

To preserve and protect Long Lake, its watershed and ecosystems



Long Lake

Preservation Association
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— Photo by Byron Crouse

President's Message

Spring is Here, I Hear. For now, that Rodgers & Hart show tune (I Married an Angel, 1938) has it right. As I write this I hear robins and blackbirds, but see an occasional snowflake drift down upon ice bound solidly to the shore. But that will change, probably by the time you read this.

Some changes are also coming to LLPA. You will note from the accompanying article from the Sustainability and Capacity Committee that Long Lake is classified as an impaired water for purposes of reports to the US Congress. That is true, but before panic sets in this should be put in perspective. The federal Clean Water Act of 1970 requires biennial reports from the states listing their impaired waters. In the case of Long Lake, Wisconsin bases this classification solely on phosphorus levels, which is less sophisticated than how the DNR determines the so-called trophic states of lakes (in a nutshell, mesotrophic is pristine, oligotrophic is what we see in Long Lake everywhere except the upper basin above the Narrows, and eutrophic is getting pretty green). Chlorophyll levels

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President's Message continued

figure into trophic state determinations, but not reports to under the Clean Water Act. In Long Lake the upper basin, but only the upper basin, has been reported as eutrophic for about 20 years. This results at least in part from the fact that naturally high phosphorus levels in groundwater flowing into the upper basin are contributing to plant and algae growth (see article in the Fall 2020 newsletter, <https://longlakellpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LLPA-Fall-2020-Newsletter.pdf>). It seems quite probable that the report of the entire lake as impaired results from high phosphorus levels in that one location. It should also be noted that the federal report lists the priority of responding to the report of impairment as low.

But while we should not panic, we definitely should not ignore the situation. While testing of water clarity throughout the lake has been fairly consistent for 30 years, these tests are performed once a month during summer months so may not tell a day-to-day story, and anecdotal reports in recent years point to increasing greening in late summer, especially in the upper basin. We can't do anything about groundwater phosphorus, but we can take steps to prevent runoff which only increases nutrient levels. The DNR Healthy Lakes and Rivers grant program comes to mind. The difficulty for LLPA is that with only volunteer help and no paid staff we do not have the human resources to do what is necessary to implement such programs. Various grants are available which might increase LLPA's operational abilities, but an essential first step is to develop a comprehensive Lake Management Plan. The Board of Directors recently approved applying for a planning grant to assist in doing just that. A consulting firm has been retained to assist in preparing the grant application, due September 1, 2022. You can expect to be hearing much more about this in the near future.

On a brighter note, what's old is new again. The annual meeting is back to its original time, Cakes at the Lake is its old self and there will again be an Ice Cream Social.

There will also be a resumption of apparel sales, which has been quite popular in the past. But instead of stocking inventory and finding sufficient volunteers to store and sell it, we will be giving online sales a trial. Details are available on the LLPA web site.

Incidentally, all of this depends on a strong membership. If you have not yet renewed your 2022 membership, this is a good time-right now. Forms are available at <http://longlakellpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/LLPA-Membership-Form6.pdf>.

On a final and personal note, this will, at last, be my final President's Message. When I first accepted this job I thought it would be for a single term, not the three non-consecutive ones it turned out to be. In the past it has been difficult to find busy people to undertake these duties, but this too has changed. The Board of Directors is now more diverse in professional backgrounds and personal interests than perhaps at any time in its 30 year history. The future is bright.

It's been a great ride. Now it's time to fish.

Joe Thrasher

President – Long Lake Preservation Association.

A HINT OF NORMALCY

Cakes at the Lake is back (this time with real pancakes and the works)! The Ice Cream Social is back! And the Annual Meeting returns to its usual time, the first Saturday following Memorial Day. Here are the events for the summer of 2022:

ANNUAL MEETING:

Saturday, June 4, Camp Tomahawk

ICE CREAM SOCIAL:

Saturday, July 30, Location to be determined.

CAKES AT THE LAKE:

(all from 8AM to 11AM, Hunt Hill; for more on Hunt Hill and its events see <https://hunthill.org>)

June 11	Predators
June 25	Rare Turtles of Wisconsin
July 9	Moose
August 13	Spider Webs
August 27	Wolves

Have a great summer!

Those Darn Weeds

by Joe Thrasher

We often hear complaints of excessive aquatic plant growth (OK, weeds, which are simply defined as plants in inconvenient locations) around docks, in swimming or wading areas or in the boating approach to docks or lifts. “Those darn weeds! Can’t I do something about them?” Yes, you can, to a point. The Wisconsin Administrative Code, section NR 109.06, allows some aquatic plant removal without a DNR permit provided it is done manually, either by hand pulling or by cutting. At present removal is limited to a 30-foot strip as measured along the shoreline. We say at present advisedly, as all administrative rules regarding aquatic plant management are currently undergoing revision, but administrative rule-making is an extended process and will not likely be completed for this summer, so for now we go with NR 109.06. It is in some respects outdated, as it was promulgated at a time when shoreland zoning rules were different and it was drafted with them in mind, but it is still workable.

Taken literally the rule would seem to require that all docks and lifts be located within the 30-foot zone. That would range from impractical to impossible in many instances, and we have been unable to confirm that it has ever been interpreted or enforced that way. In the event of multiple docks it would still seem advisable to locate the cleared area around the most used structure.

Hand pulling is probably the most effective method of removal as long as the roots pull loose, but cutting keeps them down for a while and definitely helps. There are relatively inexpensive devices on the market designed for that purpose. Do an internet search for “aquatic plant cutters,” or words to that effect, and you will find a variety of them.

There are two aspects to the rule, besides the 30-foot width limit, to keep in mind. First, manual means manual. Use of any form of power equipment is not allowed. Second, all removed plants must be truly removed from the lake, not left to float away to take root elsewhere. Keep these aspects of the rule in mind and yes, you can do something about those darn weeds.

HERONS ON LONG LAKE

Article and photographs by Byron Crouse

The **Great Blue Heron** (*Ardea herodias*) is one of the first shore birds I can remember recognizing. Even with its silent and motionless hunting style along the shoreline, its size, standing four feet high, and a wingspan of six feet, allowed me to see it even as a young birder. When it flies, it has a characteristic slow beat of its broad wings, the neck is pulled in a “S” shape and its long legs extend behind its body. Great Blue Heron and Sand Hill Crane may be mistaken for each other as both are tall with long legs and necks. Cranes fly with straight necks while the Great Blue, as other herons and Egrets, fly with its neck held in the characteristic “S” shape. Despite its size, with hollow bones, a Great Blue Heron only weighs 5 to 6 lbs. Over the years, I learned how interesting this bird is. Today it is the most widely distributed and best-known heron in North America, but it was not always easy for herons.



The Great Blue Heron played a formative role in the conservation movement to protect birds. Demand for plumage from the back and neck of herons used in stylish women’s hats in the late 1800s resulted in unsustainable hunting of herons such as the Great Blue Heron and Egret (another member of the heron family). In 1896, Harriet Hemenway and Minna B.

Hall held a series of tea parties for hundreds of influential women in the NE region of the US calling for an end to plume hats and killing of birds for their feathers. This led to the formation of the Massachusetts Audubon Society in 1896, and subsequently the National Audubon Society and passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Today the Great Blue Heron population is stable or slightly increasing and is not on the endangered species list.

The Great Blue Heron has also benefited from the recovery of the beaver population. The swamps and wetlands formed by the beaver dams provide nesting and foraging habitat. Today the herons can be found throughout Wisconsin and much of North America. Here on Long Lake, you can observe Great Blue Heron along the shorelines and in

the marshy bays. Many of us see them on the ends of our docks, and even if we do not see the bird, we do see the “whitewash” they leave behind.

Great Blue Herons mate and are monogamous with a new partner each season. The male picks out the nesting site in a colony or “heronry” where there may be five to hundreds of nests. The nests are usually built in trees but can be found in brush or on the ground. These nests are built of sticks and grasses over several days to several weeks, with the males bringing the nesting materials to the female who then builds the nest. A new nest typically is twenty inches wide, but they can reuse nests, which over time, get quite large, sometimes reaching a width of four feet and a depth of 3 ½ feet. The female will lay 2 to 6 pale blue eggs that are 2 X 3 inches in size. Both parents participate in the incubation period of 28 days, and nesting period which lasts several months, until the young are almost adult size. The first year of life after fledging - becoming capable of flying- is a very risky period for young Great Blue Herons with a mortality of 60 to 70 percent as they learn to forage and care for themselves. It is thought that this high mortality rate is due to difficulty learning to forage for themselves in the fall and the challenges of surviving during their first winter for those wintering in more northern regions. The life span of surviving Great Blue Herons is long, with the oldest identified heron being in Texas at 24 ½ years old.

The Great Blue Heron has several unique adaptations related to its preening. The middle toe of their feet has fringe-like rounded teeth, like a hair comb, that they use to clean fish slime and other dirt from their feathers. They also have a downy feather patch on their chest that develops when they are young. The heron breaks down these downy feathers with its bill until they are frayed and powdery. This “powder down” is then worked into the feathers while the bird preens, capturing the cleaning and protective nature of this powdery down.

In addition to the comb-like feature on their middle toe, the hind toe is on the same level as the front three toes. As they walk on brush or shorelines, they stand on all four toes for greater stability. The stability is further enhanced by a tire tread-like covering of the bottom of the feet.



Great Blue Heron preparing to eat a turtle

It is normal for the Great Blue Heron not to migrate, provided there is food available during winter. While there is wide variation in their migration patterns, in Wisconsin they will often winter in central or southern Wisconsin where there is open water and access to food. Great Blue

Heron eat nearly anything, including fish, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, insects, and other birds. Their eyes have evolved with a high percentage of rod-type photoreceptors that improves their night vision and allows hunting day and night. They also have uniquely shaped neck vertebrae allowing the S shape to the neck and an ability to strike at food quickly and at a distance. They have strong mandibles (lower jaw) for grabbing and crushing small prey, or they can impale larger fish and break sharp fin spines before swallowing them.



Adult Green Heron

As compared to the Great Blue Heron, which you can see on docks, shorelines or other areas along the water's edge, the **Green Heron** (*Butorides virescens*) is much more secretive. I've found the Green Heron

in the marshy areas of the creek going into Mud Lake and in the marshy areas on the west side of Belvidere Bay. Compared to its relative, the Great Blue Heron, the Green Heron is much smaller with a length of 16 to 18 inches, a wingspan of 25 to 27 inches and a weight of 8 to 9 ounces. It is short and stocky with shorter legs and a thicker neck usually drawn up to the body. Feathers on the crown can form a small crest if raised. The Green Heron is often dark in color with a chestnut breast and neck. I find the name a little misleading as the light must hit the feathers of the back exactly right to produce a deep green color that seems gray blue in color to me. The bill is heavy and dark, often referred to as daggerlike, that they use for spearing or grasping their prey. They have a piercing "skeow" call heard often when they are alarmed (https://assets.whatbird.com/api/sound/birds_na_147/sound/8432) or a "kuk" sound made when startled (https://assets.whatbird.com/api/sound/birds_na_147/sound/8433).

Green Herons feast on small fish but will eat insects, amphibians, reptiles, and rodents. (I've heard of folks on Long Lake appreciating the Green Heron for reducing their chipmunk population.) They hunt along shorelines and brushy water edges at all times of the day, preferring shallow water areas less than 4 inches deep, leaving the deeper areas for their long-legged relatives. One interesting fact about the Green Heron is they are one of only a few birds that use tools. They are known to chew on small twigs and then drop the twigs (or other bait) on the water to attract a minnow or small panfish, then grasp or spear the fish when it surfaces to examine the twig.



Green Heron hunting

Unlike the Great Blue Heron, the Green Heron usually does not nest in large colonies. The male will typically start building a nest with thin sticks in a secluded area in a fork of a tree or in brush and then attract a mate. Courtship behaviors consist of loud calls, snapping their bills, stretching their necks, or exaggerating their wing flaps while flying. The female joins in building the nest, usually 8 to 12 inches wide and 1 to 2 inches deep. The clutch will consist of 3 to 5 pale green eggs about 1 X 1½ inches in size. The incubation period lasts around 20 days and both adults share the incubation and rearing duties. At hatch, the chicks are helpless and stay in the nest 16 to 17 days; about a week after leaving the nest they can fly. The young stay with their parents for a month after leaving the nest while learning to fend for themselves.

The Green Heron is common throughout Wisconsin during the breeding season. In preparation for winter, the Green Heron migrate in late August through October to the southern coastal regions, and some go further to Mexico or northern South America. While the population of Green Herons has declined in the past several decades, they are not considered endangered.

I am finishing this article on 3/31, as March is leaving us more like a lion than a lamb, with fresh snow and the lake fully covered with ice. As you read this, we are fortunate to have these two herons return and join us on Long Lake. As with any wildlife sightings, enjoy the view, observe the behaviors of these birds, and listen for their calls. Please try not to disturb them, especially in the spring and early summer when they are nesting.

BOATING ETIQUETTE TIPS

Hope everyone is gearing up for a great summer at the lake! It will be great to feel the warm sun again after a long winter. There were many days last summer when the lake traffic was up. With boating season just around the corner, we thought it might be a good reminder to post some basic boating etiquette tips as a refresher and a primer for the upcoming season. The following thoughts were gathered from a compilation of several internet sources:

Give ‘Em Space. This might be the number one boating etiquette rule. Be mindful of other boaters, fishermen, swimmers, and our friendly loons! Long Lake is big and there is no reason to boat right on top of others. In Wisconsin, the following boating actions are considered illegal:

- Operating a vessel repeatedly in a circuitous manner within 200 feet of another vessel or person in the water.
- Operating a vessel within 100 feet of the shoreline, any dock, or raft at greater than “slow, no wake speed.”
- Operating a PWC at faster than “slow, no wake speed” within 100 feet of any other vessel, within 200 feet of shore, or within 100 feet of any dock or raft

Watch The Wake. The fastest way to make the wrong kinds of waves is to literally throw a big, obtrusive wave at another boat, swimmer, angler or shoreline. This is much more than being a nuisance or disrupting others’ experience on the water. It’s dangerous to those unable to tolerate a large wake, like canoes and kayaks. Throwing large wakes near shore also means your prop could be cutting weeds which promotes debris, future weed exploitation, and increased nutrients (algae). Wake boats are especially encouraged to stay farther offshore to limit shoreline erosion and lake bed disruption issues. Several wakeboating signs have been posted around the lake.

Keep the tunes in check. Sound is amplified over the water, so keep the music at a decent level, especially at night.

Slow your roll. Watch for and mind our no wake zones. These are established to provide “speed limits” for the safety of all on the water.

Rules of the water. Become familiar with navigation rules. Remember that the boat you are passing has the “right of way” and it’s your job to avoid him. Don’t “tailgate” other boats, especially anyone pulling a skier or tuber. You never know when they decide to stop or let go, and most boats won’t turn on a dime.

Be polite – give a wave. When passing another boat, give a little wave hello. Boating is all about having fun and being part of the boating community. Embrace it, enjoy it, and make it a pleasant time for you and your fellow boaters.

See you on the water!



SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE *Update*

Happy Spring from the Sustainability Committee of LLPA. We want to give you an update on our work this past year. You might recall our survey of members from back in February 2021. We had a great response of over 400 and the results were very fruitful. The results of the survey were published in our Spring 2021 LLPA newsletter. As many people have noted or commented, particularly in this past year, the state of Long Lake is in flux and is trending in the wrong direction. Comments about the negative turn in weed growth and water quality were very common last summer.

The State of Wisconsin continues to list Long Lake as an impaired water body in its 2020 Water Quality Report to Congress. We also know that the north end has been listed as eutrophic for quite a while, and the idea on how to preserve the lake is now the question. Several large-scale ideas to maintain Long Lake came out of our survey. However, the top lake concerns of water clarity, sedimentation, and excessive weed growth are not issues that can be solved by a few volunteers on a Saturday morning. The Sustainability Committee was tasked, in part, with identifying how to make the organizational structure of LLPA more robust and able to fund and manage large scale projects on the lake. With the help of Dr. Jeremy Solin of the UW Extension Service, we considered several possible organizational structures for LLPA to advance this goal. In the end, our recommendation was to remain a voluntary organization but pursue ways that we can work toward a full or part time staff person to focus on Long Lake on a daily basis. One option we are considering is partnering with Northwest Regional Plan Commission based in Spooner. This group has the grant writing expertise that could come in handy for us. More to come as we explore this idea further.

However, before we can tackle any of these larger issues, we first need a current and comprehensive Lake Management Plan for Long Lake that the DNR will use as our blueprint to fund future projects. The Committee is working to get this study funded for completion in 2023. For the health of Long Lake, this is a necessary step to take if we are to maintain our precious resource near its current condition. Should you have any ideas on this topic or wish to help in any way, please contact one of our committee chairs, DJ Ehrike (musicaldje@yahoo.com) or Sandy Campbell (sandycampbell11@gmail.com).



— Photo by Joe Thrasher



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