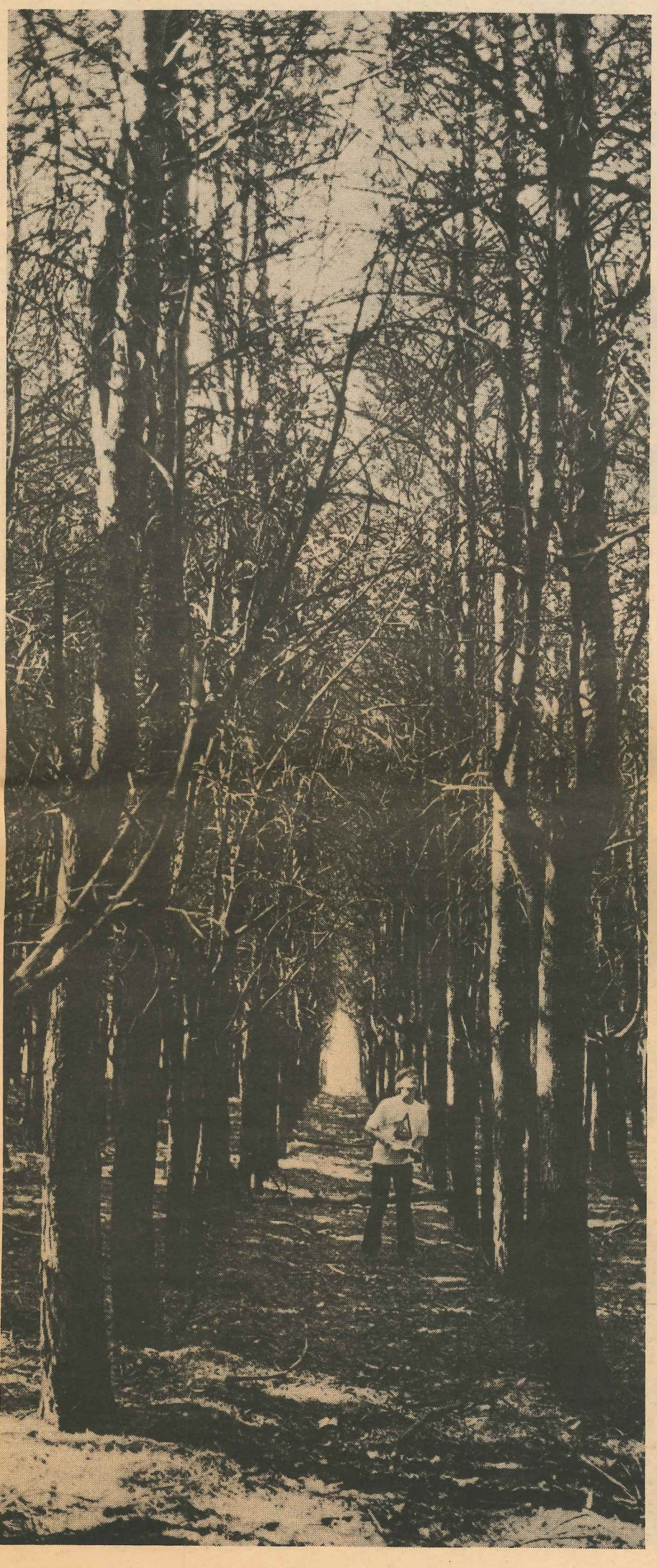
POST-CRESCENT MAGAZINE

View

SUNDAY, JUNE 8, 1975

Trees for Tomorrow



It started in 1944. Its purpose was replacement of trees cut for war. Now it's an outdoor classroom with environmental education its goal....

As time goes on the forest dies
Within this soil where it lies.
The beauty of the view is lost
And nature pays for the cost.
In my eyes arose the tears.
What happened to those 50 years?

Tammy Syring, a sixth grader at Roosevelt School in Neenah, penned the poem as she rested in her dormitory at Trees for Tomorrow Environmental Center in Eagle River.

Tammy had just completed a field trip on which she and 59 other Neenah

By Bill Knutson

Post-Crescent staff writer

sixth graders from 14 schools saw what happens when man does not take care of what nature has given him.

But during the 3½ days at Trees for Tomorrow the middle of last month, the pupils also witnessed the good that results when man and nature live in harmony.

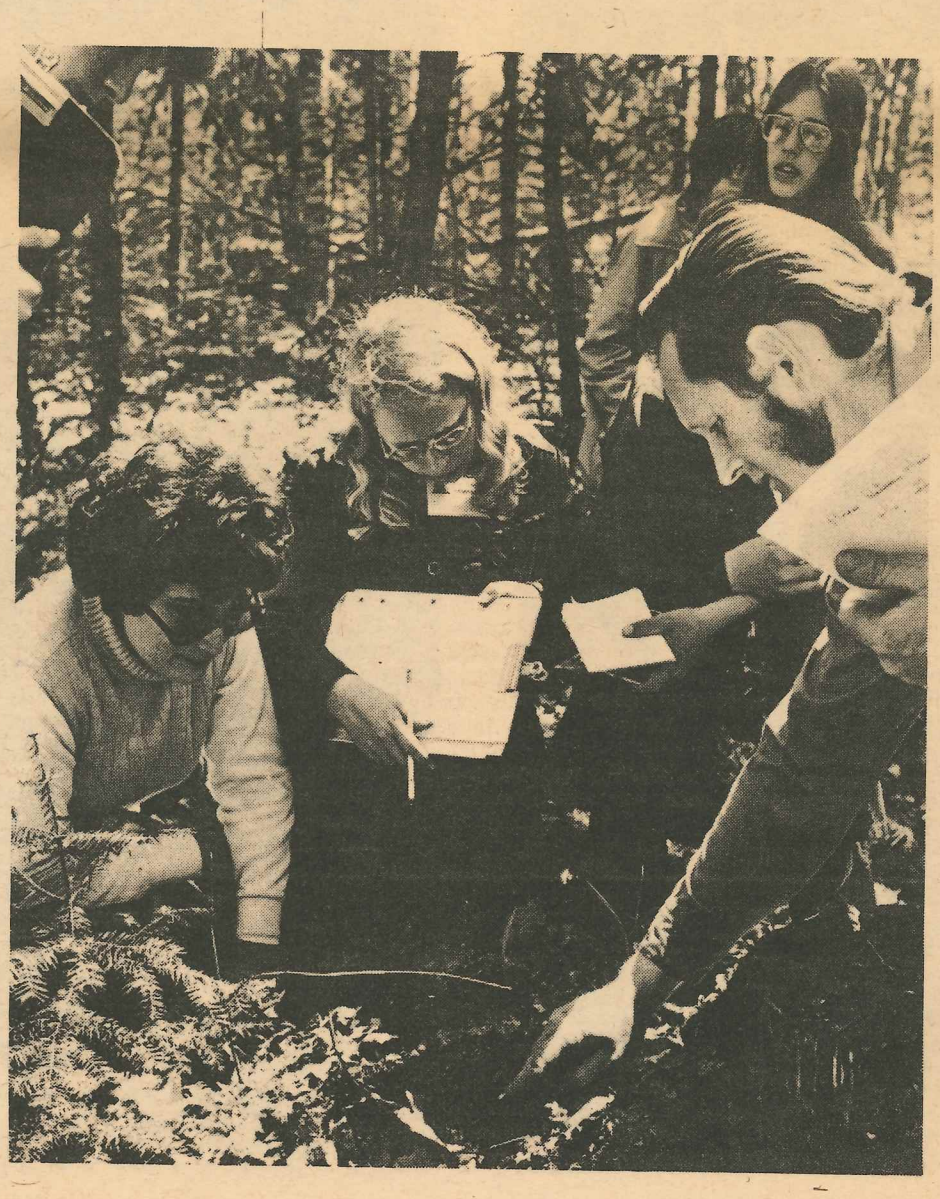
Until three years ago, Trees for Tomorrow was not geared for elementary pupils. Most of the campers were older students — high school and college age. Many were teachers, businessmen, civic club members and legislators.

Leo Nickasch, a Kimberly-Clark Corp. employe who is on the conservation committee of United Paper Workers International, helped form a trial program which brought 60 pupils from Lakeview School in Neenah to the camp. Nickasch, known in the Fox River Valley for his environmental education efforts, now is on a committee of the Neenah-Menasha Chamber of Commerce which solicits funds for partial scholarships to Trees for Tomorrow. Donations come from labor unions, businesses, industries, civic organizations and individuals.

"This is the age where we have to get to the young people," Nickasch said. "This is the ideal age."

If the enthusiasm displayed by this year's group of Neenah campers was any barometer, Nickasch couldn't be more accurate.

The pupils and six teachers and counselors arrived by school bus Sunday afternoon. After a Paul Bunyan sized dinner cooked by jovial Big John (who looks like he samples a goodly amount of his product), they heard the Trees for Tomorrow story.



World War II had drawn heavily on Wisconsin's forests when executives of nine state paper mills organized Trees for Tomorrow in February, 1944. They had more than just a casual interest in seeing new forests sprouting across the north. It was at a time when patriotic Americans also were heeding President Roosevelt's pleas that they plant trees on their back forties.

Power companies soon joined the nonprofit reforestation program. The initial thrust of Trees for Tomorrow was making trees available free to landowners and students and anyone else who wanted to help.

There was a 2 for 1 program where landowners were offered two seedlings for every tree they cut for the war. Trees for Tomorrow foresters demonstrated proper planting.

In 1946, realizing the need for a place where conservation could be studied outside the classroom, Trees for Tomorrow leaders entered into a permit-use lease with the U.S. Forest Service for a cluster of rustic buildings in a pine-circled clearing on the banks of the Eagle Chain of Lakes.

Forty educators comprised the first group to use the outdoor classroom. More than 100,000 persons have since studied there.

In 1946 the camp would accommodate 28 persons at a time. Trees for Tomorrow has spent $250,000 enlarging and improving the camp, which now will accommodate 72.

After hearing the Trees story, the Neenah pupils moved outside the lecture hall to a council ring campfire where they talked about themselves and their families. They got to know each other.

"This is a living experience," said Mully Taylor, who has been executive director since Trees for Tomorrow began. "We have kids here from different types of homes; from 14 schools. Sometimes we get kids who are seldom away from home."

Anita Jarosh later said that "meeting so many new, friendly people" was one of the high points of her stay.

Theresa Williams was thrilled that she finally mastered making an upper bunk.

The big bell by the mess hall rings at 7 a.m. After breakfast the pupils spent the first morning researching and discussing what they would later encounter in the forests and fields. They also

learned how to read a compass and they began making terrariums. Some of them went to the "little library in the woods."

The first afternoon was spent at the Wisconsin Press Association Forest, which many of the pupils considered the highlight of the the program.

They split into five Indian tribes and headed into the brush behind Tony Pudlo, Trees for Tomorrow's full-time ecologist, and several tour guides.

They made learning fun.

One tribe discovered rabbit browse on a raspberry bush and deer browse on aspens. Another identified a white birch seedling. Another discovered a maple sprout in a rotten stump. A finding of flowers in a red maple tree earned bonus points for the Chippewas and the Menominees got five points for spotting a witch's broom on a balsam trunk.

There was a world of wonders waiting to be discovered. The pupils had sketch pads, notebooks and field glasses. They found deer and partridge droppings and moss and lichens and bird nests and woodpecker holes.

"These little things that look like caterpillars are flowers from the aspen tree," Pudlo explained. "The aspen is a quick growing tree that's very important in making paper."

"See how the ants and fungus are destroying this stump," Pudlo said. "And see how new life is growing right out of it."

Mice holes fascinated some of the pupils. A girl thought a pine cone that had been chewed on by a squirrel was a small pineapple.

A boy found a Gettleman can for his collection.

There were no big words. No propoganda. No precept.

"We don't expect them to go back home with a lot of facts," Taylor said. "We can't cover the universe in three days. It's attitude that counts. We want to help them develop good attitudes. We want them to want to learn more. We want to motivate them.

"We don't expect them to become foresters," Taylor said. "We're satisfied if they just want to become informed about their environment. We show them and let them make up their own minds."

Warren Volk of the U.S. Forest Service showed the tribes the value of selective cutting. Balsam seedlings were sprouting in a clearing scattered with stumps. "This will be a forest again," Volk said. "We can cut these balsams in 50 to 60 years."

Joel Gohdes planted his first tree, a pine, in the press association's plantation, with the help of Walter Goldsworthy, a Trees for Tomorrow guide. Sometimes it took two pupils on a spud handle to break the ground for the seedlings.

"Don't move the spud back and forth too much or you'll get an air pocket and the roots will dry out," Goldsworthy advised.

Before heading back to camp, the pupils gathered wintergreens, clover, moss, ferns and other plants for their terrariums.

Pudlo dropped to his knees and touched a trailing arbutus. "There's no perfume in the world so sweet," he said.

Weary as they were, most of the pupils found the strength for volleyball, basketball and horseshoes when they got back to camp.

As they sat down to plates heaped with pork steak, beans, potatoes and slabs of warm bread, Ted Jarosh, principal at Lakeview School, told them to report to their dormitories right after supper for "woodtick check." He gave them a short course in tick identification.

There was time for a little fishing after supper and as the sun went down, the pupils began a silent nature hike through the forest trail at the 40-acre camp.

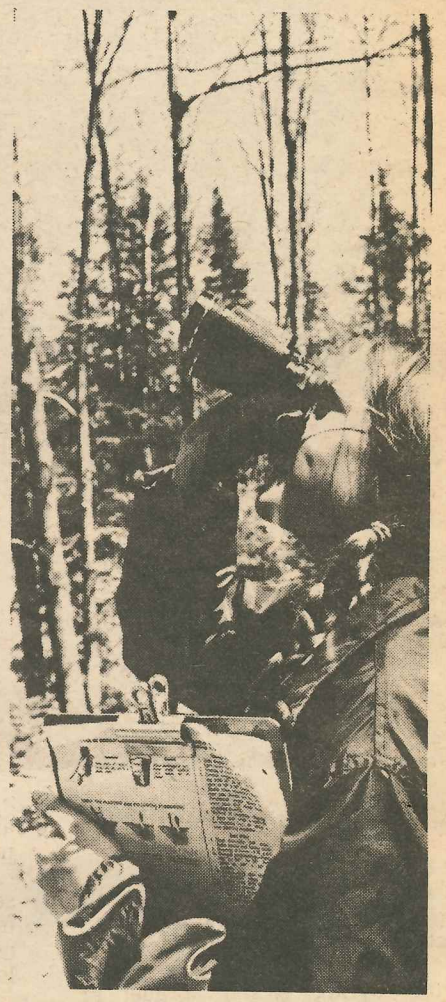
After learning how a tree becomes paper, the campers went by bus to a beaver pond Tuesday morning.

"When a beaver gets to be about two years old, his parents kick him out of the house," said Phil Vanderschaegen, a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources game biologist. "So some of those beaver came boppin' along here and set up housekeeping."

The beaver was once nearly extinct, he said, and now there are too many of them in Northern Wisconsin.

Pupils were fascinated by Vanderschaegen's discussion about beaver. They have to chew, he said, pointing to popples and aspens laying helter-skelter on the stream bank. If they don't, their teeth grow too long and they will die. Beaver dams will ruin a good trout stream, he said.

No, beavers do not hibernate, said Ken Elliott, a Trees for Tomorrow guide who recently retired as a forest service



How it got started

EAGLE RIVER — When Trees for Tomorrow was organized in 1944, its primary goal was replacement of Wisconsin's trees cut for war and conversion of poor agricultural land to productive forests.

The program, which largely involved giving seedlings to landowners and any groups willing to plant, was immensely successful. So successful, in fact, that Trees for Tomorrow soon found itself shifting emphasis to development of forest management plans and tree harvest supervision.

By the late 1960s, it was time to think of new goals again. This time Trees for Tomorrow chose environmental education. It's meant quite a change fax at the 40-acre outdoor classroom in this Northern Wisconsin resort community.

It's no longer Trees for Tomorrow Camp. With new vistas came a new name: Trees for Tomorrow Environmental Center.

There also has been a change in sponsorship. Until 1974, underwriting of the program was by paper mills and electric power utilities. In 1974 Trees for Tomorrow went public. Industries still make substantial contributions, but now a large part of the operational cost is covered by member subscriptions which range from $10 a year for a Friend of Trees membership to $1,000 and over for executive membership.

Workshop fees also help defray the program costs. No state or federal funds are involved at Trees for Tomorrow, according to Executive Director M.N. Taylor.

However, state and federal agencies, most notably the U.S. Forest Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, play key instructional roles. Trees for Tomorrow has a small staff of technicians, including an ecologist, so it relies heavily on the USFS, DNR, business and industry for technical assistance.

Until recently, the rustic camp in the pines was closed most of the winter. High school students began arriving about the time the snow disappeared and the ice left the lakes. When schools recessed for the summer, teachers journeyed to the camp. So did clubwomen, businessmen, legislators and representatives of many industries.

Now Trees for Tomorrow Environmental Center is nearly as busy in the winter as during the rest of the year. A unique program that was almost instantly popular was the cross country skiing-winter ecology workshop, pioneered in 1973 and greatly expanded during the last ski season. About 1,000 persons took part in last winter's series of workshops, Taylor said. Entire families enrolled.

Last February, a group of students from Roncalli High School in Manitowoc participated in the first winter ecology workshop for high school students. Another significant winter program is the timber workers' workshop, aimed at training people in pulpwood cutting siills. A snowmobile safety course combined with an ecology workshop also proved popular.

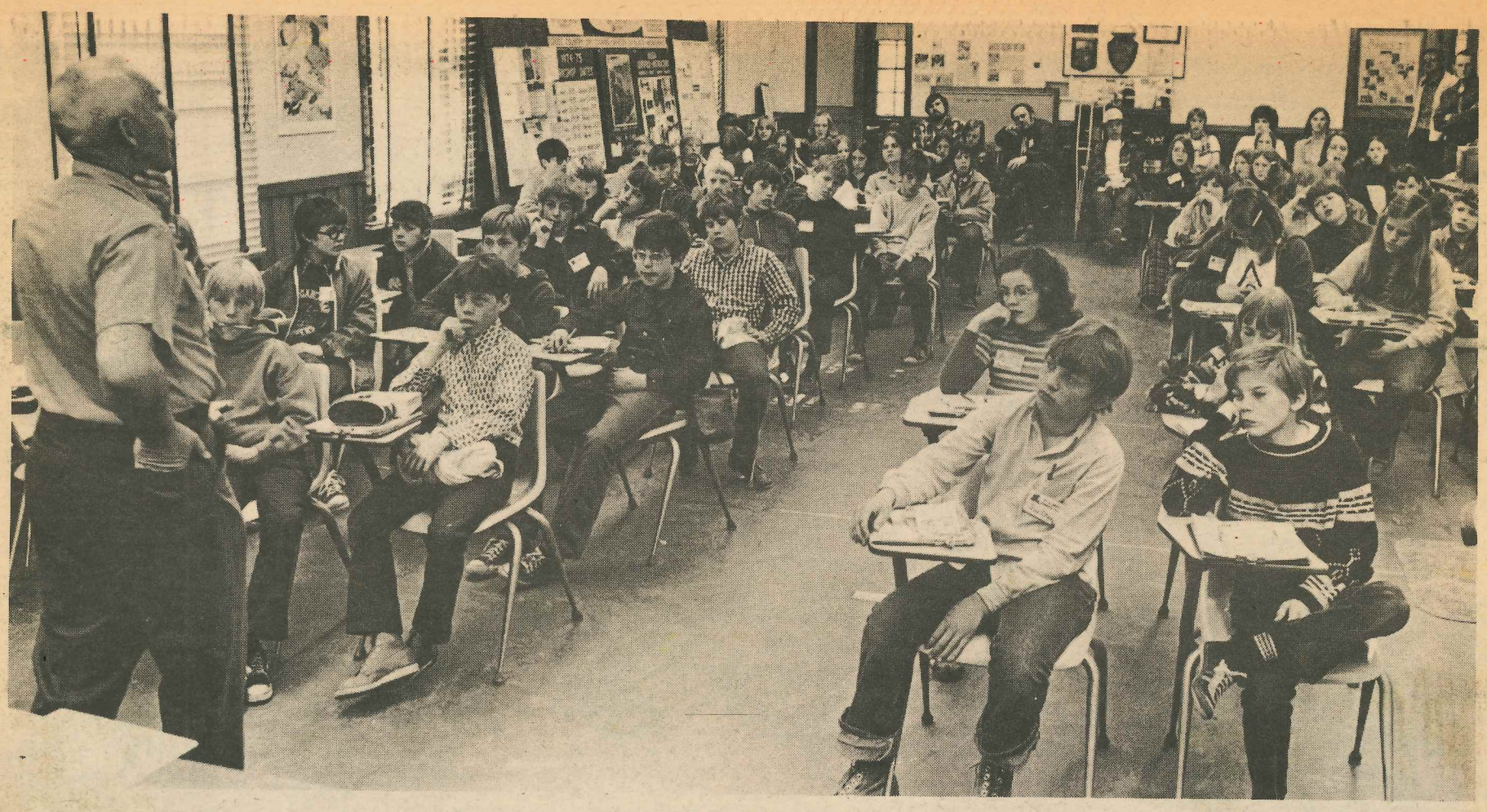
Two anglers workshops will be introduced at Trees for Tomorrow this summer. The weekend programs, on June 20 and July 18, will include instruction in bait casting, spinning and fly fishing, boating and fish ecology. Fishing equipment and fish biology experts will instruct. The workshops, consponsored by Trees for Tomorrow and the University of WisconsinStevens Point, is designed for the beginning fisherman and the angler seeking to improve his skills.

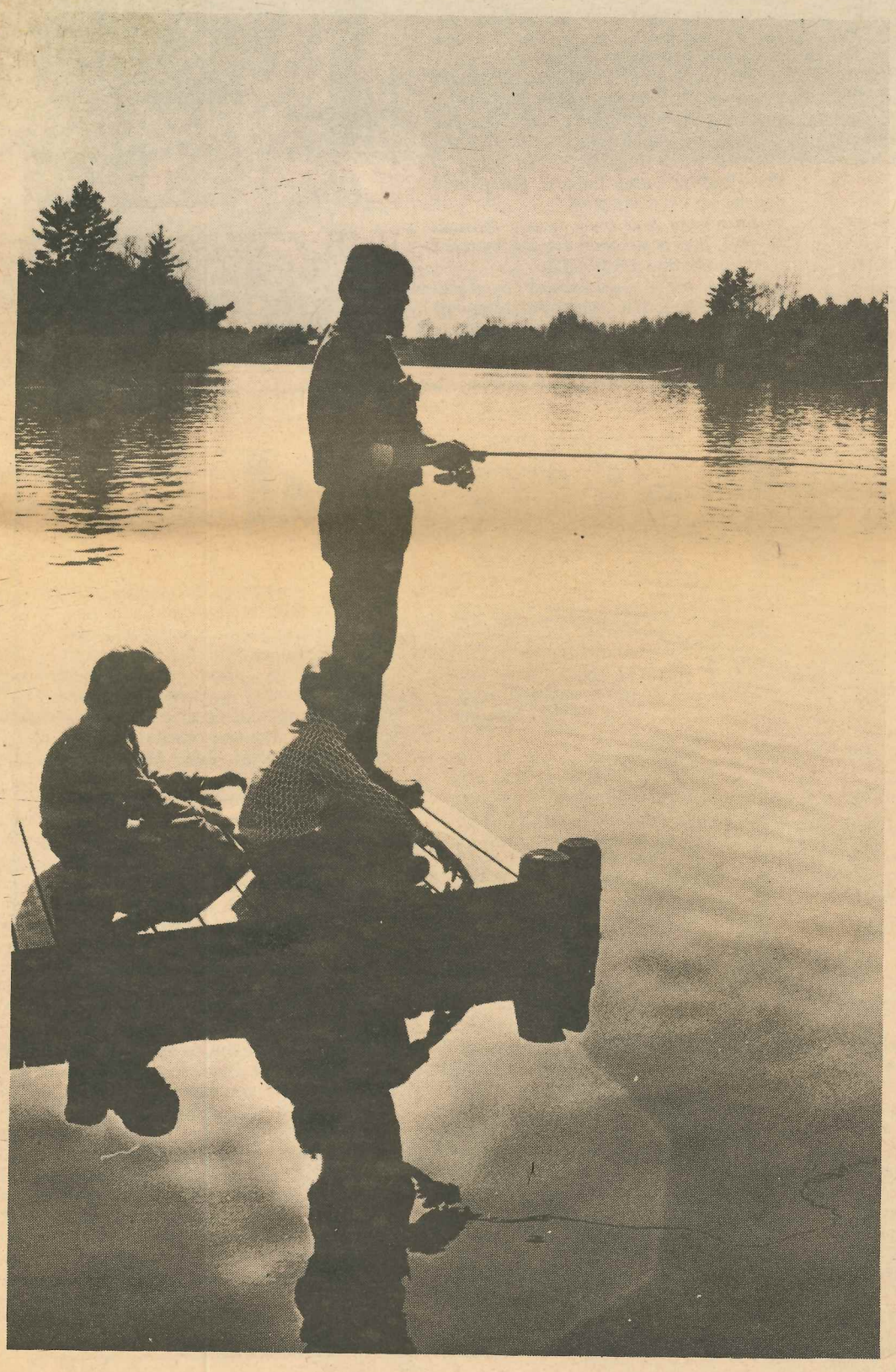
There also will be three weekend ecology workshops for individuals, couples and families this summer. The program will include field ecological studies and instructions in backpacking, plant identification and wilderness survival, with particular emphasis on orienteering — the use of map and compass. Those workshops begin June 27, July 11 and Aug. 8.

Information on any Trees for Tomorrow programs can be obtained by writing the center at Post Office Box 609, Eagle River, zip code 54521. or by telephoning 715-479-6456.

Another major change at Trees for Tomorrow has been the introduction of programs for elementary school pupils. Neenah's Lakeview School figured in the first workshop for elementary pupils and Taylor said it was so successful — "the Neenah experiment worked out well because there was strong motivation in that community" — that many other schools have since become involved.

"We see as a trend, younger people coming to Trees for Tomorrow," Taylor said. He said there will be more winter ecology programs for high school age youths, so more time can be devoted to younger people during the fall and spring.





Post-Crescent phot
by Edward J. Deschle

ranger. "They stay in their house most of the winter. It must get pretty boring with no TV."

The big female beaver is the boss, Vanderschaegen explained.

"You probably could come down here at night and see beaver swimming along munchin' up lily pads," he said.

Big John and the other cooks had lunch waiting at Star Lake campground when the bus got there. It was 75 degrees and sunny. Tired feet were soaked in the cool lake.

The next stop was the Star Lake pine plantation, in Northern Highland State Forest. Sixty years ago the area was a lumber company horse pasture.

"Shut your eyes and try to imagine this area without any trees," said Don Burr, DNR forester. He gave a short quiz on uses of a forest. Neenah pupils had quick answers.

They learned that a cord of wood is four feet by four feet by eight feet and that sustained yield forest management means not cutting any more than you replace.

Then, for 15 minutes, no one spoke a word. "Listen, see, smell, touch and observe," said Ralph Hewitt, another DNR forester as he prepared to lead the silent tour through the forest.

The only sounds were the crunch of feet on brown pine needles, the whisper of wind through the tops of the red pines, the chatter of two fighting squirrels and the distant scolding of a crow.

The hushed procession ended at a huge bog that smelled sweetly of moss and spruce.

"What do we care about bogs? They're just filled with mosquitoes." Hewitt said. "Why don't we just fill them in?"

In the next half hour, he answered his own question. The seemingly useless bog is "one of life's big sponges," he said' and water is life.

Hewitt tore off a num moss. "When along and gives yo a girl, "it probab this." The moss ha times its dry weigh he tried to squeeze

Hewitt found a l said is the beginni in the bog. The la makes a palatab leaves are dried.

He led the pup boardwalk, toward goon. The entire bo it was created by ago, he explained. into the cool bog an on hot summer day

Big bugs scooted ter. "It's a whole n Hewitt said.

The pupils and t teachers spent part viewing the past The pupils entertai of Wednesday morn ing dormitories, ju ects and getting rea to Neenah. They w same bus that wou asha elementary pu

It wasn't a three school for 60 young hard. They learned.

"I think I can nov the world around r true beauty of nat presence," Linda School wrote later.

When they return the campers would t and others about th with nature.

"We want them to tal ambassadors," J