

Don't bet on seeing early morels

Well, I do declare. This is the strangest winter these tired old bones have ever witnessed in more than a few years of patrolling the Hoosier state for rabbits and the other critters.

As one reader puts it in e-mail: "Night-crawlers on my driveway, sprouting daffodils, blossoming dandelions, \$1.99 gasoline ... we may be finding mushrooms next month."

And that, my outdoor friends, is only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak in tired old idioms.

As this is written, White River south of Noblesville is quitting its banks for the lowlands, probably returning later in the week when colder predicted weather comes along with a cessation of the rain.

And that is keeping the season on ducks and geese alive and well in the southern part of the state. (The dates for South and Ohio River zones were included in last week's column. They don't last much longer).

In the meantime, if you just want to see ducks or geese, the North Zone (basically the northern third of the state) is closed for ducks and Canada geese now, but it is hosting ducks in good numbers.

Ordinarily, that part of the state is in the deep freeze.

However, the season is open on light geese (blues and snows), but there are almost none of those in Indiana.

Other hunting opportunities for the



'Bayou' Bill Scifres

OUTDOORS

remainder of the hunting seasons also were covered in last week's column.

In the meantime, the earliest I have ever found mushrooms was March 27 (that is morels). That came about in a very early spring. I do not think we will have an early spring this year.

In winter, use slow-moving baits

Only the smallest of the small farm ponds have any ice now, and in this case it would be questionable, but some anglers who frequent the small bodies of water are catching some bass now and a few other species.

Best bet is a slow-moving bottom bumper of black, but when I write this, some angler connects with a bright yellow crank bait.

The reason slow-moving baits are best at this time of year is that the metabolism of all cold-blooded critters, including fish,

slows to a crawl when water temperatures drop below 50 degrees. Most standing waters are below that level now. The color is based on the fact that black contrasts well in murky water.

Nightcrawlers or other forms of soft baits, including live ones, always are a good bet if they are hooked in a manner that makes them relatively weedless.

In the colder months, I fish both shallow water and deeper stuff. But, depending upon what the weather is doing when I am there, I start with deep water when weather is cold or windy; more shallow on bright, sunny days or when it is quite warm. The breaks, areas where shallow drops into depths, can be a good bet at midday.

Deer tip: Don't catch poison ivy

Ted Hamilton e-mails some interesting information picked up in a recent deer-butcher seminar.

Deer eat, and like, poison ivy. Thus, to avoid the possibility of a nasty case, it is a good idea to wear plastic or rubber gloves for emergency situations where the stomach or intestines are broken.

"Bayou" Bill Scifres' outdoors column appears Saturdays in the Daily Journal. Comments can be sent to P.O. Box 699, Franklin, IN 46131.

Samardzija opts for career on diamond

The Associated Press

CHICAGO

The Chicago Cubs signed right-handed pitcher Jeff Samardzija to a five-year deal worth \$10 million, the team announced Friday.

Samardzija, 21, was a standout baseball and football player at Notre Dame.

He led the Fighting Irish football team with 78 receptions and 1,017 receiving yards in 2006 and was named first team All-America by the Football Writers Association of America. The team went to the Sugar Bowl.

But Samardzija has decided to concentrate on his baseball career. As a pitcher at Notre Dame, he was 8-2, with a 4.33 ERA in 15 starts last season.

He was 21-6 with a 3.81 ERA in 50 career games, making him the 13th-winningest pitcher in Notre Dame history.

Samardzija will report to the Cubs' big-league camp in Mesa, Arizona, on Feb. 14.

In other baseball news

CLEVELAND

Indians land Nixon

Outfielder Trot Nixon agreed Friday to a \$3 million, one-year contract with the Cleveland Indians, an addition that gives the club depth and veteran leadership.

The 32-year-old Nixon had spent his entire career with the Boston Red Sox, who selected him in the first round of the 1993 amateur draft.

Nixon batted .268 with eight homers and 52 RBIs in 114 games last season.

Nixon will likely platoon in right field with Casey Blake, who also will see time at first base.

ATLANTA

Teams finish deal

Reliever Mike Gonzalez joined the Braves on Friday after Atlanta finalized its four-player trade that sent first baseman Adam La Roche to the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Outfielder Jamie Romak also was sent to the Pirates and shortstop Brent Lillibridge to the Braves.

Gonzalez, a 28-year-old left-hander, was 3-4 with a 2.17 ERA last season.

Upperclassmen deal with 'senioritis'

Last week in practice, one of our coaches said, "Although we aren't playing well, we still look pretty good."

There has been much progress from the beginning of the season to now. That progress is exciting. We have been playing more as a team than ever before, and we have been moving the ball around the court better than we have in years.

In our game against Perry Meridian this week, we did not play well overall but still came out with a 15-point victory.

Coach Joe Lentz mentioned to our team that, when he has talked to the coaches of the previous two teams we have played, both coaches were very impressed with our play. Other people are noticing our potential as a team, and I am hoping that we get even more heads to turn by the time our regular season is finished.

We have a big conference



Lydia Feldman

WINTER SPORTS DIARY

game today against Ben Davis. By winning this game, we would have a good chance at winning our conference, which is a huge feat considering the teams in the Metropolitan Interscholastic Conference. According to the most recent poll, there are four teams in the top 10 from the MIC, and we are not one of them.

Second semester means that keeping your grades up becomes more difficult. During the season, it is always a little more difficult to make sure your grades are up to par.

The five other seniors and I are beginning to feel the effects of having "senioritis." Balancing school and basketball can be a difficult task, but athletes learn how to prioritize their time so they do not become stressed.

The season is slowly winding down. The Trojans have only five regular-season games remaining before our sectional tournament starts.

This year, the sectional will be at Center Grove, which is exciting for us. There is an undeniable advantage when playing on your home court.

Familiar surroundings are definitely preferable over away games. In front of our home crowd, we don't want to waste the potential others see in us.

Lydia Feldman is a senior on the Center Grove High School girls basketball team. Her Winter Sports Diary entries appear each week in the Daily Journal.

Franklin Varsity Basketball Alumni Night



Former Girls & Boys Varsity Basketball Players are Invited to Celebrate the Last Regular Season Home Game in Vandivier Gymnasium

GIRLS: Saturday, January 27, 2007 vs. Martinsville 7:30 PM

BOYS: Friday, February 23, 2007 vs. Jennings Co. 7:30 PM

R.S.V.P TO: High School Athletic Office
Noel Heminger 317-738-5711 or Fax: 317-738-5729

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