

Hurry-up, It's Time To Race . . . Turtles.

Even if you didn't grow up in Minnesota lake country, chances are, lake life was a part of your life.

Maybe, each summer, you would pile into the family truckster and make the trek from, say, the Twin Cities to any one of the hundreds of lake communities "Up North."



And you could always tell when you were getting close to this aquatic nirvana. Maybe it was the unmistakable scent of the lakes, or the sudden appearance of towering pine trees. Or, the closer you got, the more wildlife you would see.

Then, once you actually reached the lake, there they were: turtles. Dozens of them, perched on logs and docks or just bobbing nonchalantly near the water's edge. Walleyes might be the king of Minnesota waters, but ask anyone who visited

Minnesota lake country as a kid, and most will tell you that turtles, not the state fish, were the lake creatures of note.

In Longville, turtles have been drawing folks to this quaint lakes community in north-central Minnesota for a half-century – particularly in downtown Longville.



The Longville Turtle Races celebrated their 50-year anniversary in 2017 with another full summer of Wednesday races and an assortment of other attractions that have become a part of this Minnesota tradition that combines family fun and the area's pristine natural resources.

It's such a to-do that, in 1989, the Minnesota Legislature passed a resolution declaring Longville as the Turtle Racing Capitol of the World.

Judy Blundell, activities director for the Longville Chamber of Commerce, which puts on the races, said that more than 500 kids participated on one race day in 2017 and, in all, more than 4,000 kids were involved in the races for the year.

“It’s a huge deal. It’s an event,” Blundell told *Minnesota Traditions*, which embraces events like the turtle races, celebrating the resources that make them part of the Minnesota landscape. (For more, go to www.minnesotatraditions.com)



“There are a number of carnival-type games, too. ... And there’s a food vendor that comes in. And there’s music. ... But the centerpiece is the turtle races themselves.”

And, of course, the turtles. And the kids and families. And don’t forget the “turtle vendors,” who make this tradition even more of a family affair, with an emphasis on caring for these creatures and, ultimately, the resource from which they come.

According to Blundell, a good number of turtles are provided by these “turtle vendors” – “Young people who want to take care of those turtles,” Blundell explained. “They take care of them and bring them (the turtles to the races) all summer. They’re usually teenagers. They collect the turtles from the area lakes. It seems like turtles have been hard to find in recent years.

“And we pay the kids to do it. It’s a big responsibility. And it teaches them a lot of things, too. With the last group of kids, what their parents wanted to do was for the kids to learn responsibility and the business side that’s all involved in keeping the turtles alive. The parents guide them and provide transportation.



“It’s about family.”

Indeed – both on and off Longville’s main street in the summertime, where for the last half-century, turtles reign supreme.

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