LOCALNEWS

A lesson in nature

Joy sometimes comes with a bit of sorrow

BY LAUREL BEAGER
Editor

"It was an experience," Lee Konen said as she described a recent encounter with a bobcat at her Kabetogama residence.

Konen said last week she went to the door as she does each morning to greet her outdoor mouser cat who then curls around her feet for some affectionate petting.

"I opened the door and no cat," she said. "I didn't see her all day."

As Konen cleaned fresh strawberries at her sink the next day, she saw out her glass door "a head coming across the driveway. I thought 'My cat is coming. Here is my kitty.'"

But when she looked again, the animal was not a black cat. Instead, it was a bobcat. It settled on the freshly shoveled deck at her kid's cabin next door, and eventually made its way to Konen's deer feeder and her rock hill.

She was able to snap some photographs as the bobcat was there for at least three days.

"And I have no cat," she said. "It must have got my kitty."

Her cat's been gone for more than a week, but Konen accepts no condolences. She's sorry her kitty's gone missing, and was likely killed by the bobcat, but it's part of life living in Borderland.

"There are some things you can do something about, and there are some things you can't," she said. "That's Mother Nature."

It's the chance sightings of wildlife, and the great neighbors she has, that has kept her here, she said.

A few years ago, Konen had a cougar around, and seven or eight years ago a baby moose came down the driveway. She's had a fisher living just across the road.

"What more could you ask for?" she said.

Despite Borderland's sometimes harsh conditions, Konen said she is living where she wants to live.

"My kids ask how do you stay up here," she said. "We're tough, we're used to it. I've been up here 32 years now. I'm 72. Lost my other half a number of years ago, but it's home."

In Kab, everybody looks out for each other, she said.

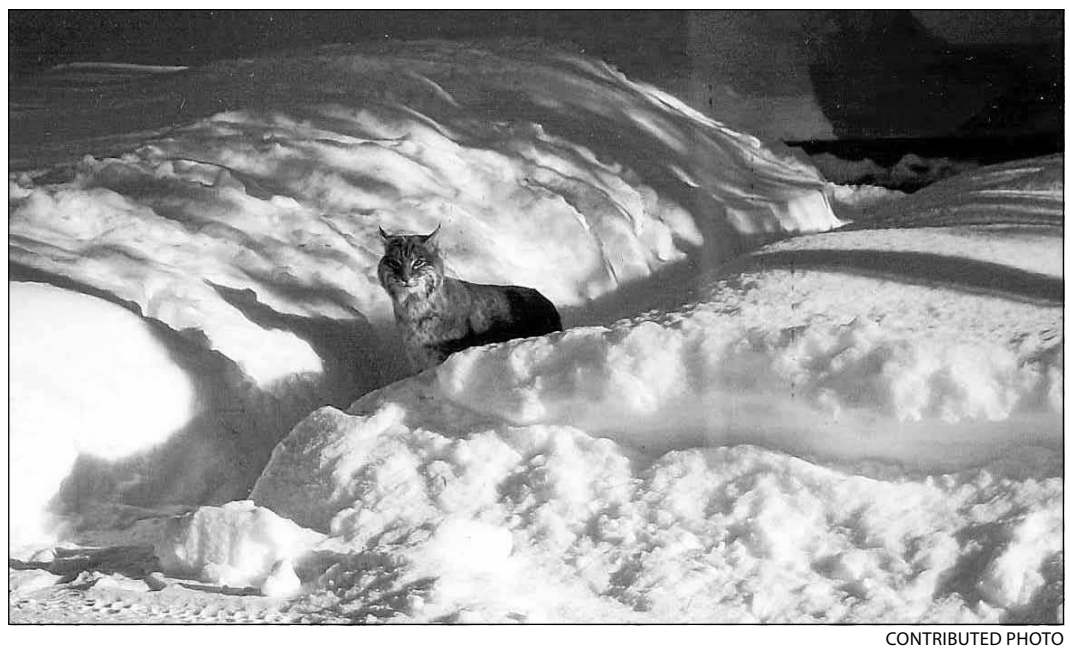
"You don't worry about anything on the lake, but get to the highway and it's a different story," she said.

Meanwhile, Konen said her cat's done a good job for a long time living outdoors to assist in keeping the mouse population down.

"I'm sure he got her first, and then stuck around," she said of the suspected killer.

She's seen bobcat tracks around her yard and around the shed where Konen created a cat bed, complete with a heat lamp to warm her kitty on cold nights.

"My kids said, 'Mom, he's getting warm out there, why don't you take him out a steak.'"



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lee Konen shot this photo of a bobcat at her Kabetogama residence last week. She suspects the wild cat killed her domestic mouser.

FALLS SCHOOL BOARD

Board expected to renew early release program

BY SPENSER BICKETT
Staff Writer

The International Falls School District is expected to approve Monday continuing the practice of "early release" Wednesdays for the 2015-16 school year.

The Falls School Board will meet at 5 p.m. Monday in the cafeteria at Falls High School. Superintendent Kevin Grover said he can't say for sure, but his "hunch" is that he will recommend to the board continuing the early release program on Wednesdays for the next school year.

Kevin Grover

"We don't have the data to see if it's helping with testing, that's just now starting to come in," Grover said. "But we have to include it in the calendar to get it out there for next year."

The program involves students being released early on Wednesdays during the school year in order for teachers to have extra time to get together for discussions, evaluations or training, Grover said.

"We've been able to do a lot of positive things," Grover said. "It's a common time where we can focus on specific things and accomplish different goals."

Even if there were positive test scores available, Grover said it's extremely difficult to prove they would be a result of the early release program.

"Even with having the data, it would be tough to prove the impact," Grover said. "But I'm still going to speak in favor of the things it's allowed us to do."

Grover acknowledged the strain the program puts on parents, and the incovenience it causes them. But, he said, he hasn't fielded many complaints on the issue, though board members could bring up feedback they've gotten from parents.

Also Monday, Grover will update the board on a Minnesota School Board Association training session he recently attended in Bemidji. The session focused on open meeting laws, and he'll share with the board information on the topic, and discuss what he learned, he said.

"We have three new board members who may have questions on open meeting regulations," Grover said. "So we'll discuss the information and let people ask any questions they may have."

Grover, along with school principals Melissa Tate and Tim Everson, will also offer their monthly reports to the board.

Also Monday, the board is expected to:

- Receive a report on a MSBA survey.
- Adopt a resolution directing the administration to post and recommend a candidate for maintenance/transportation director.
- Approve the 2015-16 school calendar.
- Receive a draft copy of the 2015-16 facility plan for adoption in April.
- Accept the resignation due to retirement of Janet Underdahl as an educational support professional.
- Approve the hire of Heather Swanson as a part-time educational support professional.
- Accept the resignation of Kristine Morgan as a part-time educational support professional.
- Approve the hire of Kristine Morgan as a full-time educational support professional.