

Outdoor observations

By Hal Bush



Ski sites close to home

With the shortage and inflated prices of gasoline this winter, many Blue Water District skiers may be looking for some action closer to home.

There should be no problem getting to the Port Huron area's two skiing facilities economically and without running short on fuel, even on a Sunday when gasoline stations are closed.

Black Forest Ski Lodge, four miles west of Port Huron, reported its skiing conditions as "very good" Saturday with a 12 to 14-inch base on its five slopes.

Black Forest, 5570 Lapeer Road, has been open about three weeks because of the early December snowfall and cold weather but was closed during the rainy Christmas week.

Activity at its five rope tows has been "busy" but not overcrowded, the lodge reports. Black Forest is adding two fireplaces in its lodge building and is getting some new rental equipment.

Weekday hours of operation are 4:30 to 10 p.m. Weekend hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. except for the 5:30-6:30 p.m. dinner hour.

Tow and rental charges, unlike most ski areas, are unchanged from last year at Black Forest. Tow charges are \$3.50 weekdays and \$4 weekends, with \$1 extra beyond 5:30 p.m. on weekends. Rentals of boots and skis are \$3 weekdays and \$3.50 weekends. Private lessons and more-economical group lessons will again be offered.

Bad luck has again put a crimp in the

opening of Circle TNT Ski Area, 7250 Gibbons Road at Birch Road west of Lapkeport near Jeddo. Last year it was vandalism that kept Circle TNT's six slopes from opening on time. This season, the Christmas Day rainfall washed away a 12-inch base and the ski area's snowmaking equipment broke down not once but twice. "The rain just about killed us . . . it took us down to bare ground in spots," a spokesman at the ski area said.

Circle TNT is expecting delivery of a new compressor for snowmaking Monday and is scheduled to re-open Tuesday unless a heavy snowfall comes before then. The ski area had been open about 1½ weeks before the Christmas rains came.

Tow and equipment rental fees have gone up \$1 at Circle TNT. The new tow fees are \$4 on weekdays and \$4.50 on weekends. The same fees apply for rentals. Weekday group rates are offered with reservations made at least a day in advance for groups of 20 or more persons. The group rate is \$4.50 for both tow and rental fees, or \$2 for skiers with their own equipment. Private and group lessons will be offered.

TNT has five rope tows. Its longest of six runs is 1,200 feet with a 135-foot vertical drop.

Circle TNT also has a toboggan run for which it charges \$1 a person for all-day use. It also has five miles of snowmobile trails through hilly woods and fields, open for use without charge.

Think snow.