



The Weld Observer

May 2024 -2nd Edition



HENRY BLAU

Swimming with Loons in an Asylum

by Jean A. Miller Mariner

“They can’t be loons,” I said to Paul. “Loons appear in singles or pairs. This group is so big -- must be ducks.” Upon a deeper look, I saw their laddered backs, shiny black heads, pearl necklaces, and large beaks. They were loons. We were looking at a raft of thirteen common loons. I called a greeting to them that I’ve used in years past, “Hey

There,” and was met with silent turns of heads that seemed to express a curiosity more than a greeting.

It was dawn on a mid-June day in 2022; a mist rose from the lake contributing to the fog. The raft, also called an asylum, of loons floated seamlessly with the water, creating only the smallest of concentric ripples when they turned. We waited until they turned to the right, then we dove left for our morning swim to the Inn Beach.

We wanted to give the loons space and not invade their kingdom.

When the sandy bottom rose to greet us upon our approach to the shore, we raised our heads, slowed to eggbeater kicks, and found ourselves surrounded by the raft. They followed us! Our heads above water, we looked left and right, mirroring their head movements. We were in the asylum.

Swimming with Loons

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LESTER GARY

In Concert: Mustard's Retreat, Saturday, July 27th

by Liz Boyle

Libby Glover and David Tamulevich play together as a duo known as Mustard's Retreat. They'll be performing for the first time in the Weld Town Hall on Saturday July 27, coming to us from Ann Arbor, Michigan where they live. Libby and David have known each other since 1975 and have played together, sometimes with other musicians, since that time. They've been performing as a duo since 2016 and do 30-40 concerts a year.

They are excited about coming here for the first time. When we spoke, David said, "It's just the kind of place we like to play, in a small town where there's still connection and community. That's what we're all about. We want to bring everyone out. The rewards of this are where you get to go and the people who you meet."

Their song choices are all about the audience because they consider the audience part of the show. It's an organic process; If the audience sings something or if they laugh at something, that might send the duo off on a different tangent. They like to play

their own songs but also songs by others. Libby and David are known as storytellers and try to be fun and entertaining. They are not political and don't try to play message music. Their most popular song is called, "Ours is a simple faith," written in 2004. Finding common ground is what they try to celebrate.

David plays guitar and Libby plays a little electric bass guitar and acoustic guitar and they both sing. Libby played guitar as a child and taught herself piano.

Mustard's Retreat

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What's Up Outside, May 1, 2024

by Lise Bofinger

Things are greening up, and the bugs will be biting by the time you read this! It is quite fitting that I saw my first flowering Trailing Arbutus or Mayflower on my afternoon walk today. Its leathery leaves are some of the first that green up once the snow departs, and the fragrant light pink flowers are certainly a sign that spring is coming.

Many years ago, when I spent my weekends bartending in a VFW in Central New Hampshire, an older veteran always brought me Mayflowers in the spring that he had collected in the woods. Though I wished he had left them at home in the woods, it warmed my heart that he cared for me and knew they would be special to me.

As you venture into the woods, keep your eyes open for spring wildflowers. Woodland wildflowers flourish in the spring because the leaves are not yet out thus, much more sunlight hits the ground, giving ground cover plants a boost of energy. One of the earliest plants to green up in the spring is Skunk Cabbage, which often pops up through the snow. It can melt the snow around it due to its rare ability to generate its own heat. Additionally, you may find trout lilies with their speckled leaves or, in damp areas, marsh marigolds with bright yellow flowers. There are many more, so dig out a guidebook and venture into the woods!

Gathering fiddleheads is a favorite activity of many Mainers. If you are interested in checking it out, here are a few pointers:

- Fiddleheads are young,



SKUNK CABBAGE

- uncoiled fronds of Ostrich Fern
- Fiddleheads grow in floodplains or along rivers and streams
- They should be harvested before they unfurl, in late April or May
- Only harvest a few from each clump, leaving enough for the next harvester and for the ferns to continue to grow
- Make sure you have permission from the landowner

- Clean before you cook, rinsing first in clean, cool water and remove papery brown scales.

If you're new to the world of fiddleheads, I can assure you, it's a treat worth trying. The taste is often compared to asparagus, a vegetable that many of us enjoy. So, if you're a fan of asparagus, get ready for a delightful surprise when you try fiddleheads!

Maria Luisa Cleasby

by Dennis Cleasby

Unlike many articles about the long-standing members of our little town, I'd like to write about a newer member of some seven years here in Weld; my wife.

You won't see her at many events, you won't hear her speak unless you know Spanish, and you'll maybe get a glimpse of her in our garden or with the chickens as you drive by. She was born in Nicaragua entered the USA in 2016.

Maria Luisa Cleasby, (nicknamed Luis) is one of the sweetest people on this planet. She fits in here because she comes from a place where people are simple, kind, not looking for an argument, and live in her home country like our ancestors did in Weld. People are close to the earth, hardworking, and interested survival within nature.

From age 10 my wife worked as a domestic for a tyrannical homeowner. At 13 she got her first pair of leather shoes. She never owned a doll. She never went to school. At that time, a revolution took place, and she witnessed the carnage of war firsthand in the streets. She worked selling plantain her father grew then eventually worked for a health clinic in her little town. Marie Luisa has eleven brothers and sisters and a



literal tribe of nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was a single parent and raised her daughter, Kellyn, for thirteen years on a salary of \$60 a month. Like many other migrants today she went to another country to find a better life and economic security. When she arrived first in Costa Rica, she was kidnapped and held against her will in a locked house until she escaped to the bus station and the town where we met months later. When we met, she was working 12-hour days in a tiny local restaurant. She had one day a week off, which was when I happened to be available on my planned trips.

and Mary and the entire folk era.

"We look for laughter, for singing, and for tears," David explains. "The songs make a difference to people. They go to people's hearts. That's what you aspire to as a songwriter: to write something that gets in and makes itself

Maria Luis is my heroine. She is quiet but street smart and can size a person up in seconds. Because of her background she fits into a place where nature, hard work, and a stick-to-it attitude forged a people who challenged nature, grew their own food, cut their own wood, and carried their own water to drink; this builds character. They're the same things she does when she joins her family for the daily chores when we visit Nicaragua. Running water and plumbing are nonexistent. The rivers and creeks provide for the people just like when the first folks that lived in Weld.

Maria Luisa had a less-than-pampered childhood which created in her a level of gravity that shows an understanding of experience and hard work. Our culture hands children their future before they understand effort and responsibility. In third world countries a lack of luxury is a secret gift. It forces creativity, inventiveness, hard work, and a deep appreciation for a few possessions. In Nicaragua, despite the barefooted children, dirt floors, and meager rations, Maria Luisa lived with people who have a sense of humor, a lack of aggression, and an unspoken community of love and understanding that functions on need versus luxury. Hmm, sounds a lot like the secret world in Weld; a parallel world perhaps.

Mustard's Retreat

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David's mother was a viola player and there was always classical music playing in their home. They've been inspired by Pete Seeger, Peter, Paul

part of somebody's life. It's a privilege to be up on stage. The music is our salvation. Hopefully we touch people in a deep way that they remember."

Mustard's Retreat has a new CD out called "By Request" which will be available for sale at the show.

Draft Horses Among Us

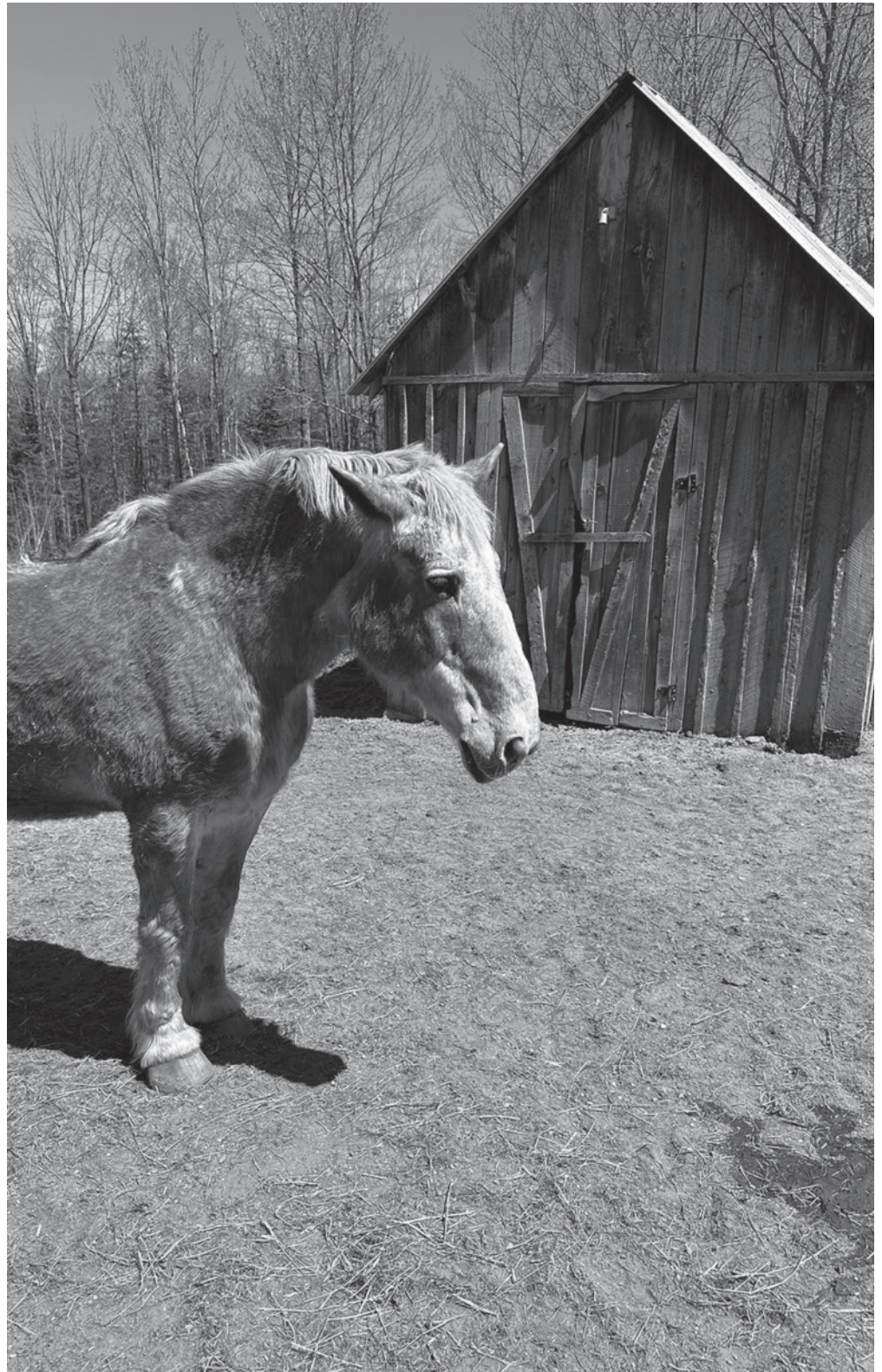
by Liz Boyle

My name is Chester. I'm a Belgian Draft Horse. I'm thought to be about 23 years old, but I don't know for sure. When I was sold, I was misrepresented as a fourteen-year-old. I live up on the Temple Road in Weld with Dave and Sonia Fish. They care for me well and have a solid understanding of horses and dogs.

Sonia comes from a family immersed in horse racing. Dave handled dogs as part of the Air Force 633rd Combat Group, Seventh Operations Wing, in the Vietnam War. Over 4,000 dogs were used in combat to detect enemy forces, and this is thought to have prevented about 10,000 service member deaths. Dave worked as a logger and got into draft horses when he was 50 years old. He is mostly self-taught and has extensive experience working in the Maine woods logging with draft horses and clearing farm fields. He still has a skidder used to move cut logs out of the forest. They're both remarkable people, Dave and Sonia.

How might you tell I'm old? My pointed teeth give me away, although once a year a dentist comes and files them down so it can be tricky discerning my age. I'm no longer active in Maine fair competitions, but I stay in good shape. My life expectancy is only about 25 years, so Dave tries not to get too emotionally attached. Although I sense that he loves us, he tells people it's best if he thinks of his draft horses as employees.

I live with two other horses named Charlie and Clay. They're also draft horses but a different breed known as Percherons. They're black and



their ancestors come from France. I'm golden in color, and my ancestors lived as far back as medieval times in Belgium. Although we're poles apart, we have fun together. In winter, we go outside and roll around in the snow, buck, and talk a lot. We all

love to be brushed and we enjoy food. Each of us eats four quarts of grain a day filled with vitamins, minerals and protein. Protein builds muscles.

Draft Horses Among Us

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Swimming with Loons

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Throughout the summer, as I have each summer, I swim – alone – to a variety of erratic rocks left by glaciers that are scattered under the water around our cove. When I'm between Pine Point and Bass Rock, a lone loon often joins me in my swim, diving beneath me and surfacing on the opposite side and zigzagging for nearly a mile. When I'm north of Center Reef headed to Bowley Rock, I'm joined again by a loon who greets me with a single hoot – and I reply with my calling card, “Hey There.” He also engages in zig-zag behavior, appearing alternately on my right, then my left.

In 2023, the raft settled north of our camp on the lake and numbered twelve loons.

Dr. James Paruk, author of Loon

Lessons: Uncommon Encounters with the Great Northern Diver, spoke to a congregation of Webb Lake loon lovers in the summer of 2023. I found myself sharing with him my experiences with loons. “They know you,” he smiled with an air of certainty. Loons live to be over thirty years old and are *philopatric* – they love their home – returning each year to not only the same lake but the same cove. Each loon has its own unique sound; the community of loons on the lake communicates through their wails, hoots, yodels, and calls. Loons recognize each other by their individual sounds; my ‘Hey There’ serves as my unique loon-esque call.

The zig-zag behavior? In Loon Lessons, Dr. Paruk reports that he observed loons following in the wake of dolphins, taking advantage of the fish stirred up by the currents of water

around the dolphins. Perhaps I am stirring up fish in the same way, allowing the loons to catch an easy meal through better fishing opportunities.

Both loons and humans are philopatric – we love our homes in Weld in and beside the lake. Both loons and humans recognize the differences in their neighbors – loons by sounds, humans by faces. Both loons and humans share the same home here in Weld. Loons know each other as neighbors – just as humans do. Loons greet each other enthusiastically as friends – just as humans do. As the summer residents descend upon Webb and Weld with the surety of the daffodils, lilacs, brilliant sunsets, out-of-state plates and tents, we can greet each other with the recognition that we agree on something profoundly important: our love of home.

www.JeanAMillerMariner.com

Draft Horses Among Us

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It's not just physical things that make us different from each other; our temperaments are dissimilar. Like other Belgians, I'm mellow. Dave trusts me and finds me easy to work with. For instance, I don't mind having my feet picked up. When the snow packs up in my feet, it's dangerous.

My tendons can be overstretched and harmed. Every six weeks the Ferrier comes, and all of our shoes get removed, and our hooves get trimmed back. Our feet grow like fingernails. I try to give my all to Dave and let him knock the snow out of my feet without giving him any trouble. I also let him trim my hair in summer because I look better with short hair, and it's nice and cool feeling.

The two Percherons have bigger attitudes, especially Charlie who can

be feisty. He always has to show his authority. It's not unusual for Charlie to bite us. He kicks and finds other ways to keep us in line. But we all like to be together undisturbed. Charlie weighs about 1,800 pounds, so he's no joke. (Every state fair has a scale to weigh horses.)

I can tell when Charlie's feeling on edge because his ears drift backwards. None of us like wind, and we can be very unpredictable and dangerous on a windy day.

Clay is 17 years old and he's the largest of our crew. Dave likes to say he's a good boy, but I notice he really has to get after Clay to do things. He has done well competing in state fairs because he follows Charlie who knows all of the routines. It takes a lot of preparation on Dave's part, working with his horses most days so they're ready to compete. They have to be hard. When a horse is hard, he's muscled up.

Maine has more state fair horse competitions than any other state. Draft horses compete by pulling logs through a course with many twists and turns. There are cones along the route and each cone has a tennis ball on top. They're penalized five points if they touch a cone and ten points if they knock the cone over or when a tennis ball falls off. The course is wide enough for two horses with about one inch on the outside of each horse.

The Common Ground Fair in Unity, Maine is Dave's favorite fair. It lasts three days and I think you'd enjoy yourself. <https://www.unionfair.org/schedule>.

Drivers: Remember, horses have the right of way on the roads. We have to obey rules, too, but if you harass us, you'll be fined big time. No horn blowing, either, and don't call out to us or make noises, especially “Whoa.” It's very disorienting. Thank you.

A Path

by Barbara Hardenbrook

I walked a path so mossy and green
That led to steps just swept clean,
And on I walked to a road so big
That about I turned to find again
The steps so clean and
The path so mossy and green.

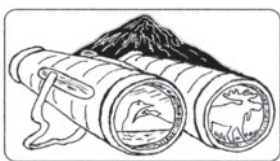
Scared

by Pearl Bennett, Age 10

When I am scared, I am a flea,
compared to the world I am a pea.
Fear comes and steals me from my nest,
I scream and cry for all the rest.
I hope it's a dream, sometimes it's not,
but darkness scares me quite a lot.
Scared is a Tsunami, wrecking my home,
the only place that I have known.
But when I see pages, covers,
stories, they carry my mind away.
They soften my worries, take them away,
to the water's roaring bay.
I take the book and hand in hand we accomplish all the impossible.
With my book and my eyes to look, I'm safe, sound and happy.

Submitted by her grandma, Susan Fesenmaier, from Center Hill. Pearl enjoys Dummer's Beach, the cross-country ski trails, and the skating rink in Weld.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN



The Weld Observer

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Via e-mail: weldrecnews@weld-maine.org

or drop your submission in the Weld business box

in front of the **Weld Town Office** located at **23 Mill Street in Weld.**

Attention: **Weld Recreation Department**