

NORTHERN HOME

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SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2002

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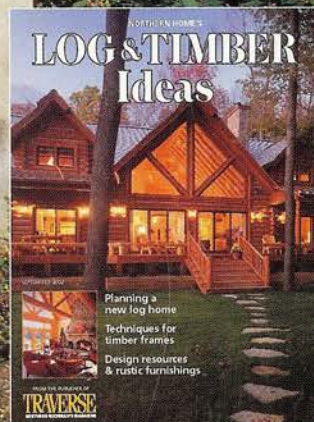
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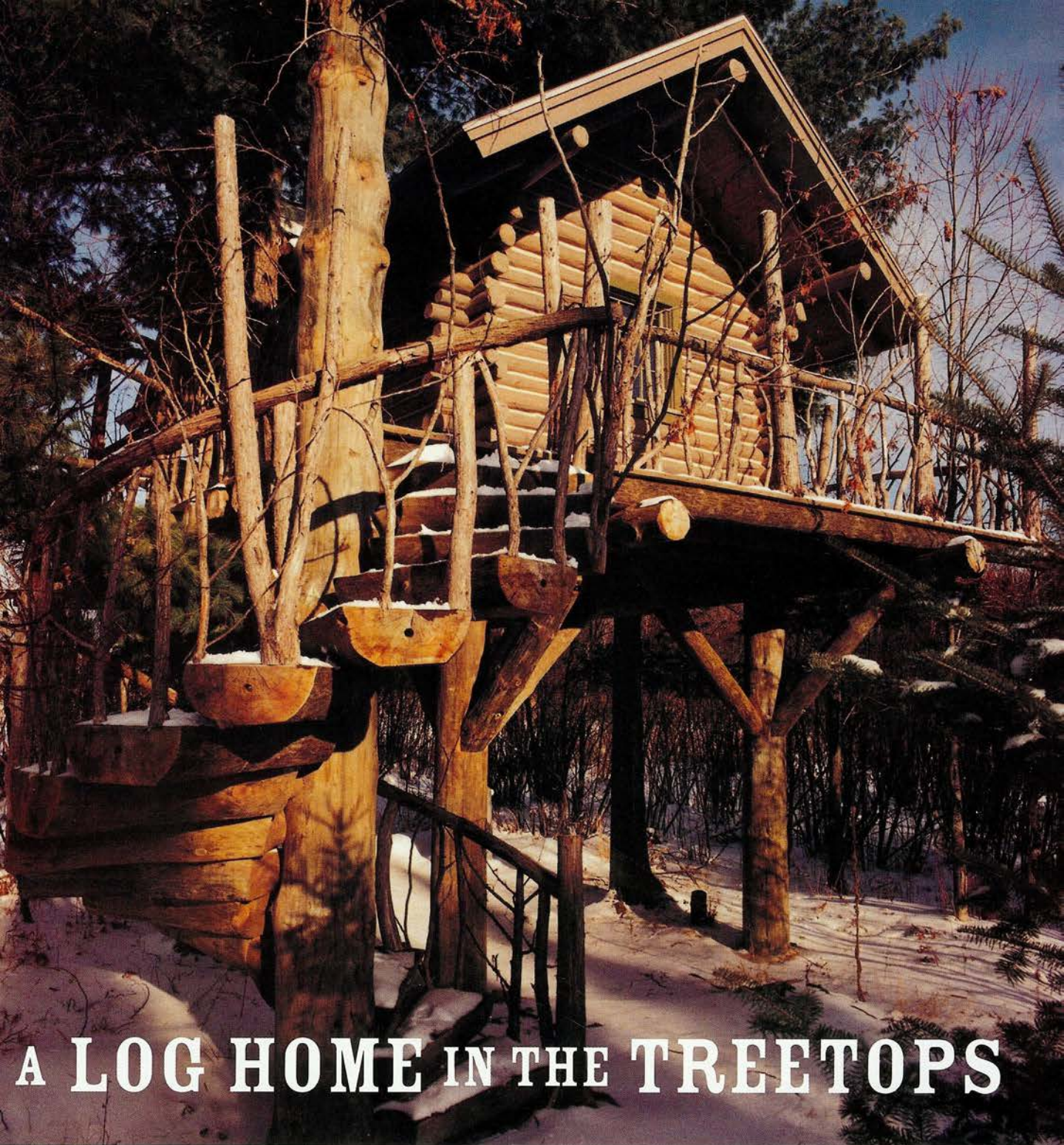
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A Supplement to TRAVERSE, NORTHERN MICHIGAN'S MAGAZINE

INSIDE:





A LOG HOME IN THE TREETOPS

**There's something about
a cabin that stokes the
fires of the imagination.
In this case, log living
meets wild solitude in
the ultimate tree house.**

By Cara McDonald

THIS LOG DREAM BEGAN WITH FROGS.

A little swamp where peepers trill and bullfrogs rattle. Nothing special to most people, but a slice of heaven for Dave Tuxbury, who owns Deer Tracks Ranch near Fife Lake and does log home restoration. This is his escape, and out on the edge of the 1,600-acre spread sits Dave's tiny, perfect cabin, tucked up in the branches of ancient cedars. A tree house.

"It's a little eccentric," Tuxbury admits. "But I wanted to be able to go there and relax without bothering the landscape. This structure fits in with the wilderness around it." So much so that on some days, Dave walks out to find deer sleeping beneath the tree house. He climbs the spiral stairs and sits on the porch to hear the frog chorus. There's no

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driveway, no utilities, no whine of a generator. Just a most excellent tree fort with quintessential log cabin style.

It's not the sort of log structure most people would think to undertake—building an elevated structure in a remote location has its challenges. For one, lack of road access to bring in materials posed a problem. So the materials were first handcrafted, fitted together, then pressure treated and brought to the location in winter, across the ice of the frozen pond.

Elevating the structure was the next challenge. The 20-by-12-foot cabin was built on the ground in a saddle-notch, chink-style system, then painstakingly raised with house jacks and bridging to its present lofty perch on a treed ridge overlooking the pond. A spiral staircase and wrap-around cedar deck were added to complete the look of the outpost—on the outside.

Inside, the atmosphere is almost as appealing as the wilderness setting. Decorator Rachelle Babcock's design concept was based on a camp theme, filling the one-room space with games, playing cards, taxidermied animals and antiques. Old Coca-Cola boxes serve as furniture, an antique trunk fills in for a coffee table. The colors are classic and inviting. "You want to pull from a natural palette," she says. "Warm reds, soft greens." For a bit of energy, she chose a deep blue denim for the oversized sofa, and repeated the fabric as an insert behind the pine tree cutouts in the wood cabinetry.

Babcock also left space in her decor for the cabin to evolve in its usage. Right now, there are no utilities, but an antique copper sink basin and matching counter have been put in, and room underneath has been left for a small refrigerator.

Though the huge rustic pine sofa can be used as a bed, the tree house is just for day trips right now. Friends and family and guests of Deer Tracks Ranch head out for the occasional gourmet lunch or wildlife viewing. And despite the comfort of the ranch's log lodge, it's the little tree house guests remember.

For those who want one of their own? Tuxbury cautions that, small and primitive as it is, a tree house is a bit too tricky for the average person to tackle, but recommends contacting a reputable log home supplier or builder and carefully planning a site that can be both remote and undisturbed.

To find out about Deer Tracks Ranch and visiting the tree house cabin, call 866-3-TRACKS or click www.deertracksranch.com.

PHOTOS: COURTESY MAPLE ISLAND LOG HOMES

