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## Interview with Mike Miller

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Mike Miller

Chris Grasso

Lori Liggett

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# Life Along the Kokosing

Accession number: LAK-BY-A002

Researcher's name: Brenda Young

Event: interview with Mike Miller

Place: Knox Lake, Knox County, Ohio

Co-workers present: Chris Grasso, Lori Liggett

The following is a catalog of a tape-recorded interview with Mike Miller at Kokosing and Knox lakes, Knox County, Ohio, on June 24, 1999. The interview mainly consists of Miller's knowledge, as Knox County wildlife officer, regarding hunting and fishing in northwestern Knox County.

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– Mike Miller (hereafter MM) noted trees and brush under water makes Knox Lake unsafe for swimming. People are daredevils – some slide down the face of the dam, which is 30 feet high. MM said people who break this law could be fined up to \$250 and sentenced to up to 30 days in jail. He usually gives them \$75 waivers and they have the option to fight it in court. He said he doesn't like summer because of the problems he has to deal with – he doesn't like it when the temperature is above 75 degrees Fahrenheit and people start swimming.

– Knox Lake is solely for fishing – people need a place to go to view wildlife. They can decide for themselves if they want to bird-watch or hunt and fish.

– Every Thursday night, Knox Lake hosts a bass fishing tournament. (MM stops as one of the marinas to see where it would be held on the night of the interview).

– Shortly after the new \$250,000 parking lot was put in at Knox Lake, someone built a fire right in the middle of it. Since then, absolutely no fires are allowed in the region. In the past, MM would tell people to put them out, because fires were never allowed, but now there is an automatic fine.

– MM pointed out there is an eagle's nest at Knox Lake – this is the second year, and the first year in which an eaglet survived.

– (After a question from Lori, MM tells us to contact Lela and Darryl Hathaway to find out more about people who may sell wild plants from their homes. He offers to take us past their home on

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the way back to Kokosing Lake.

– MM said boat slips at Knox Lake are very affordable – the cheapest in Ohio. Here, it costs \$80 to dock your boat, while elsewhere in the state it would cost \$400. In addition to the new parking lot, the division put in a new seawall.

– Division has 400 acres of land around the lake, which is itself 520 acres. Because of that, the division has to be very careful about encroachment by residents.

– [As we drive through Knox Lake parking lot, a young fisherman on a dock holds up his fishing license for Miller to see]. MM noted the division maintains a computer system to keep track of who is and isn't licensed to hunt or fish during the various seasons.

[ELAPSED TIME: 10 MINS.]

– [Tape recorder is turned off for approximately 10 minutes while Chris and MM go into marina to find out about bass tournament logistics. It is turned back on after we get into Jeep to return to Kokosing Lake].

– MM noted farmers are concerned about what the eagle's nest will mean for them. Regulations limit the activities allowed in areas around a nest. Farmers are usually happy once they realize it doesn't necessarily affect their operations; the problem then becomes the people who come to see the nest and park along the farmers' properties without permission.

– [MM tells us about Hathaway family, mentions retired man who runs a fruit and vegetable stand at his Berlin Township home. He also asks Lori about the LAK project and what our research group is trying to learn about. He says there are a lot of Amish in the Middlebury Township area who sell food from their homes, but he doesn't have much contact with the families.]

– MM noted Kokosing River's Scenic River status – he recently had to take a man off a bulldozer who was channelizing the river near the headwaters. The Environmental Protection Agency had been notified because the man had built a dam that caused a fish kill because of the low water this spring. MM said it is interesting to consider how much the river has been changed by man over the years.

[ELAPSED TIME: 20 MIN.]

– MM said hunting and fishing has decreased nationwide because of changing lifestyles. People have more to do; MM also blames the decrease on the breakdown of the family unit. MM criticized the government for its agriculture policies, which he said are pushing small family farms out of business in favor of big corporate operations. Americans should be concerned because of the danger of losing a major supplier if something goes wrong on a huge farm. For

instance, if America would be hit with the “Mad Cow Disease” like England, and a corporate dairy is infected, the nation could lose a large portion of its milk resources.

– [We drive by the Hathaway’s house; MM talks about their operation]

– MM said he grew up in Cincinnati and lived in Columbus 10 years; he knew he wanted to be a wildlife officer when he was in seventh grade. He said there are 7,000 game wardens and Department of Natural Resources officers in the country. There are 100 wildlife officers in Ohio, 200 park rangers and 16 water craft officials. He said his job allows him to make his own schedule; he works out of his home. He said he can tell you who’s killing what out of season and who’s sleeping with who’s wife.

[END OF INTERVIEW]