of Pupils.”

The last session recorded in this particular register, Nov. 15, 1875 to April 4, 1876, showed Joseph Johnston instructing 54 students, although average daily attendance was much less. The age difference in the one-room building ranged from a handful of five to seven-year-olds up to three boys and a girl age twenty. However, three of those four oldest came only a day or two.

Christmas fell on Saturday that year, and students had Thursday and Friday off. It was back to school on Monday.

Family names included Bonnes, Keefe, O’Keefe, Ryan, Ross, Welsh or Welch, O’Brien, Colbeth, Hutton, Mahoney, Smith, Wanner, Splann, Switzer, Dorigan, Wilson, Shasby, Lenahan, Haddow, Cashman, and Galvin.

For the sixth time, the Oak Valley community assembled for their annual meeting. Convening at the school on Sept. 24, 1866, they voted unanimously “that the schoolhouse be moved on the one acre on the south side of the stage road (now County N) . . .”

Ten years later, the oldest known plat book locates the school at the southeast corner of what are now County Roads N and SS.

However, there is a discrepancy between the legal description of that site and what was recorded in the 1866 minutes. The minutes point to a parcel directly west of the original site. Both that parcel and the southeast land were owned by Christian Bonnes. Was the school moved twice? Or was it decided after the annual meeting that the southeast corner was preferable?

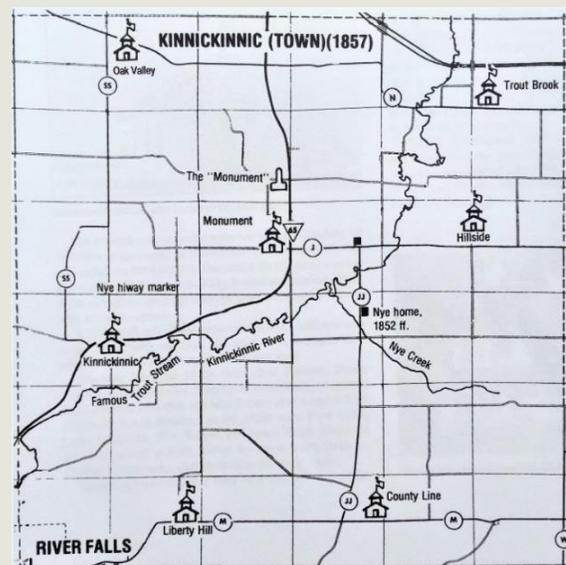
A search of St. Croix County land records did not reveal any transfer of ownership to the school district for any of the locations. It is likely the land owners simply agreed to having the school on their property without registering a formal transfer.

No reason was recorded for the move. In 1866, Seth Colbeth’s two sons were adults, though he still had two daughters in school. On the other hand, Christian Bonnes’ oldest son was just reaching school age. It is possible that had something to do with moving the school.

Kathy Hunter is a resident of Kinnickinnic Township. She is the Great-great granddaughter of Christian Bonnes.

#### Editors Note-

This map from “Remembering Rural Schools of St. Croix County” shows the locations of the seven rural schools in Kinnickinnic Township. More information about our rural schools can be found in this book (available at local libraries)



# FOR THE BIRDS

## UNCOMMON FINDS IN KINNICKINNIC TOWNSHIP

by Tom Andersen

I'm always on the lookout for birds not often found in these parts. Knowing where to look and what to look for helps keep the rare ones on my radar. Uncommon birds can be a once a year or even once in a lifetime sighting. Birders often have a "life list" of sightings and I've added one layer of difficulty to this. I don't count a bird on my list unless I get a good picture. For me, it adds to the pleasure and allows me to enjoy the experience long after it has occurred. Know that you don't have to have a fancy camera to do this. Point and shoot digital cameras these days can give you amazing results. A little patience and stealth, however, are still important.

Sometimes I'll hear a different call and I'll find myself trying to hunt down that bird to get a picture. I've always admired people who know bird calls. Given my less than stellar hearing, I'll most likely never be that person. That makes it doubly important that I *know what habitat a bird prefers and what it feeds upon*.

One such bird that I've been trying to photograph for a long time is the Cuckoo. Two species of Cuckoo can, on occasion, be spotted in Kinnickinnic Township. The most likely would be the Black-billed Cuckoo. Less likely, but possible, would be the Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

The Black-billed Cuckoo could nest in the Township while it is more likely the Yellow-billed would range further south. [\(Sibley\)](#) [\(Cornell\)](#) Fortunately for me I can hear the call of both Cuckoos. They are very distinct and rather loud. Learning the call of a bird is easy. Remembering is a different story. I use a small hand held digital recorder. Using the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's

website, you can easily access virtually any bird call. You can then record bird calls for use in the field. I record an unfamiliar call while in the field to make later comparison should I not spot the critter. Add a pair of binoculars and you are a birder!



Black-billed Cuckoo sitting on a caterpillar "tent" dining on caterpillars – Photo TA

The Black-billed Cuckoo has a strong preference for caterpillars. They prefer the denser wooded areas. They are, however, elusive. *Look for a bird about the size of a dove. They have a kind of hunched up look about them.* They don't move much, preferring to sit still patiently searching their surroundings for a meal. This, of course, makes them hard to spot. Fortunately, there is a way to "up your odds" of seeing one. *Look for caterpillar "tents".* If you hear a Cuckoo about, they will likely, at some point, visit it for a meal.

While I see the Scarlet Tanager every spring and summer, I do not consider them to be common. I do know that they are a very secretive little bird. Getting close to them is not easy. Maybe it's because they have those "hot red" bodies accented by jet black wings. Or, maybe it's because *they frequent the high up places in the hardwoods.* Either way, they are not a bird often spotted, let alone photographed.

A fly fishing pal of mine says that unless it's a really bright day, he cannot see them. He is color blind. So, he relies on hearing their call. His hearing, far better than mine, is able to pick up *the decisive robin like call* they make.



Scarlet Tanager – Photo TA

The Scarlet Tanager does nest in Kinnickinnic Township. Since I spotted and tracked the first one a few years back, I have observed them nesting every year. Usually about the time I'm sitting under a tree calling Tom Turkeys or searching for Morel mushrooms (late April through mid-May) the Tanagers show up.

Tanagers are berry eaters, however, like most species of birds they are opportunistic. I experienced this first hand one spring when a Tanager arrived quite early. He found the suet to be a fine substitute for the blackberries and raspberries that were more than a month away from showing.



The Scarlet Tanager sharing the suet with five Yellow-rumped Warblers – Photo TA

I'm always concerned about the Tanagers nesting successfully in my woods. Or shall I say, I am always concerned they will raise their own kind! We always have a pair or two of Cowbirds. Cowbirds parasitize other species of birds as they do not build nests of

their own. The Cowbirds always seem to show up pretty early seemingly scouting out who might be a suitable nest builder for their eggs. Every year I see the wrong bird species feeding Cowbird chicks.



Female Scarlet Tanager – Photo TA  
Photo TA

It is said that Cowbirds are known to replace Tanager eggs with their own. Unfortunately, the Tanager doesn't seem to know the difference. (Cornell) It is April 27<sup>th</sup> and as I am writing this, I see two pairs of Cowbirds sitting high in the tree patiently observing the birds, especially the Eastern Towhees.



Photo – TA

Whether you have 10 trees in your yard or thousands in your woods, the birds of Kinnickinnic Township can add much pleasure to your outdoor experience. Kinnickinnic Township is a great venue for birding.

Sources

- \_Photos are from Kinnickinnic Township
- \_Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>
- Sibley Guide to Birds, David Sibley

# O N THE ROAD AGAIN

by Bill Gnatzig

As the Town's population continues to grow, the safety of all those using our Town roads is an increasing concern.

Our Town roads are first and foremost designed for use by motorized vehicles. As rural roads, most originally built several decades ago, the pavement is often narrow and shoulder space is limited. While there are no restrictions on non-motorized use of the Town roads, those using them for such purposes need to recognize the limitations and safety issues involved.

To aid safety, Kinnickinnic has designated a 45-mph speed limit on all Town roads, which is the lowest the town is allowed to do under nearly all circumstances. In some areas the Town has also posted yellow "advisory" signs noting lower speeds, but these are only recommendations. Safety falls heavily on those using Town roads for slow moving purposes. Walkers, bikers, joggers, etc. need to think defensively. Follow these basic safety rules:

## Pedestrians

Walkers and joggers should consider wearing high-visibility clothing. Walk on the left side of the road so oncoming traffic is apparent. **DO NOT WALK ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE ROAD WITH YOUR BACK TO TRAFFIC.** Walk single-file when in a group. Wear reflective clothing at night. Use a leash when walking the dog.



## Bicycle Use

Bicyclists should use the right lane, the same as motorized traffic. This puts a special burden on bicyclists as traffic coming from behind can approach quickly and sometimes quietly. High visibility clothing, rear view mirrors and hearing awareness are especially important. Consider avoiding wearing ear buds. Bicycle riders are required to adhere to all traffic signs, including stop signs. Use hand signals. When riding in groups it is advisable to avoid crowding the center line. Common courtesy and safety also dictate that both single and group riders should move to the side to allow quicker vehicles to pass safely in appropriate areas. Lights and reflective clothing should be used at dusk and dark.

## Horses

While Kinnickinnic does not have much horse-related traffic, it is important for riders to recognize the potential safety issues. Horses should be well trained and under the control of experienced riders.

Horse drawn carriages and wagons should have slow moving vehicle (SMV) signs. **Horses and riders are considered the same as pedestrians and should use the left side of the road facing on-coming traffic.**

**As non-motorized but wheeled use, horse drawn vehicles should stay in the right lane.**

Keep aware of traffic approaching from behind and use lighting at dusk and night.

**Farm Equipment**

Farmers have the right to use rural roads to move equipment as needed from farm to field and between fields. Equipment is becoming larger, often to the point of exceeding lane widths, necessitating the need to weave around mailboxes and other obstructions. Some recent Wisconsin law changes imposed special lighting requirements on farm equipment over a certain size, in addition to the prior required use of SMV signs. Changes have eliminated the prior clause that permitted cars and trucks to pass slow-moving (less than 25 mph) farm equipment in marked "no passing" zones.

*Bill Gnatzig is a former Town Supervisor and currently serves on the Town Road Committee*

**Editor's Note**

*This is an important reminder and great follow up piece to the article in the April 2018 Current. It is still fairly common to see residents jogging, walking, and walking their dogs while not facing oncoming traffic. Each year, the number of pedestrians killed or injured by distracted drivers is significant. Facing oncoming traffic can give you a pretty good idea of what an oncoming car is doing. If your back is to the traffic, well.....*

- Pictures may be used and they should be in jpg format.
- All submissions must be accompanied by the author's name and contact information.
- Questions about submissions may be directed to the Editor at- [tatrico22@outlook.com](mailto:tatrico22@outlook.com)
- *The Current* Editor and Town Board must approve all submissions.
- *The Current* Editor and or Town Board reserve the right to proof and make necessary corrections [grammatical errors, etc.] in all submissions.
- All submissions must strive to be factual.
- Partisan political submissions will not be accepted.
- Op-Ed submissions will not be accepted.
- Ideas for articles are welcomed.
- **WE ARE LOOKING FOR WRITERS.**

**BE SURE TO VISIT YOUR TOWN WEBSITE-**

[www.KinnickinnicTwp.org](http://www.KinnickinnicTwp.org)

**Editor Note:**

*The two front page pictures are of the Ruffed Grouse sitting on a drumming log and the White Trout Lilly. Both are sure signs of spring in Kinnickinnic Township. Photos taken in the Township. Photos - TA*

# GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES

- Submissions to *Current News* may come from any Town of Kinnickinnic resident and should be turned in at the town hall during regular office hours.
- Submissions may be sent to the Editor @ [tatrico22@outlook.com](mailto:tatrico22@outlook.com)
- Submissions should be in a Word file if sent by e-mail or typed or handwritten if presented to the Town hall.