

To preserve and protect Long Lake, its watershed and ecosystems



Long Lake

Preservation Association

Issue 68 • Spring 2021



— Photo by Joe Thrasher

President's Message

The lake is open, ice out having come early this year. Cowslips are appearing in ditches. The air is raucous with the sounds of birds. Yesterday I counted 13 species at the feeders, less than half being birds that overwinter here.

It's not summer yet, of course. I'm looking out the window at a lawn white with snow that fell overnight, notwithstanding 80 degree temperatures a week or so ago. But there is definitely light at the end of the long tunnel of winter.

There is light also at the end of a far more serious tunnel, the Covid 19 pandemic. Vaccinations are proceeding at a far greater pace than anyone dared to hope at the beginning of the year. But, like summer weather, we're not there yet. Precautions still must be taken, and that means, among other things, avoiding large gatherings. Which brings us to the subject of the LLPA annual meeting.

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Board of Directors

President:

Joe Thrasher
(715) 354-3540
ltlport@gmail.com

Vice President:

Byron Crouse
bjcrouse@wisc.edu

Secretary:

Marcia Kampf
(715) 354-3048
mkampf41@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Chuck Lawrence
(715) 236-7938
chuck@ricelaketax.com

Past President:

Randy Krautkramer
(715) 296-5522
rkrautkramer@gmail.com

At Large Directors

Brent Blaeser
blaeser@amfam.com

Sandra Hovey Campbell
sandycampbell11@gmail.com

Randy Champeau
randychampeau@gmail.com

DJ Ehrike
musicaldje@yahoo.com

Jim Garey
(715) 651-8030
longbear13@icloud.com

Nikki Janisin
(715) 635-6543
director@hunthill.org

Donnie Marker
donnie@lakeplace.com

Steve May
stevemay1414@gmail.com

Wes Mohns
(715) 354-7274
wesmohns@yahoo.com

Randy Poznansky
randypoz@gmail.com

Camp Tomahawk

Brian Halloran
(952) 212-7418
bhalloran@northernstarbsa.org

Webmaster

Barb Lang
mrcarter7@charter.net

LLPA Addresses:

PO Box 336
Birchwood, WI 54817

Visit our web site

www.longlakellpa.org

President's Message continued

The LLPA board recently decided that the meeting would take place at the usual time, that being the first Saturday following Memorial Day. Whether it would be in person or virtual was left undecided, awaiting further developments. But then someone came up with what we hope will prove a better idea. Everyone prefers an in person meeting, but there will likely still be Covid issues in early June. So it was decided to postpone the meeting until near the end of summer, after campers have departed Camp Tomahawk but the facility is still available for our use. The date is Saturday, August 28. We certainly expect it to be safe to meet by then, but whatever Center for Disease Control recommendations are then in effect will be observed. Save the date!

It also appears that some modified form of Cakes at the Lake will be returning at Hunt Hill. Events will probably be outdoors, and details are not yet finalized, so watch for updates on the LLPA and Hunt Hill web sites, and for email announcements.

Speaking of email, if you have not yet renewed your 2021 membership please consider doing so now, and do not be reluctant to include your email address. Our membership information is given to no one, and that means no one. Email is a highly effective and inexpensive method of communicating with members, but we can't reach you if we don't know your address.

Meanwhile, summer is just around the corner. Enjoy it safely.

Joe Thrasher

President, LLPA

DNR Young Walleye Survey

by Randy Krautkramer

If you happened to be out on the lake or in your yard overlooking the lake on the evening of September 29, you may have seen a boat with numerous bright lights and a shocking boom. The DNR was active that night surveying Long Lake for young walleye less than 12 inches in length. Such surveys are used to look at natural reproduction as well as stocking success on Long Lake.

The survey (September of 2020) looked at natural reproduction in the lake. The stocking of approximately 35,000 seven inch walleyes from the Spooner Hatchery into Long Lake took place the following weeks in early October, so they would not be included in this report. The survey covered both the north and south ends of the lake and covered about 12 miles of cumulative shoreline. There were 32 walleyes sampled from six to twelve inches. These fish came from natural reproduction. These lower numbers are typical in pre-stocking surveys.

According to Craig Roberts, DNR Fisheries Biologist for Burnett and Washburn Counties, the DNR plans to survey the lake again this fall for young walleye. The 2021 survey will tell the DNR how well the 2020 stocking survived. The one-year old walleye numbers (8 – 12 inches) should be higher in 2021. The DNR is tentatively planning to do a full survey in 2022 looking at all gamefish and panfish present in Long Lake. This will be similar to the 2015 survey but will not include a creel report.

Yellow Flag Iris: A non-native invasive plant now on Long Lake

Article and photographs by Byron Crouse

I have seen a spread of pretty yellow flowers along the shoreline of Long Lake over the past several years. I live in the Narrows section of the lake and noticed they are spreading southward following the flowage of water. My initial reaction was “they are so pretty, pretty yellow iris”. Then at a session on invasive species, I learned about the invasive yellow flag iris.



This invasive perennial plant is a native of Eurasia believed to have been brought to the US to decorate water gardens. Unfortunately, it has escaped and now thrives in wetlands, shorelines and can grow into a floating aquatic mat. You will recognize it easily in May to June when the yellow flower typical of an iris is in full bloom. When the bloom is not present it can be mistaken for the native blue iris which is not

invasive. Cattails and sweet flag can also be mistaken if you are just using the leaf for identification.

The invasive nature of the yellow flag iris arises from its ability to spread by both seeds and rhizomes. It grows on a dense and thick mat of rhizomes and fragments of the rhizome produce new plants. It produces seeds in the seed pod that are angled capsules about 2 to 4 inches long, producing up to 100 seeds. The seeds are a pale color as they develop and become darker brown as they mature, with the capsule of the seed containing air pockets promoting the seeds spreading by floating and drifting in the water. The seeds are about 1/3 the size of a dime. The plant is poisonous, resulting in wildlife not eating the plant. It can also have a substance that can cause skin irritation. As the plant becomes established it grows into larger clumps and can evolve into a floating mat. Both the clumps and mats can alter the shoreline habitat and squeeze out native species. The dense nature of the plant also interferes with normal water movement and traps sediment. The WI DNR designates the yellow flag iris as a restricted species, meaning it is an invasive species already

established in the state and it causes or has the potential to cause significant environmental or economic harm or harm to human health.

Control of this relatively new but spreading invasive plant on Long Lake comes through mechanical and chemical treatments. Small clumps can be removed by pulling and digging the plant out. You should wear gloves since the sap is irritating to the skin in some people. One needs to be attentive to getting all the rhizomes out; otherwise the plant will regrow and need to be removed again. Once removed, it should be disposed of in a landfill or burned. Cutting the seed heads off will stop the spread by seeds spreading through the water. I have removed several clumps of yellow flag iris. I found that it was not too difficult when it was the size of what would make a dining room table centerpiece with a rhizome ball about 8-12 inches in diameter. The one clump on my property has not returned now over the past 2 years.



When the plant expands to larger clusters, the weight of the rhizome ball and the ability to successfully remove all the densely matted rhizomes makes digging the plant out impractical. Then, aquatic herbicides can be used. This however requires permitting and one should contact the WI DNR for support.

The LLPA monitors for aquatic invasive species and will be monitoring the yellow flag iris. If you see this growing on your shore, please remove this and dispose of the plant in the landfill. At a minimum, cut off the seed pods, bagging them and disposing them in the landfill before their seeds mature and spread through lake currents. We hope good citizenship will result in our controlling this without the need for herbicides.

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Invasives/fact/YellowFlagIris.html>

LOONS OF LONG LAKE - PART 2

by Byron Crouse and Barb Sabatke
Photographs by Byron Crouse

As the ice retreats and open water starts lapping the shoreline, we start hearing the calls of migrating birds heading north. Loons are among the first to return. Loons from this area, while primarily spending the winter in the Gulf of Mexico, face many challenges. Hurricanes, oil spills like the BP Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill in 2010, and toxic Red Tide impact the regions where the loons winter. The juvenile loons from last fall that migrated south for the first time will not return here until they are fully mature in another several years. They may spend some of the summer on the east coast of the US. Studies have shown this is another time of significant mortality for loons as this is an unfamiliar area for them. The reason for spending time in this area is unknown. Sadly, the overall outcome is that only about half of the juvenile loons that migrate south for the first time will ever survive to return to the Long Lake area. The good news is that those survivors can live to be 20+ years old.



The male loon is the first to return and is responsible for selecting the nesting site. The loons make the trip from the Gulf in two to four days, usually arriving in April. After taking several weeks to recover from their journey they prepare their nest. Loons prefer a nest near the shore adjacent to the lake so they can swim to and from the nest. Loons spend all their time in water as their legs are located further back in their body, making them extraordinary swimmers but unable to walk on land like other waterfowl. In a good year, one to two eggs will be laid in May. Both the male and female loon take their turn on the nest. As they incubate their

egg(s), they place the egg(s) on the top of their feet and hold the eggs close to their body. While this helps keep the egg(s) warm, if the adult is startled and scared off the nest, making a hasty escape they may drop the egg(s) in the water. It is critical to stay at least 200 feet from a nesting loon to avoid driving the loon off the nest. If anxious or fearful, loons on the nest will lay down flat with their head toward the water (hang-over position) trying to camouflage the nest. If further threatened, they will slip into the water staying near the nest and low in the water. If the loons are frequently driven off the nest, they may abandon the nest and the egg(s) will not develop. If you see a loon nesting, enjoy the wonder of nature before you, but please keep your distance and protect our loon population.

We are fortunate here in Wisconsin to have two nationally known loon programs, Loon Watch out of Northland College and the Loon Project out of the Oneida County region. Through their research, they provide us great information about our loons. The Loon Watch just released their latest information on the loon population survey that has been conducted every five years since 1985. For the first time in 35 years, there was a drop in the number of loons in Wisconsin. While the number was not statistically significant, it was the first time where we did not see an increase in the number of loons in Wisconsin. The Loon Project, where they band loons each year and can then monitor their movement and return in future years, has also been finding fewer loons returning to breed. Those that do return have been having fewer chicks, the chicks are smaller in size and fewer are reaching maturity. This is obviously a genuinely concerning pattern. Seeing these two research efforts showing signs of a declining loon population, it becomes even more important to look at what we can do to protect our 'Loons of Long Lake'.

On a global scale we are seeing the impact of a warming climate. With this temperature increase, we are seeing the loons breeding southern border moving north with northern Wisconsin and Minnesota still serving as a summer home for loons. Unfortunately, the Audubon Society predicts that the breeding areas could all move north to Canada in the next 30 to 50 years if climate warming predictions become a reality. (<https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees>). Already the increase in extreme weather events is undeniable as the frequency and severity of hurricanes is increasing and impacting the loon population at their wintering sites. The increase in extreme rain events which we are experiencing here in Wisconsin with rainfalls washing out roads also flood out loon nests that are built on the water's edge. Fortunately, some of our nesting areas on Long Lake are man-made floating nests that can float up with the rising water. We also

know that 20% of all loon deaths are the result of lead poisoning from fishing weights and jigs. Fisherman have told me about loons going after their jigs when fishing and even on occasion catching a loon. This seems more common in the fall when the juvenile loons are curious and trying to learn to feed themselves in preparation for migration. We all know how toxic lead can be if it is in our drinking water, but did you know that one lead sinker can kill a loon? Just as duck hunters of 'gotten the lead out', we need to change our fishing habits and 'get the lead out' by switching to non-lead sinkers and jigs. Long Lake Bait and Tackle near the Narrows carries tin and tungsten weights and jigs providing an option for lead-free fishing.

We want there to be loons on Long Lake for many years to come. To support this goal:

1. Enjoy watching and listening to the loons during our open water months on Long Lake!
2. Protect the loons when they are on the nest by staying at least 200 feet away from the nest. If you see the loons acting nervous through their vocalizations or behavior, you need to move further away immediately.
3. Areas with loon nests should be treated as 'No Wake Zone' areas to avoid boat wakes from washing out a loon nest with eggs.
4. When boating, maintain the 200-foot distance from loons to avoid running into loon chicks or juvenile loons that may not be able to avoid boats or motor props.
5. "Get the Lead Out" - safely dispose of your lead sinkers and jigs and replace them with lead-free tackle.
6. Properly dispose of monofilament fish line, do not throw it in the lake where birds can become tangled in it.
7. Learn about climate change and explore options to assist in preventing global warming.

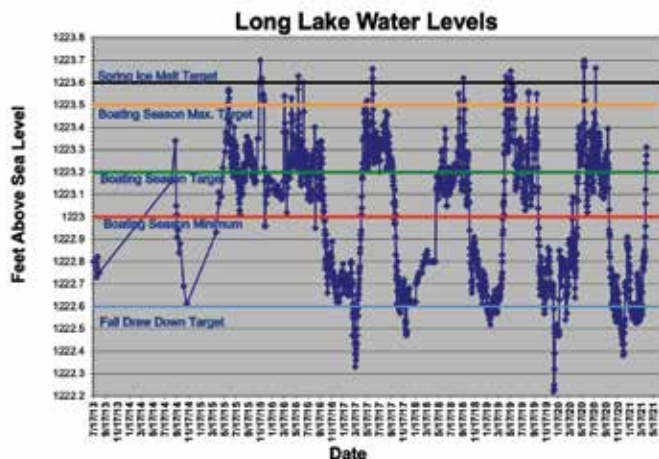


Water Level Update

by Randy Poznansky

The Long Lake dam is owned by Washburn County and operated by the Washburn County Highway Department (WCHD). Thus, the Department controls water levels, subject somewhat to the vagaries of weather, and also subject to the terms of an Inspection, Operation and Monitoring

Plan (IOMP) approved by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The IOMP sets upper and lower levels as well as target levels somewhere in-between. The extreme permitted upper limit for Long Lake is 1,224.2 (all numbers are feet above sea level) and the extreme permitted lower limits are 1,220.5 in the winter and 1,222.0 in the summer.



The summer and winter seasonal target levels the WCHD actually tries to maintain are 1,223.2 in the summer and 1,222.6 in the winter. The summer target level of 1,223.2 has been in effect for six years (see chart), and is supported by the LLPA and the Tomahawk Scout Reservation.

Since the target levels are by definition between the minimum and maximum limits, WCHD has discretion to alter them. Town of Madge officials have recently suggested that the summer target level should be lowered by 0.2 feet, or approximately 2.5 inches, noting in the past that was the

Water Level Update continued

old target level. Under a recently adopted written policy of WCHD no such change can be made unless supported by all three townships in which Long Lake is located, those being the towns of Birchwood, Long Lake and Madge.

The current 1,223.2 summer boating target has been used for the last six summers as the lower 1,223.0 target did create a reduced water level buffer for many lake shore owners when drier weather conditions often occurred. Many times, the water level would fall below target, making it more difficult to navigate the bays, getting boats off lifts, increasing prop damage while creating an increased opportunity for disturbing the natural lake bed from boat turbulence.

This is why the LLPA recommended the current levels years ago and for most lake shore owners and Scout camp these levels have been well received. Of course, there are times that some will think the water level is too high or too low but when rain is not replenishing the lake level many issues are created. It is much easier to let extra water out following rain than it is to keep the level up when mother nature is not cooperating during a drought.

Anyone having concerns about the possible reduction of the summer boating target level should express them to their town officials.

2021 Long Lake Survey Results

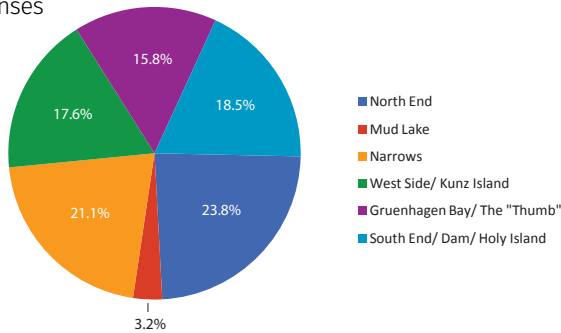
by Jeff Linkenheld

The LLPA Sustainability and Capacity Committee wants to thank all of you that took the time to complete our first survey. We had almost 350 responses! Thank you. Your input will help form our mission as we move forward. Here are some survey results to share with you.

We had a very good response from all areas of Long Lake. The survey was very well distributed. Responses to certain numbered questions are as follows:

1. What area of the lake best describes your residence?

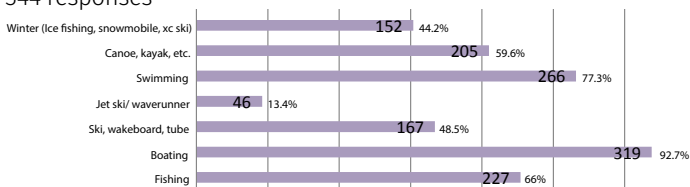
341 responses



Many people enjoy the lake in a variety of ways. Here are the top responses:

3. How do you spend your time on Long Lake? (select all that generally apply)

344 responses



Concerns about the current conditions and future of Long Lake were diverse, and different areas of the lake have different concerns. Here are the top five responses for biggest concern:

4. What is your biggest concern for Long Lake right now?	Count of Responses
Excessive weed growth	86
Invasive species threat	78
Shoreline erosion	61
Seasonal algae bloom	38
Fishery	34

But the number one concern varied by the area of the lake:

Top Concern For Each Area by % Response		
Gruenhagen Bay/Thumb	Invasive Species	28%
Mud Lake	Invasive Species	45%
Narrows	Shoreline Erosion	36%
North End	Algae Bloom	27%
South End/ Holy Island	Excessive Weed Growth	53%
West Side/ Kunz Island	Invasive Species	24%
No Location Given	Shoreline Erosion	40%

What does this mean for us? Well, Long Lake has some challenges. Numerous studies have been done on this important resource, but external forces (climate change, invasive species, development) are working against us. If we, the residents, are not willing to protect OUR lake, then who on the outside will? That's the challenge facing all of us and the charge to the Sustainability and Capacity Committee to come up with some fresh ideas. Stay tuned for further updates as we move forward. If you would like any more information on our committee, feel free to contact LLPA Board Members DJ Ehrike or Sandy Campbell. Thank you and enjoy your summer at the lake!

Future of LLPA

by Randy Champeau

The mission statement of Long Lake Preservation Association is “To preserve and protect Long Lake, its watersheds and ecosystems.” Historically, LLPA has attempted to fulfill this mission by pursuit of three broad goals. These are: Education and Communication, which includes newsletters, calendars, Cakes at the Lake programming and email communication; Management, including Clean Boats Clean Waters inspections, Fish Sticks construction and loon nesting platform construction and maintenance; and Monitoring, involving water quality testing, aquatic plant surveys, curly-leaf pondweed mapping and the like.

In 2019 LLPA conducted a review of its mission and goals, and affirmed and updated them in a document entitled *2019 State of Long Lake*, which is essentially the master plan for LLPA operations. But a fourth goal was added, that being to directly examine the *sustainability* of LLPA as an organization and its *capacity* to respond to growing concerns for lake health, such as algae blooms, siltation, weed growth and invasive species threats.

Capacity is largely a matter of economic resources. In the past numerous State agencies and affiliates have contributed to and even made possible some of the many accomplishments of LLPA. They include, to name just a few, the Wisconsin DNR and its grant programs, University of Wisconsin–Extension and UW Stevens Point Center for Watershed Science. In recent years, however, these and similar programs have experienced significant funding cuts via legislative action; some programs have been eliminated entirely. It took many years to develop the unique missions of those programs, and it does not appear that they will be replaced or returned to past funding levels in the near future. Thus, to continue to pursue its mission and maintain or add new programs LLPA will be significantly more dependent on its own resources.

Sustainability is an issue faced by many non-profit organizations dependent entirely on volunteers to operate. Any volunteer base wanes over time. Many of the original volunteers have moved on. Younger and part time residents have work and family commitments which conflict with volunteering. Finding those willing to serve in management positions can be especially difficult.

That is not to say that LLPA is going away any time soon. Some grant funding remains, and our membership has been especially generous with monetary contributions above and beyond dues paying. Our membership numbers are strong, and for the first time in a long time all positions for officers and directors are filled. But it would be short sighted not to recognize both capacity and sustainability as issues lurking over the horizon, and the time to address them is now, while things are still going fairly well.

To this end LLPA established a Sustainability and Capacity Committee. After more than three months of meetings, discussion and research the committee determined that addressing these issues is a challenging task, especially by volunteers whose backgrounds are impressive but not necessarily in the required fields. The committee recommended retention of an outside consultant, and after a number of discussions recommended Dr. Jeremy Solin. He is a UW Extension specialist holding advanced degrees and having extensive experience working with non-profit organizations. He has a strong background in the sciences, particularly in water resources.

The board approved, and Dr. Solin signed on as of March 1, 2021. Over the course of the next year he will study and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of existing operations, identify possible alternative organizational structures LLPA might consider and facilitate selection of possible directions and plans for moving forward.

We are aware of the many special and diverse interests comprising the Long Lake community. There are full time residents and part time residents hailing literally from Connecticut to Arizona. Preferred uses of the lake vary widely. The lake has distinct geographic areas, making it essentially multiple lakes in one. It lies within three different townships and is served by three different post offices. Given this diversity there should be a uniting mission to protect and improve the integrity of the community and corresponding water quality of the lake. At present LLPA is the only institution devoted solely to this purpose. Please watch for continued notices on how LLPA pursues its potential for the future.

FORWARD SERVICE REQUESTED

FISH STICKS UPDATE

by Randy Krautkramer

In early March of 2021 another Fish Sticks project on Long Lake was completed. The placement was a joint effort of Camp Tomahawk, the Long Lake Chamber of Commerce and the LLPA. This is the second year the Chamber has been involved by supplying most of the labor and the equipment to cut the live trees and place them on the lake.

We are very fortunate to have Camp Tomahawk participate in this project by providing shoreline and all the live trees needed for placement. This year two locations were used with four bundles of four trees at each location for a total of 36 trees put in place. With its start in 2015 there are now seven completed Fish Sticks placements along Camp Tomahawk shoreline, each with multiple bundles of trees. This is truly a great asset addition to the Long Lake fishery.

These Fish Sticks are designed to create an excellent underwater habitat for fish and numerous species lower in the food chain. For a more detailed explanation of how the Fish Sticks are constructed and placed see the LLPA web site at <http://longlakellpa.org/fish-sticks/> or the DNR's Fish Sticks brochure at http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/documents/outreach/fishsticksbest_practices.pdf.

