

Traveler

Exploring Marinette County's winter waterfalls.

Story and photos by *Tim Sweet*

Most of November 2014 had the Badger State locked in a wintry deep freeze since chunks of the polar vortex had frequently broken loose from the far north and plowed into Wisconsin leaving lots of snow and ice behind (*I've been watching too many weather reports*). The conditions were perfect to head up to Marinette County to search for frozen waterfalls.

My son-in-law and his four-wheel drive truck made it through the slippery back roads and unplowed parking lots with no problem. He had been to many of these out-of-the-way locations during warmer months on trout fishing excursions.

I brought along a copy of Patrick Lisi's book "Wisconsin Waterfalls: a Touring Guide" from our local library. It contains directions and background information about many of the state's most treasured water features; I enjoyed sharing the book's valuable tidbits and factoids from the back seat.

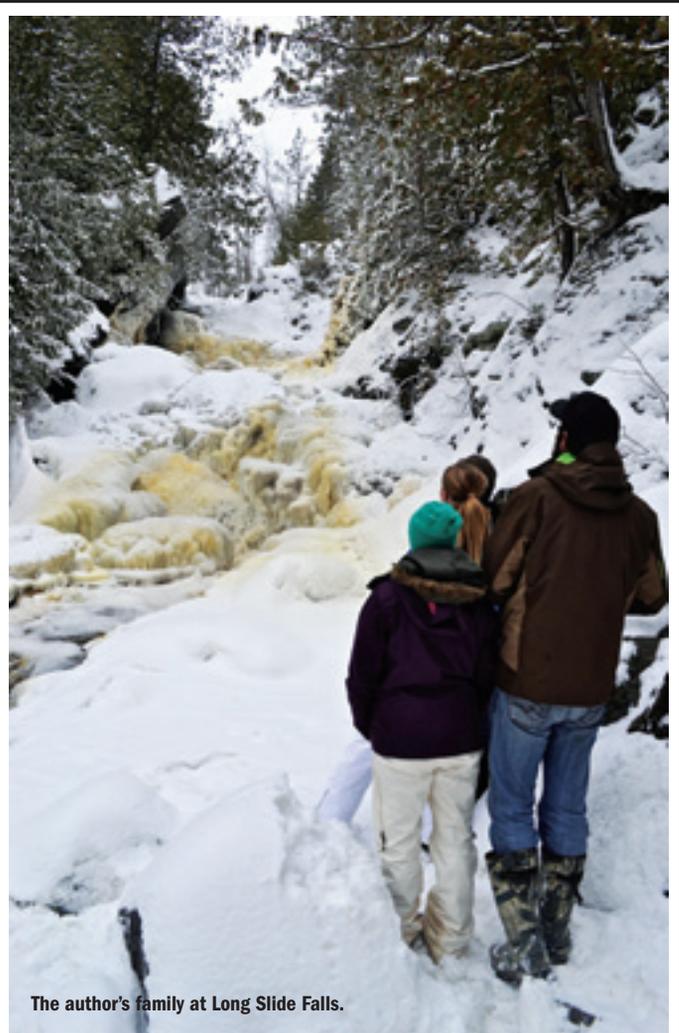
Our first destination was Smalley Falls on the north branch of the Pemebonwon River. It's about five miles north of Pembine on U.S. Highway 8/141. Then follow the signs east on Morgan Park Road about a half-mile to a small parking lot. Once we started down the narrow woodland path, my anticipation built as I read warnings that said, "DANGEROUS OVERLOOK" and "STEEP TRAIL." The smile on my face grew wider when I began hearing the sound of water rushing through the narrow ravine that contained Smalley Falls.

Snow-laced cedars and rock walls coated in hoar frost created a perfect winter scene as the river ducked over and around icy boulders. We all squeezed together for a photo along a rocky ledge decorated with lacy ferns, pillows of moss and colorful lichen. Moments like these were meant to be preserved,

even when it's cold and one's fingers feel like bone-chilling temperatures are nipping them.

Back in the truck, we drove a little farther east on Morgan Park Road to Long Slide Falls. A short hike into the forest led to an incredibly scenic overlook of an enchanting, icing-laced gorge. The falls is about 50 feet high and "slides" through the ancient geologic cleft to where the Pemebonwon continues on its way to the Menominee River.

On the day we visited, no one else was around. The snow and icy crystals clinging to God's handiwork made me feel like we were smack dab in the middle of winter's splendor. I loved it! We carefully made our way down to the bottom of the falls where we admired the thundering water



The author's family at Long Slide Falls.

as the frigid temperatures transformed the liquid state of matter into frozen and frosty delights.

When my kids were little, my wife and I often took them on outings to beautiful places. A frequent comment was, "Gee whiz, Dad, all we do is

drive, walk and take pictures." It seemed like a déjà vu moment as we brushed off our snowy boots and followed the guidebook to Horseshoe Falls, located on the south branch of the Pike River, eight miles southeast of Dunbar.

This beauty spot was far off



Tackling the trail to Smalley Falls on the Pemebonwon River.

What's cooking?

BEER, BRAT AND BUTTERKÄSE MAC

(serves 8)

Stuffed with inventive macaroni and cheese recipes, tips and more, we have the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board to thank for allthingsmacandcheese.com. It's the go-to site for macaroni and cheese aficionados and in this issue, we share a recipe featured on the site that offers comfort food for the cold Wisconsin months.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 yellow onion
- 4 bratwursts
- 24 ounces beer, your favorite variety
- 1 pound elbow pasta
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 4 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1 teaspoon dry powdered mustard
- 1 teaspoon hot sauce, more to taste
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg, freshly grated preferred
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- 2 cups (8 ounces) Wisconsin butterkäse cheese, shredded
- 2 cups (8 ounces) Wisconsin Monterey jack cheese, shredded



SUSAN SENATORI

DIRECTIONS:

Slice onion thinly and place in medium saucepan. Place brats on top of onion. Pour beer over onions and brats and cook covered at low heat for 1 hour. Remove brats from mixture and thinly slice. Reserve 1 cup beer and set aside. (Note: You can also save about 1/4 cup of onions if desired; just chop into small pieces.)

Preheat oven to 350°F. Heat large pot of water for macaroni. Meanwhile, brown brat slices in skillet over medium-high heat. Once browned, remove from pan and set aside. Add macaroni to boiling water and cook until al dente. Drain.

While macaroni is cooking, add butter to saucepan and cook over medium heat. Once butter is melted, whisk in flour and cook 1 to 2 minutes. Add reserved beer, milk, mustard, hot sauce, nutmeg, salt and pepper. Whisk this mixture until flour is blended in, and then cook for roughly 5 to 6 minutes, until the mixture starts to thicken a bit.

Once the mixture starts to thicken, add in brats and onions (if using), then cheese. Reduce heat to low and continue to stir until cheese has melted.

Combine pasta with cheese mixture and pour into lightly buttered baking dish (2-quart round or 9x9-inch dish). Bake 20 minutes. Cool 3 to 5 minutes before serving.

Recipe by Brew Crew Ball and shared on allthingsmacandcheese.com.

the beaten track. See Lisi's book for directional details, and be sure to have a four-wheel drive vehicle if coming in winter. From the parking lot, the hike down to Horseshoe Falls takes you through a wonderfully secluded forest. The falls itself drops and makes a sharp turn in the Pike River, then tumbles on through the quiet northwoods.

From there we meandered along Trout Haven Road to Twelve Foot Falls Road until we arrived at Twelve Foot Falls County Park. Numerous falls are lined up and down this stretch of the south branch of the Pike River. A hike around a still pool, over a footbridge and around a rocky outcropping brought us to an up close and personal view of the very athletic waters roaring through Twelve Foot Falls.

Dave's Falls County Park was our last destination of the daylong journey. It is easily accessible from the west side of Highway 141 just south of Amberg. The lovely park has the Pike River coursing through it creating two cascades: one is upstream along a trail past a foot bridge, while

Dave's Falls crashes through a dark, rocky gorge further downstream. From above, we observed a fresh otter slide in the snow next to the falls. Snow- and ice-covered rocks create additional hazards to hikers. Please remember to use caution and good judgment when visiting these special places at any time of the year.

Darkness was beginning to descend when we made it back to the truck. It had been a wonderful day that flowed from one beautiful river to the next. Precious family memories were created and preserved, hopefully, for many years to come. I'm already looking forward to the next chance to explore more of Wisconsin's winter waterfalls.

And hey, how about you? If you are physically able, now might be your best chance to get out there, too.

Visit therealnorth.com/ and click on the "Waterfalls" link for more information. Also, stop at the nearest library and check out a copy of "Wisconsin Waterfalls: a Touring Guide" by Patrick Lisi.



Tim Sweet writes from his home in Clintonville.



Dave's Falls crashes through the rocky gorge to the Pike River.



The author and his family reach Smalley Falls thanks to some guidance from "Wisconsin Waterfalls: a Touring Guide."