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The Minneapolis Tribune

Home and Recreation

Part One

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High-flying Area Ski Season Seen

By BEN KERN
Minneapolis Tribune Staff Writer

Skiers' toes can start tingling about improvements in Upper Midwest ski areas for this season.

On the debit side there are a few setbacks. A lack of any big openings suggests that ski areas, unlike rabbits, can get tired of multiplying. Since the same can't be said of skiers, the plateau is probably temporary.

The setbacks, which began when Moon Valley, near Shakopee, closed last season, now include St. Paul's Villa Park, which had a chalet fire and won't reopen as a ski area, and Birch Park, a promising family area a few miles east of Stillwater. It may or may not reopen—financial problems.

On the positive side, much is happening among areas within a 75-mile radius of the Twin Cities.

Afton Alps, only an upstart area six years ago, has extended its huge spread and for the second successive year leads the pack in heavy lift installations. Last year it added two of the standard chairlifts seating two in a chair. This year it's adding a triple-seater and another T-bar. This gives the area a total of four chairlifts, three T-bars and a Pomalift.

The area also is adding new land. Its acreage on the site overlooking new state parkland on the St. Croix River now is around 200. The new chair serves a new run covering about 10 acres at the river end. The lower of two parking lots is now about half a mile long.

Upriver, **Trollhaugen** is putting in a new chairlift (its first), adding a sitzlift to its Tomtebakken beginners' slope, and opening a new T-bar combination of slopes which occupy part of an additional 80 acres acquired at the southeast end.

The new T-bar combination adds to the area's standing triumph as a paradise for intermediate skiers and affords a long view of pine-fringed contours fanning out before the big timbered chalet.

The new chair will parallel the tree-line up the middle just east of the electric rope and T-bar combine which unloads about five skiers a second at the top.

This is the area which in 1950 started the St. Croix River Valley skiing boom now extending from Afton Alps, south, to **Val Croix**, north (now enlarging its chalet).

Midway between the two, a new group (Robert Owens, president; Charles J. Hansen, manager; Per Guldbrandsgaard, ski school head), has taken over Ski Mac, renamed it **Snowcrest**, and given the grounds a general revamping, from parking lot to new runs on both sides of the valley. Previously an all-rope area, it now gets a new chairlift and sitzlift. Plans call for more as needs develop.

Another chairlift (this makes three new ones going in around the Twin Cities this season) is being installed at **Welch Village** in the Cannon River valley 40 miles southeast of Minneapolis off Hwy. 61.

The new lift, 2,000 feet long, adds a complex of variegated runs to this well-elevated (330-foot vertical), vari-pitched area in its picturesque rural countryside setting overlooking the Cannon River. Snow-making will cover the whole area, and lights will illuminate 60 acres for night skiing.

Buck Hill, the metro-area volume leader with its incomparable night-skiers' view of the city lights (from 12 miles south of Minneapolis west of Hwy. 35W), last year having opened slopes which nearly doubled its capacity, this season has added 1,000 square feet of lounging area to its rakishly designed chalet.

The big Buck has also regraded two main slopes, enlarged parking, ungraded snowmaking, and added an Erich Sailer racing program with Sailer himself in charge. Gordy Anderson will run the ski school, as usual.

Powder Ridge, Buck Hill's sister area 55 miles northwest of Minneapolis, has similarly enlarged its chalet by 2,000 square feet (Beer Stube and food service on upper

Skiing
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Winter Sports Fair Slated

The Northwest Ski and Winter Sports Fair opens a three-day run Friday at the Minneapolis Auditorium, with demonstrations of skiing techniques, exhibits of equipment and sports fashions, and movies.

The Convention Hall of the auditorium will be decorated as a winter wonderland, with a ski exhibition ramp dominating the entertainment area. A cedar chalet will be on display, along with snowmobiles and winter camping equipment.

Steve Knowlton's "Ski Antics" will be presented twice daily by a team of top skiers. Continuous showing of skiing films and a film about snowmobiling are planned.

There will be exhibits from resort facilities in Utah, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico and Canada as well as "Ski Fashions of the 70s."

Frank Covino's mixed-media instructional program on skiing will include a chalk-talk and an action film, and the ski instructor will answer questions about skiing.

Hours of the show will be noon to 11 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and noon to 8 p.m. Sunday.

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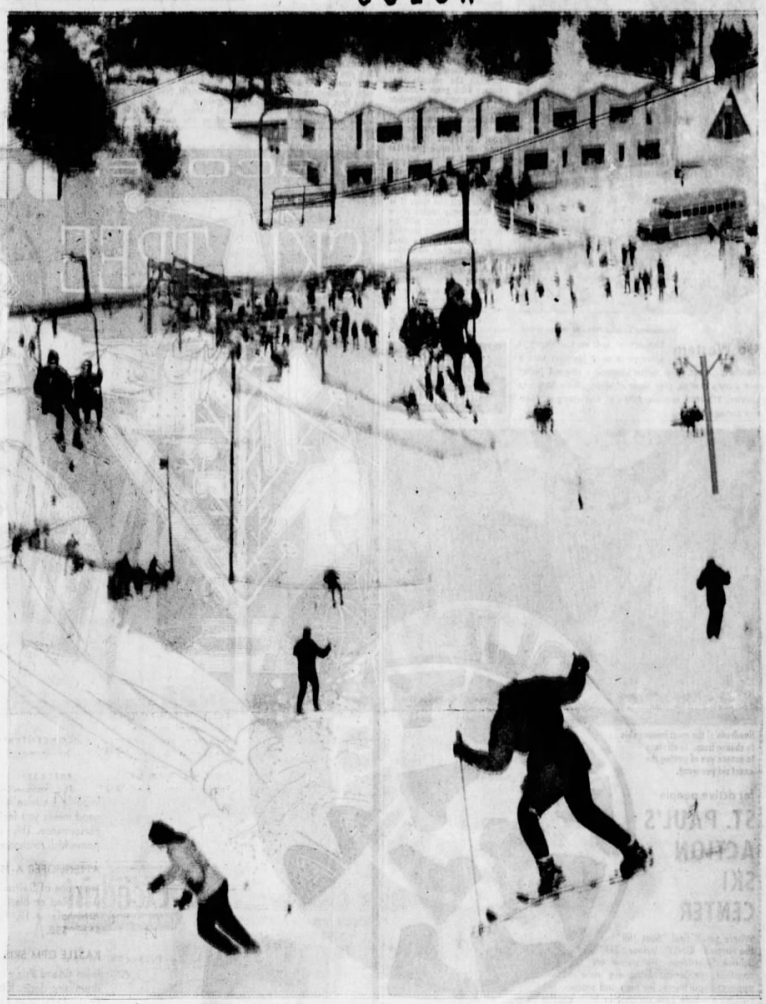

Minneapolis Tribune Photo by Arthur Hager

SKIERS IN ACTION AT AFTON ALPS, ONE OF THE TWIN CITIES AREA'S FASTEST GROWING SKI CENTERS
Site is in a St. Croix River valley ravine 4 miles south of Afton, 25 miles east of Minneapolis

Are Mallard's Friends Its Worst Enemies?

Jim Kimball

It is possible that one of the best intended and most popular game management practices is destroying the mallard population on the North American continent. Remember—I said it is possible. I do not know. But the frightening part of it is—neither does anyone else know.

I am referring to the extensive program of raising game farm mallards and releasing them into the wild which is being carried out by individuals, groups of sportsmen and farm youth.

This program is so popular and so widespread that even suggesting that it may be unwise is certain to inspire fervent criticism. For this reason I will mention no names, but I have gathered my information from well-informed leaders of sportsmen's organizations, individual laymen who have made sincere long-range studies of ducks and trained scientists who work entirely with waterfowl.

First, let it be understood that this is no condemnation of game farms because game farms are an important tool in wildlife management, a tool which has established pheasants, chukar partridge, Hungarian partridge and other important species on this continent. But it is not an all-purpose tool. A hammer is a fine tool for driving nails but of little value in cutting a board. A game farm is ideal for introductory stocking but may be useless or downright dangerous in maintenance stocking after a species is established.

As stated, many organizations and individuals have been raising and stocking mallards into the wild. Perhaps the best and most effective program has been carried out by high-school-age farm youths in the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program. These young people have, during the past five years, stocked 100,000 pheasants and 50,000 mallards.

The value of this program in teaching farm youth to have an interest and concern about wild things is immeasurable. They have been encouraged and assisted by both state and federal conservation agencies. To even question the value of their work is indeed unpleasant—so unpleasant, in fact, that even those most concerned have shied away from bringing this problem into the open.

The problem is this:

It may be that the introduction of vast numbers of relatively tame mallards into the wild population is bringing about a genetic change which will make it more difficult for the wild mallard to avoid predators and hunters, to migrate on schedule, to raise a brood of young in the wild and to retain the sagacity and intellect that has built up during thousands of generations of natural selection.

If this is happening, it will not be the first time that man has destroyed the native intellect of a species.

There is no longer such a thing as a truly wild eastern turkey. This was demonstrated by a classic study years ago which showed that even the pituitary gland of what we now call the wild turkey is substantially smaller than it was in the original wild bird.

A biologist from England has said that, because of stocking, there are no longer any wild mallards in Europe.

However, this is no one-sided argument. Some very knowledgeable waterfowl people believe that somewhere between 20 percent and 70 percent of the wild strain of mallards have been tainted or polluted by the introduction of game farm mallards. Others say there is no proof of this, and they are right. To date, only a small percentage of wild mallards show visible signs of tainting.

However, changes in the bird's appearance may not become obvious until there has been a substantial change in the intellect, and no one knows about this.

I see the balance of nature as a very delicate and fragile thing largely determined by the physical and mental capabilities of each species. If any species were made just a trifle quicker and smarter, its numbers might increase greatly because it could better avoid enemies and raise its young. The reverse would also seem to be true. Man can alter this delicate balance, but he cannot undo what he has done.

Some argue that while the game farm bird is less wild and sagacious, it will stand more crowding, better tolerate the presence of humans and produce larger broods. They believe that introducing these traits into the "gene pool" of wild mallards might even have beneficial effects. Further, they say that once in the wild, natural selection

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