

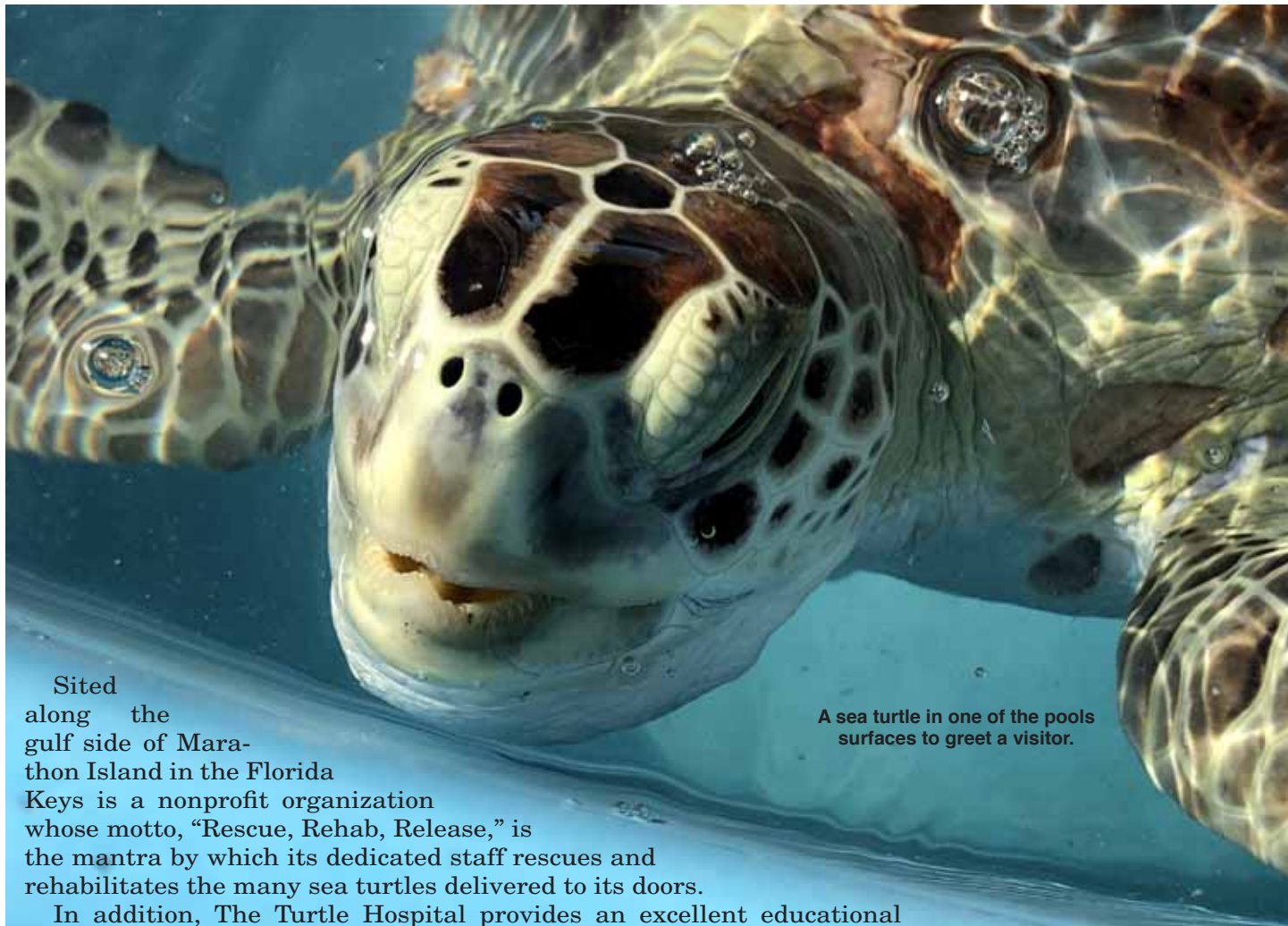


Volume 37, Number 9 Thursday, March 11, 2021

Rescue, Rehab, Release

by Linda Weigel

“An understanding of the natural world and what’s in it is a source of not only a great curiosity but great fulfilment.” Sir David Attenborough



Sited along the gulf side of Marathon Island in the Florida Keys is a nonprofit organization whose motto, “Rescue, Rehab, Release,” is the mantra by which its dedicated staff rescues and rehabilitates the many sea turtles delivered to its doors.

In addition, The Turtle Hospital provides an excellent educational program highlighting species of turtles and environmental dangers that threaten their very existence.

Richie Moretti founded the facility in 1986 at the site of the former Hidden Harbor Motel. It is the only state-certified veterinary hospital of its kind, one that includes state-of-the-art rehabilitation for injured turtles. Many of these sea turtles will be released back to the ocean. Others become permanent residents due to severe injuries requiring a lifelong commitment of care and feeding.

A sea turtle in one of the pools surfaces to greet a visitor.

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**It's Time
To Spring Ahead**

Sunday, March 14th

Rescue, Rehab, Release

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For someone who as a youngster stood on the shores of Lake Michigan dreaming about oceans and the creatures that inhabit it, this wonderful facility represents the culmination of that curiosity. After registering online to visit The Turtle Hospital, you arrive at the main entrance to check in, fill out a form and await to tour the facility with a seasoned guide. The excitement builds with the fine educational presentation, including information about the species of turtles found in Florida waters, their food, habits and environmental challenges.

Next, you pass by the operating theater and X-ray facility where patients suffering from disease, boat or fishing-line injuries or ingested trash or plastics will be served. The most common surgery is the removal of Fibropapilloma tumors, which affect more than half the green sea turtles in the Florida Keys.

The Turtle Hospital and Sea Turtle Center
in the Florida Keys

Once you exit the building, you make your way to the Gulf side (back) of the property. There, recovering turtles and permanent residents are kept in small- to medium-sized holding tanks or pools, where they can be fed and carefully monitored until strong enough and healthy enough for release. The large 100,000-gallon saltwater pool provides space for easy swimming and gaining additional strength. Sadly, some of the patients do become permanent

residents when their injuries are too severe. Madea, for example, is a non-releasable loggerhead, adult female weighing about 200 pounds. She suffered a boat strike that damaged her spine, making her unable to dive on her own. Fitted with weights to assist her in diving, they are not permanent as the scales (scutes) on her back will grow and eventually shed off, taking anything attached as well.

"The sea, once it cast its spell, holds one in its net of wonder forever." Jacques Yves Cousteau

There are seven species of turtles worldwide, five of which live in waters off the coast of Florida: Green, Kemp's Ridley, Loggerhead, Leatherback and Hawksbill. All sea turtles are classified as reptiles, are cold-blooded, breathe air, lay eggs and have been around in one form or another for more than 150 million years. They have survived the extinction of the dinosaurs and been abundant until the past several decades due to human interruptions and interactions having decreased their populations.

Greens

The majority of the patient population at The Turtle Hospital consists of green sea turtles. It takes a single green two to four decades to mature to a full grown adult, eventually weighing as much as 500 pounds.

Interestingly, although brown on the outside, they are green on the inside due to their vegetarian diet of seagrasses and algae, and it's that green diet that turns their fat a vibrant green. In the wild, they eat sea grasses, algae and some sea food. At the hospital, they enjoy green peppers, cucumbers and romaine lettuce.

Now, unfortunately, they are an endangered species in the Florida Keys. Previously, they had been hunted for food and were considered delicious (turtle soup) with the many established canning factories, helping to decrease the population. Luckily, that is



no longer the case as the Endangered Species Act of 1973 prevented the taking of sea turtles from the wild for commercial purposes.

Loggerhead

Loggerhead turtles have large heads about twice the size and twice the width of a green sea turtle's head.

During the course of the educational presentation, our volunteer, Tammy, told the amusing story of how they got their name. Years ago when popping up alongside sailing ships, the sailors would ask, "Is that a log ahead? Loggerhead! That's how the turtle got its name, a true story!" Toward the middle of the turtle's head is a small area (about the size of a grape) — the location of its brain. In the back of the skull is a larger area composed of muscle mass that helps provide powerful jaw muscles and a bite force of more than 900 pounds per square inch (equivalent to an adult male tiger and almost as high as a great white shark). That powerful bite allows them to eat their favorite hard-shelled foods such as crabs, lobsters and the Florida conch.



The Turtle Hospital's operating theater.

Hawksbill

Hawksbill turtles have a sharp, pointy beak that enables it to tear apart soft coral sponges to reach the tasty little bits inside. They have beautiful shells and are the only species of sea turtles to have overlapping scutes. Scutes are the individual scales on the shell, and as the turtle grows, they flake away and molt off. Unfortunately, it is their beautiful shells that have put this species on the endangered list. Jewelry, combs and other items have been made from their shells, and it is now illegal to own such items. They can no longer be imported to the U.S.

Kemp's Ridley

The Kemp's Ridley turtle is the smallest of the

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Rescue, Rehab, Release Continued from Page 3

species, the most critically endangered and the rarest to be found in the wild. It spends most of its adult life at the bottom of the Gulf Stream and on average can weigh up to 100 pounds. Their lifespan can reach up to 30, possibly 50 years.



Two young Kemp's Ridley turtles on their way for intubation.

A major factor in their endangerment is their nesting behavior. All species of sea turtles return to their native beaches to lay their eggs, returning only to the beach they were hatched on and that beach only. Interestingly, unlike other sea turtles that come ashore to nest one at a time, and generally under darkness, Kemp's Ridley turtles come out of the water at the same time in the middle of the day, in one big group, and place their nests together. For a long time, there was only one beach where these turtles would nest along the gulf shores near Rancho Nuevo, Mexico. However, once the nesting female population drastically dwindled, researchers intervened and removed turtle eggs, taking them to Padre Island National Seashore, Texas, a protected area, to establish a second native beach. Now, decades later, Kemp's Ridley turtles are returning to the Texas beach they recognize as their hatching site.

Leatherback

Leatherback sea turtles are the largest of the species and, in fact, one of the biggest reptiles on the planet. They can grow as large as 8 feet in length and weigh up to 2,000 pounds. Additionally, this species is the oldest of all current sea turtles.

Unlike other turtle species, they don't have a carapace (shell) with hard scales (scutes). Instead, they have a smooth leathery skin covering a flexible bone structure, enabling them to dive deep to ocean depths up to about 4,000 feet without being crushed



Victor, a juvenile leatherback.

by the pressure. A harder shell would crack with the weight of all that water.

Pictured here is Victor, a juvenile leatherback sea turtle brought to Turtle Hospital on Dec. 5, the first of its kind admitted there for care. You might note his attachment to a special swivel tether meant to help prevent him from hitting the sides or bottom of the tank, as leatherback skin is highly sensitive. Here also, you see general manager Bette Zirkelbach attempting to feed him. Victor may eventually grow as large as 2,000 pounds, living his life somewhere deep mid-ocean. Leatherbacks have a specialized diet, and they enjoy jellyfish.

Happily, Victor was released into the ocean Jan. 21 with the help of Capt. Jack Carlson, who located a spot in the Gulf Stream with plenty of jellyfish.



The facility's special tanks for recovering sea turtles.

“Only we humans make waste that nature can’t digest.” Charles Moore, Marine Researcher

The human impact on sea turtles is significant, especially concerning human litter and garbage floating in ocean waters.

Sea turtles like to eat jellyfish. However, they cannot discern plastic grocery bags or a released balloon from their prized favorite food, which leads to an impaction inside the patient’s stomach or intestines, thus making the turtle unable to pass the trash through its system.

Entanglements also are dangerous for sea turtles, as they need to breathe air to survive. If caught up in a crab-trap rope, buoy line or any other kind of obstruction, they can become trapped underwater, unable to breathe and drown. Additionally, monofilament fishing line can do severe damage by wrapping around its flippers, throat or neck, tightening until it cuts into its skin. If not removed in time, the



Do sea turtles have fingernails?

Yes they do. Although a sea turtle’s flippers seem like strange appendages, they contain five finger or toe bones just like most other vertebrate animals. Two of these digits have protruding nails (claws). The large scutes that cover a sea turtle’s carapace are unique to each species. This loggerhead sea turtle has five lateral scutes, one more than a green turtle or hawksbill.

result might require amputation of a flipper.

To help turtles with impactions (intestinal blockages), the staff uses a special oil similar to vegetable oil, making things a bit slippery. Next, the turtle receives a little fiber assistance: Metamucil, which encourages the turtle to poop and release the impaction. Gas also can present a problem. Too much gas is alarming because it causes the turtle to float, which is dangerous in the wild. Turtles must be able to dive to reach the seagrass bed to eat and rest, and where they can remain for several hours without coming up for air. If floating and unable to dive, a sea turtle may become susceptible to predators,

boats and boat strikes. A good gas relief medicine works wonders.

Water pollution has had a hand in the increased number of sea turtles suffering from the Fibropapilloma virus. If you ask where this virus is most

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Rescue, Rehab, Release Continued from Page 5

prominent, the answer is in and around developed islands – wherever there is human habitation with disturbance of the natural ecosystem. With no cure as of yet, these viral, often severe tumors can cover extensive portions of the animal's body, hindering their ability to function successfully out in the wild and severely compromising their immune system.

Foxy Charley suffered from Fibropapilloma and arrived at The Turtle Hospital with tumors on her rear flipper and small tumors everywhere else. After a number of successful surgeries, she was safely released back into the ocean Feb. 7 and fitted with a satellite tag.



Chomper, who has a tumor.

Pictured here is Chomper before surgery to remove her Fibropapilloma tumors. Sadly, she did not survive her infections because her immune system was just not strong enough. Not all sea turtles, despite the heroic efforts of rehabilitation staff, survive, which is difficult for everyone.

The incredibly dedicated staff at The Turtle Hospital is on call 24/7, with some living on site, thus enabling them to attend to turtle patients overnight. All the wound care, medications, physical therapy, fluids and time spent keeping the tanks and systems clean requires a deep commitment. The hospital also has its own ambulance ready at a moment's notice to assist in transportation.

□

At the end of November 2020, The Turtle Hospital received 40 critically endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtles. Since then, several have been released a few at a time. In fact, 15 were released back into the ocean near St. Augustine, Fla., on Feb. 13. These turtles had been cold-stunned off the eastern coast and received a broad spectrum of antibiotics, wound care, vitamins and special breathing therapy. Kemp's are the most critically endangered and rare

est of all the sea turtles, and such weather changes can be life-threatening.

Kemp's turtles like to follow the warm Gulf currents north towards New England in the summer for feeding. However, when cold water moves in too quickly, their instinct directs them to seek shallower water. The area of Cape Cod that hooks is where they headed. However, the turtles got trapped by the shape of the land and wound up cold-stunned, a condition similar to hyperthermia in humans. The turtles arrived at Turtle Hospital requiring treatment for fungal pneumonia. They also needed wound care because, while stunned, they were blown around onto rocky beaches resulting in external wounds. The Turtle Hospital received these endangered patients through teams of volunteer pilots that flew them directly to Marathon Island.

Likewise, sudden weather changes such as the massive January winter storm to hit Texas and Louisiana can endanger the lives of these animals. You may have recently read about dozens of volunteers rescuing thousands of sea turtles along the Texas coastline, providing a temporary haven until they could be safely returned to the Gulf. In fact, this recent cold-stunning event was the largest ever for that state.

□

These animals have been around for millions of years, surviving innumerable cataclysmic events. You have to ask yourself, if they are endangered

now, how does that inform us as humans about the safety of our water, about our very survival.

My visit to The Turtle Hospital brought me in contact with one of the most magnificent of ocean creatures, the sea turtle, fostering an even greater respect for the dedicated/passionate/committed staff there. I'd like to especially thank Zirkelbach for her assistance and Tammy for a wonderful educational presentation.

The Turtle Hospital can be visited online at www.turtlehospital.org and on Facebook, where you can view many of their fine videos, including those featuring turtle releases and fun information about individual turtles.

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LCSO to Close Conductor Search With Beethoven Celebration

LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra will bring its "Brave, Maestro!" series to a close with final music director candidate Wilbur Lin at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 14, at LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St.

Part of the symphony's 48th season, the concert marks a celebration of Beethoven's belated 250th birthday and features the composer's "Symphony No. 7," as well as Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." A limited number of tickets will be sold to the public. Masks are required.

Since 2019, Lin has served as assistant conductor for the Cincinnati Symphony, and is a graduate of Riccardo Muti's Italian Opera Academy. He is a Doctor of Music graduate from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and a two-time recipient of the Mortimer Furber Prize for Conducting at the Royal Northern College of Music. He is the founder

of the Chamber Philharmonic Taipei, which began as a student orchestra and is now a professional chamber orchestra.



Lin



Scheck

Lin studied under Muti and other well-known conductors and directors. He has conducted orchestras such as the MAV Symphony in Budapest, the Taiwan Symphony, the *Orquesta de Cadaqués* in Spain and the Missouri Symphony.

LaPorte resident Carey Scheck is the piano soloist on "Rhapsody in Blue." She is a graduate of

Valparaiso University and Western Illinois University with degrees in piano performance, and is a music teacher in LaPorte Community School Corp.

Tickets, which are \$20 for adults and \$18 for seniors, are available at www.lcso.net, Roxy Music, 1012 Lincolnway, and the Civic. Tickets also may be purchased at the door. Doors open at 2 p.m.

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“With a Youthful Spirit” Next School of American Music Family Concert

“With a Youthful Spirit,” an afternoon of chamber music presented by The School of American Music, is at 3 p.m. EDT Sunday, March 14, at Converge Community Church, 601 W. Buffalo St., New Buffalo, Mich.

COVID-19 protocols will be observed. Those who cannot attend can watch the concert live as a SAM Facebook Live stream.

Philip Bauman, SAM programming chair and concert organizer, has dedicated the day to young first-chair musicians in the Northwest Indiana Symphony Youth Orchestra, where he has served as conductor for 19 years. A special performance by the symphony’s woodwind quintet is planned, featuring selections for string quartet, flute, harp and woodwind quintet.

Selections include:

- Music by Handel from the “Water Music,” Mozart and Smetana, presented by the Prima String Quartet, featuring Tiffany Chou and Adam Garrido on violins, Libby Gibson on viola and Claire Gould on cello.
- “Entr’acte” by Jacques Ibert, “Sicilienne Opus 78” by Gabriel Fauré and “Sonatine No. 2” by F.J. Nadermann presented by La Belle Voca, featuring Yara Hijaz on flute and Grace Wells on harp.
- “Joplin Rags” (“The Entertainer,” “Cascades or



Pictured are members of the Prima String Quartet from the Northwest Indiana Symphony Youth Orchestra. The back row is Tiffany Chou (left) and Adam Garrido. The front row is Claire Gould (left) and Libby Gibson.

Maple Leaf”), Denis Agay’s “5 Easy Dances” and maybe some Gershwin presented by the woodwind quintet featuring Dan D’Andrea on bassoon, Jennet Ingle on oboe, Cindy Fudala on flute, Trevor O’Rardin on clarinet and John Schreckengost on French horn.

The concert series is supported by a grant from the Pokagon Fund, donations to SAM and Converge Church and its tech team. Tickets are free, but space is limited. Donations are welcome.

Reserve seats at www.schoolofamericanmusic.com.

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Hello! My name is Kelly Ryan Gaussein and I am so excited to be working with @properties and Micky Gallas Group in Long Beach, Indiana. My goal is to help you find your dream home and to ultimately have you “love where you live!” Whether you are searching for the perfect summer getaway, new home or investment property, I am committed to advocate for you by offering the highest standards of professional service in the industry, which you expect and deserve.

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Northwest Indiana has always held a special place in my heart as I have been a part of the Long Beach community since 1983. I live here full time with my husband and 5 children and we “love where we live!” My knowledge of the area and surrounding communities is personal. I am a great resource now, and in the future, for all you need to know about schools, restaurants, the arts, handymen and current community happenings. It would be a privilege to work with you and I welcome any inquiries, connections or referrals!

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Stick With Unfocused “Billie Holiday” for Andra Day’s Performance

by Andrew Tallackson



Andra Day stars as the titular jazz great in “The United States vs. Billie Holiday,” now streaming on Hulu.

Andra Day is flat-out sensational in “The United States Vs. Billie Holiday,” the singer’s first major film role, no less. Like Angela Bassett as Tina Turner in “What’s Love Got to Do With It?,” we feel like we’ve met the real thing, not a carefully crafted impersonation.

A shame, then, the movie isn’t as fearless or focused. Based on Johann Hari’s Chasing the Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs, director Lee Daniels (“Precious,” “The Butler”) aims to reconcile Holiday’s true story over the glossier, Hollywood take of Diana Ross’ “Lady Sings the Blues” (1972). And it does, but it’s also terribly unfocused. Rambling and jumbled, when it should have knocked us off our feet. What recommends it is Day, who just won a Golden Globe for the performance.

What the movie, now streaming on Hulu, reveals is how the U.S. government, in racializing the war on drugs in the 1940s, targeted Holiday because of her heroin use. It was just a smokescreen, though. With the Civil Rights movement heating up, the intention was to get Holiday to stop performing “Strange Fruit,” which protested the lynching of blacks. The song was viewed as a potential catalyst for Civil Rights protests.

The government’s tactics, in essence, were the earliest examples of poisonous cancel culture. And when we meet Holiday in the film, it is clear she understands the impact “Strange Fruit” has, and why she hesitates, despite public demand, to perform it. And when a husband and wife arrive backstage af-



“The United States vs. Billie Holiday”

Running time: 131 minutes. Hulu. Rated R for nudity, sexual content, language throughout and some violence.

ter a performance, hoping to meet her, we see how entirely Day has transformed herself. You sense greatness. A talent aware of her talent, always in motion, existing almost on another plane entirely, but grounded just enough to accept a gesture of praise from fans.

Daniels, as director, asks a lot of Day. Not just that she recreate the jazz great’s raspy, smoky vocals, but that she channel a considerable amount of bravery. The movie does not shy away from Holiday’s heroin use, and we frequently see Holiday in various stages of undress, in some cases fully nude. The actress, however, is ferocious, never showing any hesitation. As Holiday, she is unstoppable.

The film’s first hour introduces Garrett Hedlund as Harry Anslinger, who led the U.S. Treasury Department’s Federal Bureau of Narcotics, and the exceptional Trevante Rhodes (“Moonlight,” “Bird Box”) as Jimmy Fletcher, the black FBI agent assigned to track Holiday. Also highlighted is her longstanding dalliance with actress Tallulah Bankhead (Natasha Lyonne).

Scene after scene, Daniels reveals the FBI tightening its grip, attending performances to prevent her from slipping into “Strange Fruit.” All, of course, lead-



The film shows Holiday (Andra Day) being arrested for heroin use at the height of her career.

ing up to the singer's imprisonment for heroin use. Up until this point, "The United States Vs. Billie Holiday" is like watching hard-hitting journalism. Then, it loses its focus. Tries to cover too much territory. By trumping the conventional take of "Lady Sings the Blues," it embraces those very clichés, over and over again, during the second act. It dwells endlessly on her drug use, her embattled relationships with men. Yes, this territory needed to be covered, but more economically, with a handful of scenes that succinctly make their point. By stretching the running time to 2 hours 11 minutes, the main thrust of the film gets lost. Maybe editor Jay Rabinowitz should have scaled the movie back by about 20 minutes. Trim the fat, so to speak, so the meat of the story doesn't get lost.

Daniels also makes a few stylistic choices that do not work. Like shifting from color to black and white, as if that will add authenticity to the images. Most disappointing is how he stages "Strange Fruit" in its entirety. I would have liked to see a recreation of her first public performance of it. How the crowd reacted. Connected to its powerful message. Instead, Daniels films it as a fantasy sequence in which she sings it in an empty music hall. Is he trying to suggest the only way Holiday could perform it untethered is this way? Or for the viewer to focus solely on the words alone? Day sings the hell out of the song, but again, I'm not sure how Daniels films it was the most effective way to go.

I'm giving the "The United States vs. Billie Holiday" a mild recommendation. It deserves to be seen for Day alone, even if the movie, itself, lets her down. Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com

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Little by Little, “The Mauritanian” Grows in Power

by Andrew Tallackson



Defense attorney Nancy Hollander (Jodie Foster) meets with her client, Mohamedou Ould Salahi (Tahar Rahim), at the Guantánamo Bay detention camp in “The Mauritanian.”

In many ways, “The Mauritanian” is a routine, TVish legal thriller where opposing forces descend on an impossible case. In fact, substitute Matthew McConaughey for Jodie Foster and Samuel L. Jackson for Tahar Rahim...and you have a solid, if square John Grisham timekiller.

Consider, though, that the film explores the period right after 9/11, specifically American desire for swift retribution, and we have a more complicated tale. Its argument? That after the Twin Towers fell, the U.S. government cared only that it identified suspects who “looked the part,” affording Americans the instant closure they desired. Layer into the fold moving performances, including Foster in a surprise Golden Globe win for Best Supporting Actress, and you have powerhouse entertainment.

Directed by Kevin Macdonald (“The Last King of Scotland,” “State of Play”), the movie is based on the 2015 memoir *Guantánamo Diary* by Mohamedou Ould Salahi and is available through View on Demand. Salahi was a Mauritanian detained on no charges for 14 years — from 2002 to 2016 — at Guantánamo Bay’s detention camp, accused of having assembled key players in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Salahi (Rahim) is assigned a defense attorney, Nancy Hollander (Foster), and her associate Teri Duncan (Shailene Woodley), and it’s their job to piece through all the legal roadblocks, particularly mountains of paperwork, all of it redacted.

Hollander may be a real person, but she is introduced as a flimsy cliché: the legal ace savvy enough to know when a case is a lost cause, but roped in by

★ ★ ★ 1/2

“The Mauritanian”

Running time: 129 minutes. View on Demand.

Rated R violence, including a sexual assault, and language

her boss to take it regardless. Will this case melt her cynical heart? Are there stars in the sky?

The military prosecutor is Lt. Col. Stuart Couch, who lost a good friend in one of the planes that crashed into the Twin Towers. He’s played by Benedict Cumberbatch in a performance that takes some getting used to. This is not the “Sherlock” star’s first American accent. He’s mastered them quite well, thank you, in everything from “Doctor Strange” to “Osage, August County.” But here, he sounds like Deputy Dawg, so there is an initial disconnect. To his credit, he settles nicely into the role, underplaying it, but with conviction. And thankfully, Couch is smart enough to realize he may not have a case.

Rahim is a revelation. A French actor of Algerian descent, Salahi is a blazing example of unblemished faith. Rahim treats him as morally ambiguous at the start. We can’t figure Salahi out. He has a smirk on his face, like he’s in on a joke no one gets. But as the film carefully delves into Salahi’s experiences in the detention camp, we understand him. Specifically, the horrific torture. As an actor, Rahim may be a prime example of suffering for your art. What Salahi experiences is beyond belief, yet these practices to extract information, as we now know, were commonplace.

Seeing Foster (“The Silence of the Lambs”) back in



Benedict Cumberbatch stars as Lt. Col. Stuart Couch.

power mode, we realize how much we've missed her. The actress knows how to convey strength by exuding it. It seeps out of her pores. Foster knows how to drive the emotion of a scene without exploiting it. Is it worthy of an Oscar, now that she's secured a Golden Globe for the performance? I'm on the fence. For my money, Olivia Colman's heartbreaking work in "The Father" was among the year's best. Having said that, Foster provides one of the film's most affecting moments: a quiet exchange of understanding and grace as she arrives in Salahi's cell, not because she has new information, but because she doesn't want him to be alone.

Soon after that scene is Salahi's final testimony, delivered from Guantanamo Bay by satellite uplink. It may be the most humbling moment of "The Mauritanian": a speech that could have been just that, a speech, but through Rahim is a heartbreaking plea for tolerance, acceptance and, most importantly, forgiveness.

I was not familiar with Salahi's story. I am grateful to "The Mauritanian" for telling it, and telling it well. Exceptionally so.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com

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Not a Billie Eilish Fan? Her New Apple+ Documentary Could Change That

by Andrew Tallackson

The first time Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy" played on my car stereo, I was hooked...but cautiously so. You couldn't get that pulsating club groove out of your head, but could the girl actually sing? Or, was this a case of someone overproducing the vocals to cover up for a smidgen of talent?

"Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry," a new documentary on Apple TV+, not only proved me wrong, but made me a fan. Admiring what she and her brother, Finneas, have achieved. And, willing to cut her some slack. Her music may reach millions, but at the end of the day, she's still a girl, a typically angsty one, wishing the boy she likes would call her back.

Directed by R.J. Cutler — the guy behind compelling documentaries like "The War Room" and "The September Issue" — the film begins with the success of Eilish's 2015 single "Ocean Eyes," then as she begins touring and working on her 2019 debut studio album, "When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?" Much of it includes home footage shot by her mother, Maggie, a former actress who home-schooled her two children.

What we admire first and foremost about the young performer is her extraordinary relationship with Finneas, her brother and biggest fan. How rare is it to see siblings depicted on film who are *not* plagued by jealousy, or constantly at each other's throats. He is her biggest fan: instrumental in carving out her career, and thrilled by every inch of success that comes her way. Willing to step back from the limelight so the adoration heads her way, not his. Creatively, the two are in complete sync. They get each other, feed off each other's creative juices. There is a seamless flow to how their music emerges, and we get a lot of that in the film: scenes that delve into the early origins of a song, and how it emerges as what we hear on the radio. We come away from "The World's a Little Blurry" admiring Finneas for his intuitive producing skills as equally as Billie's uncanny ability to get her vision across to her fans.

And by seeing how those fans react at concerts, many of them girls reduced to tears, there is something to be said about a young female performer whose words resonate among those her own age, that help place their lives into a context that makes sense of it all. You can dismiss Eilish's music as angst-driven drivel, but to these girls, they're clearly affected by it.

The movie does delve into the personal side of Eilish's meteoric success, with many moments devoted to life at home, with her family. Probably the most telling moment is the one in which her mother ex-



Billie Eilish granted full access to filmmakers in "The World's a Little Blurry," now on Apple TV+. Below, she's pictured with her brother, Finneas, at the Grammys.



★ ★ ★

"Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry"

Running time: 140 minutes. Apple TV+. Rated R for language throughout and brief nude sketches

presses concern that some of the new music is not accessible enough to a larger audience. In other words, too dark for the mainstream. The conversation starts between Maggie and Finneas, with Billie arriving midway through, concerned they're talking about her. And when Maggie reiterates her concerns, Billie replies that she can't write about "happy" things if she never feels happy.

Cutler, strangely enough, misses an opportunity here, specifically to have Eilish open up more about herself. The movie hints at battles with depression, and in several scenes, we see her amid panic attacks and major tics caused by Tourette syndrome. But for the most part, her life appears a charmed one, with loving parents and a supportive brother. Is the depression beyond her control, or something else? For a movie that prides itself on transparency, having Eilish open up about her struggles could have put a face for countless others on the struggles with depression.

Then again, the point of "The World's a Little Blurry" may be that music *is* her salvation: the only true form of expressing herself. That the answers can be found in her songs, as so many performers have done before her.

And as we watch her, constantly checking her phone for texts or calls from a boy she likes, almost always disappointed, we are reminded, again, that for the old soul buried within her, she is a child, with all the quirks and flaws that come with it, trying to discover her place in the world.

And for that, we walk away from "The World's a Little Blurry" enlightened, a little in awe of how Billie, and her brother, beat the odds to earn their rightful place in the recording industry.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



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Wonderful Actresses Can't Save Dreary “Ammonite”

by Andrew Tallackson



Kate Winslet (left) and Saoirse Ronan star in “Ammonite,” now available on VOD

Kate Winslet is a source of contention in my house.

I'm a fan. The way she disappears into a character, dialing down her natural beauty. How she masters a new accent to flawless effect.

My wife is less analytic, stating simply, “I'm tired of seeing her boobs in every movie.”

Yes, the “Titanic” star's comfort level with on-screen nudity suggests a near supernatural ease with which she sheds clothes for a role. “Ammonite,” her latest, is no exception, a third act sex scene giving late-night Cinemax a run for its money.

My issue with the film — what-if speculation about British paleontologist Mary Anning (Winslet) and future British geologist Charlotte Murchison (Saoirse Ronan) — is how muted and dreary it is. The drab tone may be designed to mimic the emptiness at the core of these two women, but as a movie, it's awfully slow going.

Available through View on Demand, the story never indicates when exactly it unfolds, but we suspect it is later in life for Mary, which likely places it in the late 1830s-1840s, and along the shores of Dorset County in Southwest England. Her renown as a fossil collector, with works in British museums, is long gone. Now, she treads through a lonesome existence: Biding her time in near silence, working in the gift shop run by her mother (Gemma Jones) and combing the beaches for interesting finds.

Unexpectedly, geologist Roderick Murchison (James McArdle) arrives with his forlorn wife, Charlotte. He is enamoured by Mary's acclaimed reputation, wishing to spend a day with her. Char-

★ ★ 1/2

“Ammonite”

Running time: 120 minutes. View on Demand. Rated R for graphic sexuality, some graphic nudity and brief language.

lotte, in turn, mourns the couple's inability to have children, suffering what doctors describe as “melancholy.” When Roderick takes off for his latest exploration, he leaves an ailing Charlotte in Mary's care.

The early passages of “Ammonite” contain next to no dialogue, with director Francis Lee instead choosing to visually emphasize Mary's hollow existence. The approach works...at first. The lulling sounds of waves crashing along the shoreline, gulls wailing their sad songs. The effect is gorgeous. And there is Winslet, as Mary, utterly absorbed by disappearing into this woman. Her hair graying, unkempt. Her knuckles cracked and raw from combing the ocean's deposits along the shore.

A little of that, however, goes a long way, to where the pace is downright sleepy. And random. A scene where Mary hikes her dress and urinates at the beach — in real time, for the entire duration of the beach pee — belabors the point that she is a slave to her work. And with Charlotte seated at the beach, staring off into the horizon, “Ammonite” is one notch away from existing as a cinematic sleep-aid.

Then, Charlotte comes out of her funk...and the movie flickers to life. Ronan (“Brooklyn,” 2019's wonderful “Little Women” update) is one of today's more exciting actresses. When a character of hers is happy, you can feel it. A zest for life, and that's



The first half of "Ammonite" is so sleepy, it threatens to lose all grip on its viewers.

what we get here. Ronan brings Charlotte alive. Her smile. Her burst of energy. Her admiration for Mary's contributions to the male-dominated arena of archeology.

And by consuming scenes with star power, Ronan lures the best out of Winslet, who brings Mary from her protective shell with the subtlest of gestures. A smile. Arms wide open for an embrace. The spark between these two is real. Palpable. Especially for a period when a woman's place was by her husband's side. Then, the closing scenes emerge, and "Ammonite" slips back into the tonal funk that defined it at the start, the final shot intentionally ambiguous.

In doing a little research after seeing the film, its historical accuracy apparently is subject to debate. Two of Mary's surviving relatives are at conflict as to whether or not she was a lesbian.

Ultimately, though, that is not the issue. The problem is that Lee, as the writer and director, has no urgency in telling his story. Basically, he gave us two intriguing women in a movie that can't make us care about them.

Contact Andrew Tallackson at drew@thebeacher.com



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LCSO in the Spotlight



Jeff and Beth Oeseburg.

Editor's note — This weekly spotlight, provided by Tim King, LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra executive director, highlights its talented musicians.

Jeff Oeseburg, who joined the LCSO in 2016, began playing cello in the fifth grade through the Jenison, Mich., public schools string program. He earned his bachelor's degree in music from Western Michigan University in 1997.

Today, he is a social worker at Lakeland Hospital-St. Joseph, Mich. His interests include hiking, camping, baking, working on cars and watching YouTube video journalists. He is married to LCSO violinist Beth Oeseburg, and is the father of Brad Oeseburg, the LCSO student apprentice in the cello section.

Reverse St. Patrick's Day Parade

A safe, Reverse St. Patrick's Day Parade for Kids is from 1 to 2:15 p.m. Saturday, March 13, at Fedder's Alley in Washington Park.

The parade is a drive-through event where all participants stay in their vehicles. Cars enter Fedder's Alley from Washington Park on the west side and travel slowly through the parade on Clover Leaf Lane. Event highlights include:

- Candy for each child from Capt. Ed's Furniture Showroom.
- "Shamrock Stops" to collect items.
- Animals from Washington Park Zoo.
- Bagpipes and kid friendly characters.
- The Salvation Army food collection.

Parade participants include: LaPorte County EMS, Guardian Riders, Williams Groups, Michiana Clowns, Michigan City Fire Department, Little Caesar's Pizza, Costume World, Michigan City Area Schools and Michigan City Soul Steppers

Free tickets are required and available at the YMCA Elston Branch, Meijer and Al's on South Franklin Street and Karwick Road. If the Franklin Street bridge is under construction, entrance to Washington Park will be redirected. The parade planning committee includes the City of Michigan City, Capt. Ed's Furniture Showroom, Michigan City Chamber of Commerce and Visit Michigan City LaPorte.

Rebecca Dewey Chapter

- The Junior Membership offers \$500 Helen Pouch classroom grants for any teacher with a committed classroom project. The submission deadline is April 12.
- The Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizen Essay scholarship reception honoring 2020-2021 winners is March 21. The chapter also will recognize its 2020 Community Service, Historic Preservation and Outstanding Women in History winners.
- The "That's My Pan!" fundraiser is under way. Funds to benefit chapter activities involve veteran's and service men and women, community classrooms and student essay contests. Visit www.thatsmypan.biz/rebeccadeweychptr to place an order.

Contact rebecca.deweyto@gmail.com or (269) 635-7601 for information.

Leeds Project Heart

Leeds Public House, 401 Franklin St., through Leeds Project Heart, will donate half the proceeds from its March cocktail special to Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Visit www.leedspublichouse.com for more details.





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St. Patrick's Day 5K Color Run

The first St. Patrick's Day 5K Color Run, presented by Notre Dame Catholic School, is Saturday, March 20, at the school, 1000 Moore Road.

The start time for Elite runners is 7:30 a.m., followed by family, stroller and a separate Kids Dash. Start times may vary based on COVID guidelines and the number of registered runners.

The cost is \$30 for adults (21 and older) and includes a \$5 drink ticket at the end of the race. The \$15 cost for students (ages 5-20) includes fruit and a drink at the end of the race (a parent must be present). Children 5 and younger are free.

Registration, which is open through March 19, is available at tinyurl.com/vx93cwum. No on-site registration is planned. When registering, those who use the code FAMILY15 receive \$15 off \$90 in relation to the registration fee.

T&H Timing will professionally time the event. Masks must be worn before and after the race. All recommended social distancing measures will be practiced.

Post-race entertainment includes Mayer School of Irish Dance, bagpipes, live Irish music, corned beef, beer, hard seltzer, Gatorade and water.

Adopting "Papi"

The Michigan City Lions Club has adopted a "leader dog in training" by making a donation toward his training.

The dog, a Labrador retriever, is named Papi. The leader-dog program began in April 1939 in Rochester Hills, Mich. Lions Club International continues to support it.

Contact Club President Irene Rosevear at (219) 878-5678 for more information on supporting Papi and other leader dogs in training.



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Spring Garden Virtual Event

The LaPorte County Master Gardeners will host a two-part virtual event Saturday, March 20.

The first session, Beth Botts and "The Edible Garden, Month by Month," is from 10 to 11 a.m. From seed shopping to harvest, the focus is ways to keep a vegetable, herb and fruit garden on track throughout the season.

The second session, Steve Sass and Amanda Smith and "Spring Woodland Wildflowers in the Lower Lake Michigan Region," is from 1 to 2 p.m. The emphasis is history, folklore and physiology.

Register at www.lpmastergardener.com, after which an email with a link to the event will be sent.

LaPorte County Parks Awards



Representatives from Family Express, which was named 2020 Organization of the Year.

The LaPorte County Parks staff, park board and foundation announced their annual community awards March 2 at Red Mill County Park.

The 2020 Organization of the Year goes to Family Express for its continued support of programs and events, "quick to lend a hand when we reach out to them," according to a press release.



Sobecki

The 2020 Outstanding Park Service Award goes to Park Superintendent Jeremy Sobecki for his leadership and dedication.

"Jeremy's calm approach to situations and issues allows for the best solutions. It is evident in everyday interactions that he treats employees, volunteers and the public with fairness and kindness," according to a press release.



Alexander

The 2020 Volunteer of the Year award goes to Josh Alexander of Custom Earthworks LLC. During the past several years, he has used his equipment and time to improve aesthetic appeal and wildlife habitat on the new 20 acres at Luhr County

Park. He has helped remove brush, invasive plants and woody species, making way for prairie plantings and even helping with followup habitat work years after the initial work.



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10-Digit Dialing Starts in April

All telephone users in the 219 and 574 area codes are encouraged to start using 10-digit dialing instead of seven digit to make local phone calls.

NITCO customers can start using 10-digit dialing immediately; all other carriers will be ready in April. The full transition is mandatory by Oct. 24.

The Federal Communications Commission is requiring the change to accommodate the national "988" National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which will be fully applied by July 16, 2022.

Residential and business customers in the 219 and 574 area codes should be aware that:

- Your telephone number/area code will not change.
- In these area codes, you will need to dial the area code and telephone number (a total of 10 digits).
- All long-distance calls will still require dialing 1 + the area code + the telephone number (a total of 11 digits).

Ten-digit dialing will not change the price of a local call, coverage area or other rates and services. You can still dial three digits to reach 911 (emergency services), 211 (social services), 411 (directory assistance), 711 (telecommunications relay service) or 811 (call to request utility locate before a dig).

Indiana Dunes State Park

The following programs will be offered:

- **Reptile Rendezvous from 2 to 3 p.m. Saturday, March 13.**

Stop by the Nature Center for an informal view of reptiles and amphibians.

- **COVID-19 program safety precautions.**

Pre-registration is required for all programs to properly meet gathering guidance restrictions. Social distancing must be practiced by staying at least 6 feet away from others. Masks or other face coverings of the nose and mouth are required.

- **Snowshoe Rentals are available at the Nature Center.**

Snowshoeing is offered as long as 6 inches of snow is on the ground. A driver's license is needed, and the cost is \$5 for the day. (10 a.m.-4 p.m.) Call the Nature Center to ask about snow conditions.

Indiana Dunes State Park is at 1600 N. County Road 25 East (the north end of Indiana 49), Chesterton. Call (219) 926-1390 to register for programs or for more information.

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Chesterton Art Center



Steve Bensing's "Spring Overcomes Winter."

The Duneland Photography Club will present the exhibit "Seasons Change and So Did I" through March at Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St.

The works reflect the beauty of winter, spring, summer and fall. The theme is taken from the song "No Time" by The Guess Who. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, that theme can reflect the optimism of moving on from difficult times.

The show features around 90 pieces from roughly 30 of the club's emerging and established members. It is free and open to the public. Masks must be worn and social distancing practiced.

The April meeting, led by Ron Seman, focuses on the history of the Indiana Dunes through photos. Visit www.facebook.com/dunelandphotoclub for more details.

Chesterton Art Center is located at 115 S. Fourth St. Visit www.chestertonart.com or call (219) 926-4711 for more information.



The American Red Cross LaPorte County Chapter will sponsor the following bloodmobiles:

- Trinity Lutheran Church, 907 Michigan Ave., LaPorte, noon-6 p.m. Thursday, March 11.
- Northwest Health LaPorte, 1007 W. Lincolnway, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday, March 12.
- St. John Kanty, 7012 N. County Road 600 East, Rolling Prairie, 1-6 p.m. Tuesday, March 16.

Donors must be in good general health and feeling well, at least 17 (16 with parental consent) and weigh at least 110 pounds. Call (800) 733-2767 or visit redcrossblood.org for more details. Visit rcblood.org together for more details.



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Student Receives Automotive Award



Evan Long, an A.K. Smith Career Center Automotive Technology student, has received third place and a \$1,000 scholarship from the UTI Roger Penske Scholarship Test. A Michigan City High School senior, he competed against hundreds of students in the Midwest during the virtual event. He has earned more than \$5,800 in scholarships through similar competitions. He plans to attend the Universal Technical Institute's Illinois campus for the Automotive and Diesel Technology program. He is an intern at Valvoline and works part time at J&S Automotive in Michigan City.

Shroud of Turin Replica

A Shroud of Turin replica and exhibit is on display through mid-March at Queen of All Saints' Legacy Center, 1719 E. Barker Ave.

The Shroud of Turin is believed by many to be the burial cloth of Jesus of Nazareth. It is one of the most scientifically studied religious icons in history. As science has progressed, so has speculation on how the image of the crucified man of the Shroud was made.

After decades of research, the Center for the Study of the Passion of the Christ and the Holy Shroud has developed a mobile exhibit on the Shroud of Turin. The centerpiece is a full-length photographic image of the Shroud made by Eastman Kodak Co. In addition, the exhibit contains a large crucified corpus showing the wounds of Christ corresponding to the passion narrative in the Gospel accounts and the wounds shown on the Shroud. The exhibit contains more than 60 panels detailing the history and science of the Shroud.

The exhibit is free and can be viewed from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Visitors should park in the back of the building and enter off Esther Street. Visit www.qas.org for more details.

Bridgman Public Library

Bridgman (Mich.) Public Library will host a Zoom book presentation by Erin Bartels at 6 p.m. EST Tuesday, March 16.



Bartels

An award-winning author, Bartels will describe her inspirations, and speak about her books We Hope for Better Things (a 2020 Michigan Notable Book) and All That We Carried.

The Zoom link is available on the library website at www.bridgmanlibrary.com. Call (269) 465-3663 for more information.

The library is located at 4460 Lake St.



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Activities to Explore

In the Area:

March 13 — Reptile Rendezvous, 2-3 p.m., Indiana Dunes State Park, 1600 N. County Road 25 East, Chesterton. Info: (219) 926-1390.

March 14 — LaPorte County Symphony Orchestra, final "Brave, Maestro!" concert, 3 p.m., LaPorte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge St. Limited tickets available. Cost: \$20/adults, \$18/seniors. Available @ www.lcso.net, Roxy Music, 1012 Lincolnway, Civic, @ door @ 2 p.m.

March 14 — School of American Music program, "With a Youthful Spirit," 3 p.m. EDT, Converge Community Church, 601 W. Buffalo St., New Buffalo, Mich. Free, donations welcome. Reservations: www.schoolofamericanmusic.com.

Wednesdays — Virtual Story Time, 10 a.m., through Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. Fourth St. Info: www.mclib.org/parents/story-time/

Through Mid-March — A Shroud of Turin replica & exhibit, 6 a.m.-8 p.m. daily, Queen of All Saints' Legacy Center, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Info: www.qas.org.

Through March 31 — Dale Cooper installation (3-D paper flowers), The Legacy Center Gallery @ Queen of All Saints Catholic Church, 1719 E. Barker Ave. Gallery hours: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Info: jessicar@qas.org

Through March 31 — Duneland Photography Club exhibit, "Seasons Change and So Did I," Chesterton Art Center, 115 S. Fourth St. Masks, social distancing practiced. Info: www.chestertonart.com, (219) 926-4711.

Through June 5 — New exhibits, "Lost and Looking" & "Pipelines and Borderlines: The Art of Survival," Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. Second St. Info: www.lubeznikcenter.org

In the Region

Through March 12 — Student exhibit, Art Barn School of Art, 695 N. County Road 400 East, Valparaiso. Gallery hours: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tue., Thur., Fri./10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. Info: (219) 462-9009, www.artbarnschool.org

March 13 — Virtual concert, "We Banjo 3: Live from Ireland!," 5 p.m. EDT, through The Acorn, 107 Generations Drive, Three Oaks, Mich. Tickets: \$25. Reservations: www.acornlive.org

March 16 — Zoom book presentation, Erin Bartels, 6 p.m. EDT, through Bridgman (Mich.) Public Library. Zoom link @ www.bridgmanlibrary.com. Info: (269) 465-3663.

Through March 28 — New exhibits, KAC Members' Show & local ceramist Jennifer Zona, Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, Mich. Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. EDT Fri.-Mon. Info: www.krasl.org, (269) 983-0271.

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THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On March 11, 1888, an estimated 400 people died as one of the worst blizzards in the nation's history struck the northeastern United States.

On March 11, 1959, in New York, "A Raisin in the Sun" starring Sidney Poitier and Ruby Dee opened on Broadway.

On March 11, 1988, Gary Hart, for the second time, withdrew as a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination.

On March 11, 1993, the Senate unanimously confirmed Janet Reno to be attorney general.

On March 11, 1997, rock star Paul McCartney was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II.

On March 12, 1849, an ice flood in the Chicago River ripped ships from their docks and pushed them (along with huge blocks of ice) down stream. The gigantic mass swept the bridges on Madison, Randolph and Wells before it.

On March 12, 1912, Juliette Gordon Low, of Savannah, Ga., founded the first Girl Scout troop in the United States.

On March 12, 1912, Army Capt. Albert Berry made the first parachute jump from an airplane.

On March 12, 1925, the first transatlantic radio broadcast took place.

On March 12, 1951, "Dennis the Menace," created by cartoonist Hank Ketcham, made its syndicated debut in 16 newspapers.

On March 12, 1987, "Les Miserables" opened on Broadway.

On March 13, 1639, Harvard University was named in honor of clergyman John Harvard.

On March 13, 1781, English astronomer Sir William Herschel discovered the planet Uranus.

On March 13, 1868, the Senate began impeachment proceedings against President Andrew Johnson, charging him with "high crimes and misdemeanors." He was acquitted by one vote.

On March 13, 1884, the Chicago Live Stock Exchange received its charter.

On March 13, 1947, Lerner and Loewe's "Brigadoon" debuted on Broadway.

On March 14, 1743, America's first town meeting was held in Boston's Faneuil Hall.

On March 14, 1794, Eli Whitney was granted a patent for the cotton gin, which would revolutionize the cotton textile industry throughout the world.

On March 14, 1923, President Warren Harding became the first chief executive to file an income tax report.

On March 14, 1943, Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" premiered in New York.

On March 14, 1945, the American flag was raised on the Pacific island of Iwo Jima in World War II.

On March 14, 1967, the body of President John F. Kennedy was moved from a temporary grave to a permanent memorial in Arlington National Cemetery.

On March 15, 44 B.C., Julius Caesar, Roman general, statesman and one of the great men of history, was assassinated by a group of Roman aristocrats, led by Marcus Junius Brutus, and Gaius Cassius.

On March 15, 1892, New York became the first state to authorize the use of voting machines.

On March 15, 1913, President Woodrow Wilson held the first open presidential news conference.

On March 15, 1937, the world's first blood bank, under the direction of Chicago's Dr. Bernard Fantus, was established in Cook County Hospital.

On March 15, 1945, "Going My Way," won the Academy Award for best picture of 1944, and its star, Bing Crosby, was named best actor.

On March 16, 1792, Sweden's King Gustav III was shot and killed during a masquerade party. The assassination inspired the Giuseppe Verdi opera "The Masked Ball."

On March 16, 1802, the United States Military Academy was founded at West Point, N.Y.

On March 16, 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne's famous novel, The Scarlet Letter, was published in New York City.

On March 16, 1926, Robert Goddard launched the world's first liquid-fueled rocket.

On March 16, 1942, Gen. Douglas MacArthur arrived in Australia to assume the title of "Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Southwest Pacific."

On March 17, 461, St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, died in the town of Saul. Legend says he drove all of the snakes and venomous creatures from Ireland by beating on a drum. He did it so well that, even to this day, we are told death occurs instantly to any such creature which dares touch Irish soil.

On March 17, 1843, St. Patrick's Day was celebrated in Chicago for the first time.

On March 17, 1902, American golfer Robert Tyre "Bobby" Jones, the only person to win the U.S. Open, British Open, U.S. Amateur and British Amateur tournaments in one year, was born in Atlanta.

On March 17, 1910, the Camp Fire Girls organization was formed. It was formally presented to the public on this day two years later.

On March 17, 1969, Golda Meir took office as Israeli prime minister.

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Fernwood Botanical Garden

• **“Meet the Greats: Fernwood Virtual Lecture Series” from 2 to 3 p.m. EDT Saturday, March 20.**

Andrea Wulf will discuss “The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt’s New World.” Writings by the scientist and explorer (1769–1859) inspired naturalists and poets such as Darwin and Goethe, as well as politicians like Jefferson and Bolivar. He described Earth as a living organism humankind could easily destroy, and predicted harmful, human-induced climate change in 1800.



Wulf

Wulf is an award-winning author of five books, including The Founding Gardeners and The Invention of Nature, both of which appeared on *The New York Times* Bestseller List. The Invention of Nature won more than a dozen international awards and has been published in 26 languages.

The cost is \$40, or \$32 for members.



Fernwood Botanical Garden and Nature Preserve is located at 13988 Range Line Road, Niles, Mich. Call (269) 695-6491 or visit www.fernwoodbotanical.org for more information and to confirm the status of classes.

A Notice to Our Readers

The Beacher will continue the following office hours for now

Mon.-Thurs.: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Friday: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Thank you for your patience during the COVID-19 pandemic



Off the Book Shelf

by Sally Carpenter

The Power Couple by Alex Berenson (*hardcover, \$28 retail in bookstores and online; also available as an eBook. 419 pages.*)

Despite the title, this story begins with the kidnapping of a 19-year-old woman named Kira Unsworth. Her kidnapping is the nucleus of the story; her parents, Brian and Rebecca, swirl around her in the fog that is their relationship. Just keep in mind — there are two sides to every story...

Kira's parents have been married for 20 years. They decide to take Kira and her 17-year-old brother, Tony, to Europe for a family vacation.

In Paris, Kira and Tony break off one night to see the clubs. In one, they meet Jacques. He and Kira make eye contact. Soon, he is charming Kira, and she sends her brother outside so she and Jacques can get acquainted.

"He told her he was twenty-six, studying for a PhD in economics."

He wants to meet up the next day, but Kira tells him the family is off to Barcelona in the morning. No problem, Jacques will meet her there. Of course, Kira says nothing to her parents about him. She knows her mother would not approve. Typical.

The next night, Kira ditches Tony and meets Jacques alone...well, not quite. He brings along a girl he says is his sister. What could be safer, right? Wrong. A hit of some drug, a stumbling walk out the back door to a waiting windowless van and, later, Kira wakes up in a locked room, alone.

Finally at 2 a.m., there's no Kira, and the parents get worried. Tony then tells them about Jacques. The police are reluctant to call her a missing person yet — after all, how many other girls have spent the night with a boyfriend, then showed up the next day? Rebecca knows her daughter better than that — she would never stay away that long, especially in a foreign country, even though everyone says Barcelona is the "safest city in Europe."

So now, there is the obvious question: why Kira? What's the endgame with these people? Ransom, revenge, political reasons — the list of possibilities is long. Maybe Brian and Rebecca should take a close look at their lives...maybe the answer lies there...

The abduction now takes a back seat as the story morphs into a "how we met and got this far" scenario between Brian and Rebecca. Time to pick apart the two sides of a story that will set the stage for the twists and turns that follow.

It was love at first sight for Brian and Rebecca, or

so they thought, but maybe it was just lust at first sight. Whatever reason, they marry. Rebecca gets a law degree and works until she has Kira and Tony. Then, she tells Brian she wants to join the FBI. OK with him, he will become the househusband.

A stunning takedown of a criminal in Alabama moves Rebecca up the FBI ladder, finally landing in Washington, D.C., where she is assigned to Russian counterespionage. She's making the money, but the expenses keep mounting up. Brian is feeling restless and wants a career of his own.

How long will it be before it starts to eat at him that Rebecca makes the money, has the health insurance. Sure, he loves his children beyond belief, but his inadequacies as a man nag at him. He should be a contributor to the family coffers, and frankly, his ego needs building up, even though Rebecca has never consciously tried to downplay his job of child care. Maybe she just can't see what being housebound all those years has done to his psyche.

Brian's expertise is computers, and with Rebecca's help, he lands a job working for the National Security Agency. But is it enough? Brian has been feeling inadequate for years, and now even his job had to come from his wife. The chasm between

the two widens, but they are too civilized to confront what is really going on.

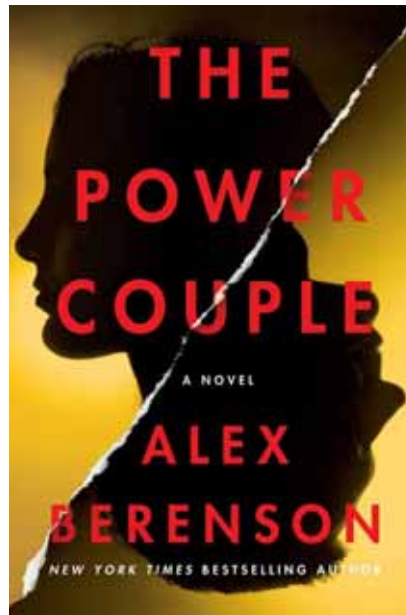
In between the couple's story, Kira has no clue where she is or why she's there. Does it have something to do with her mother because she works for the FBI? Or dad's job with the NSA? Both carry information many countries would pay big money to know. Whatever the reason, she's sure no one will find her, so it's all up to her. She listens through the door, meets Jacques's partner, Rodrigo, and starts working on a plan...Kira will not become the helpless maiden in distress!

Meanwhile, the Unsworths have persuaded the police that Kira is missing when camera footage from a club shows her with a man and woman, and a nosy neighbor from the building next door, says she saw these people forcing Kira into a white cargo van. Finally, the search begins in earnest.

About 2/3 through the story — bam! — there's a revelation of epic proportions that changes everything. Something a family will probably not survive.

Secrets, secrets, secrets...they can tear a family apart. No more explanation except to say *"there are none so blind as those who will not see."*

Till next time, happy reading!





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