

Rebounders have limited effectiveness for runners

It seems everyone these days is looking for innovative and effective devices to improve physical fitness and reduce body weight.

The list of new pieces of exercise equipment seems endless — waist belts, vibrating machines, cross country skiing simulators, manulists, computerized bicycles and low-voltage music toners.

Some devices are good. Others are virtually useless.

REBOUNDEES are the latest craze in a long line of "revolutionary" fitness gadgets.

The units resemble a small trampoline, but the bouncing surface is level and slightly larger. They are designed for stationary running or jogging.

Manufacturers claim rebounders reduce stress on the ankles, knees and legs which often results from running on hard surfaces and uneven terrain. But until recently, the effectiveness of rebound running remained untested.

Dr. Victor Katch and associates at the University of Michigan examined the caloric expenditure and heart rate response to rebound running among sedentary young-to-middle-age adults.

The energy cost approximated four

to five times the resting metabolic rate, equivalent to walking at a 3 1/2 to 4 mph pace. Heart rate responses were generally slow.

The investigators further noted that the energy expenditure and heart rate responses remained relatively constant, even when the subjects lifted their knees high and increased their running tempo. Thus, most individuals were unable significantly to increase or decrease the exercise intensity.

OTHER RESEARCHERS have reported that the energy or caloric expenditure associated with rebounders

is considerably below that required for running on land.

This may be due to the assistance that the device requires in moving the body vertically, decreasing the actual work performed.

In summary, rebound running represents a low-to-moderate intensity activity.

While rebounders may aid in reducing musculoskeletal and orthopedic problems associated with running, they appear to have only limited applicability and effectiveness in physical conditioning and weight reduction programs.



fitness
Barry Franklin

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University's medical and in Mercy College's physician assistant program.

Become a 'natural' listener



By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

Whenever I get a chance, I try to explore natural areas and things around me. In fact, Saturday my wife and I invited some friends over for dinner and asked them if they would be interested in birdwatching afterwards.

I was almost going to tell them we would be going "snipe hunting" but, instead, decided to tell them we would be searching for a courting woodcock.

Many people know the woodcock as a chunky, brown, upland game bird with a long narrow bill. It is found in wooded areas most of the time but is actually related to shorebirds like sandpipers, plovers and snipes.

They spend the winter months in such southern states as Louisiana. Then in the spring, like many other birds, they return north to nest and raise young.

AFTER A delicious lasagna dinner, we drove to the field areas west of Westland Shopping Center along Warren Road. Here, in these fields, for the past five years I have watched woodcock perform their ceremonial courtship display.

I was almost certain the bird would be there again this spring, but I wanted to be sure before I brought my class there to see it.

At sunset, or a little after, almost like clockwork, a male entered the sandy, open area surrounded by cottonwood and box elder trees. We knew when he entered because he started his "BEEEN" call while on the ground.

Darkness and field vegetation prevented us from seeing the bird, but we could hear his calls gradually increase to about once every 10-20 seconds, or so.

The male continued to call while on the ground a short time. Then, when the calling stopped, we watched the backlight horizon to the west in hopes of seeing the bird fly up.

ON HIS VERY first flight, he passed right in front of us, only about 10 feet over our heads — close enough so we could see his 3-inch long bill.

The clear sky allowed us to watch the bird gain altitude until he was a speck, barely visible in the sky, directly over the area he was calling from on the ground. Chorus frogs and spring peeper frogs calling from nearby ponds almost drowned the high pitched twittering sound produced by the male in flight.

His outer wing feathers are more narrow than the females, which is what causes the twittering sound as the air passes over them while flying.

After a flight of about a minute the male woodcock began to come back to earth. We could barely see his descent, but we could tell he was coming down by the "tinkling" sound he produced until shortly before his landing.

HE RETURNED to the same general area where we first heard him calling. This is the area to which he wants to attract a female for mating.

The same sequence of events and combination of sounds will be repeated until the darkness of night. Some birds also perform this ceremony in the morning around sunrise — all for the purpose of perpetuating the species.

Our friends thanked us for an unusual evening's entertainment.

Timothy Nowicki teaches nature study and leads field trips for local nature groups. The Livonia resident has two degrees in biology.



"It's OK, Mom. Dad said he wasn't losing weight with it anyway."

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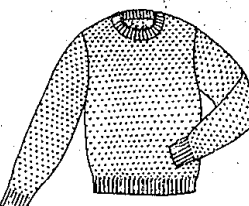
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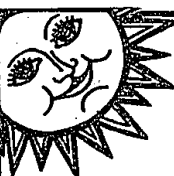
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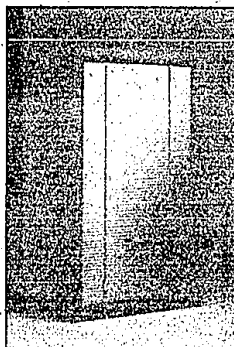
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