



Eisele

BLACK RIVER FALLS — Perhaps Wisconsin's non-existent spring, consisting of ominous dark clouds and cold, wet weather, was a precursor of what to expect at the fishing opening here.

The result was a cool, dreary opening day when thoughts turned from recreational fishing to life in general. Anglers, writers, politicians, and business promoters gathered last Saturday for the Governor's Fishing Opener, with the official opening of the state's inland fishing season.

Black River Falls, 2 1/2 hours northwest of Madison on I-94, offers several fishing opportunities. Best known are the Black River, with its swift current providing good fishing for muskies, smallmouth bass and walleyes; and Lake Arbutus, an 850-acre impoundment on the Black River featuring deep drop-offs. The lake offers good wall-

eye, smallmouth bass, musky, and catfish angling.

Not as well known are the fishing opportunities on the cranberry marshes used by growers to provide water for the beds during harvest season. East of Black River Falls is the shallow, stump-filled Potter's Cranberry Flowage, containing musky, bass and panfish. South of town on U.S. 12 is Robert's Cranberry Flowage.

Robert's marsh was the location that I fished with Jerry Kennedy, an avid bass fisherman from Alma Center who grew up in Madison.

Kennedy enjoys driving to Robert's marsh for an evening's fishing during the summer, primarily casting toward the snags along the shorelines for bass.

We launched Kennedy's 14-foot aluminum boat, powered by a small electric motor, from a

public landing along U.S. 12. We worked the shorelines with small spinners and plastic worms.

The cold water kept the bass sluggish and our only action was a small 9-inch bass that took Jerry's spinner bait with a yellow and white rubber skirt. I worked a pumpkin pepper plastic worm attached to a Mister Twister keeper wormhook, but managed to hook mostly tree stumps and submerged branches.

"I find the best combination to have one fisherman using a spinner, which creates a disturbance in the water and attracts bass to the vicinity of the boat, and the other working a plastic worm along the bottom," Kennedy said.

Like most bass anglers, Kennedy promotes catch-and-release fishing, and clips the barb off the hook to make release easier. His largest bass from Robert's Flowage is a 5-pounder, with ac-

tion from 30-inch northern pike plus bluegills and perch. July his favorite month to fish for bass.

The small marsh is ringed with trees, reminiscent of a northern Wisconsin flowage, with ospreys nesting nearby. I watched an osprey hover over the shoreline and then dive for fish. We saw Canada geese, ar pairs of blue-winged teal and wood ducks on the marsh.

The opener was slow for largemouth bass, although anglers on Lake Arbutus caught and registered several 11-inch crappies, a 15-inch smallmouth bass and an 8-pound catfish.

But thoughts of fishing dirished when participants learn Saturday evening that former Gov. Warren Knowles had died earlier in the day. Brighter days are sure to return to the lakes this summer.

Knowles at home on water

By Tim Eisele

Special to The Capital Times

It's ironic how life sometimes comes around full circle.

That's the way many of the participants in the 28th Annual Governor's Fishing Opener at Black River Falls felt last Saturday, when former Gov. Warren Knowles died from a heart attack.

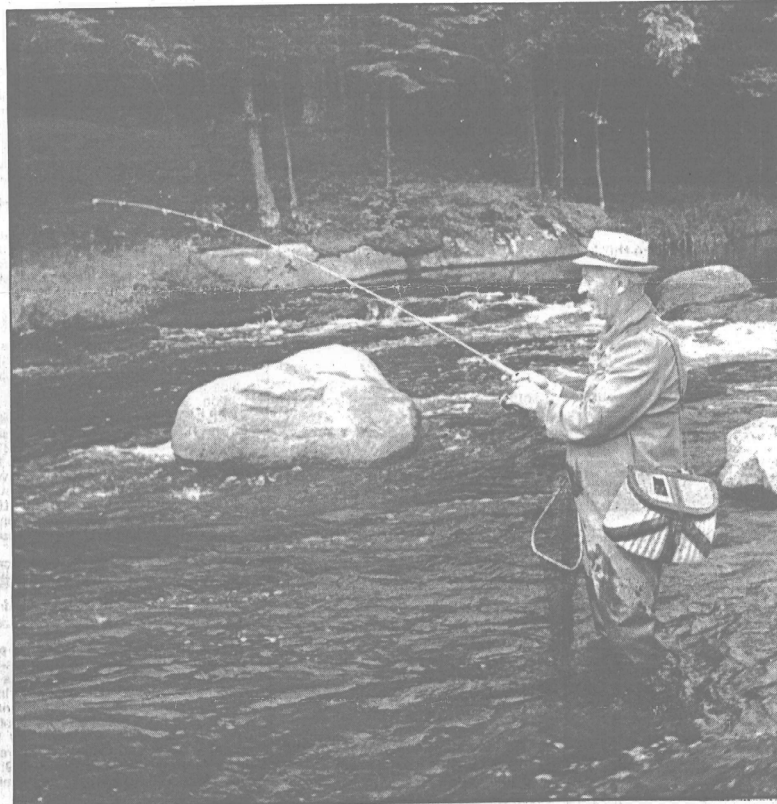
Commentary

There was irony in that Knowles, 84, was doing exactly what he wanted to be doing: fishing, listening to the Milwaukee Brewers baseball game on radio, and promoting the state of Wisconsin. He was an excellent fisherman and had just come off the water with his partner, Sam Sanfillippo of Madison, and a local fishing guide, when the heart attack occurred.

There was irony in that Knowles was the very person who started the Governor's Fishing Opener in 1968. And, although he had been out of office since 1971, he always returned to participate in the annual event.

Knowles launched the event to focus attention on the state's fishing resources and to promote Wisconsin tourism. He was keenly aware, coming from northwestern Wisconsin, that northern residents felt neglected by the statehouse. He wanted to give them something to rally around.

The fishing opener was the answer, and Knowles invited the governors of Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Michigan to fish with him, knowing that the media would focus on the competition



Former Wisconsin Governor Warren Knowles, who died Saturday, had a reputation for being a friend of the outdoors.

between the state's executives.

But, Warren Knowles was much more than a fisherman and much more than your typical politician. He was a gentleman who cared about other people. That attitude brought him the respect of Democrats and Republicans.

Wilbur Stites, retired supervisor of information for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) who lives in Black Earth, recounts the time an out-of-state

newspaper reporter was covering an outdoor event when the governor learned the reporter had left his camera in his motel room.

"Warren borrowed a DNR car and drove to the motel to get the camera for the reporter," Stites said. "I'll never forget the expression on the face of the writer when he learned that the Wisconsin governor personally went out of his way to retrieve the camera. That's the kind of person Warren Knowles was."

Warren Knowles also realized the value of enjoying the outdoors, the camaraderie of fish partners, and the necessity teaching youngsters about fishing.

Knowles started the Governor's Fishing Opener, and that where his fishing ended. But, efforts to improve the state's natural resources will live on to benefit future generations that will never know this gentle man

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