

To preserve and protect Long Lake, its watershed and ecosystems

Long Lake

Preservation Association

Issue 69 • Fall 2021

— Photo by Sandy Hovey Campbell

President's Message

The air is crisp, skies are October blue, geese are forming Vs and robins are winging their way south. Frost will soon be on the pumpkins. Leaves have fallen-and so has the lake level with the drawdown which started October 1 and was completed around mid-month.

LLPA receives questions and comments about lake levels fairly often, enough that it is again worth explaining how it all works. Washburn County owns the dam, and within parameters set by the Department of Natural Resources has discretion to regulate water levels. The Washburn County Highway Department is assigned immediate responsibility for operating all dams owned by the county.

No matter what the water level, not everyone will be happy with it. That is because shoreline topography differs from place to place, and preferred usages of the lake also differ. What's ideal for one may not be ideal for another;

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President's Message continued

a happy medium is the best that can be achieved. Recognizing this, in 2015 a group composed of representatives of LLPA, DNR and the Washburn County Highway Commissioner conferred and reached a consensus on target levels. Those levels are 1,223.2 feet above sea level for summer and 1,222.6 after the fall drawdown (whether there should even be a drawdown is debatable for a variety of reasons, and at the 2019 annual meeting LLPA members voted overwhelming to recommended it cease, but that's a topic for another day). Considering the vagaries of weather, the Highway Department has done a good job of adhering to those targets.

Long lake is situated within three townships, Birchwood, Long Lake and Madge. In November of 2020 the Highway Department adopted a policy that it would not change target levels at dams it operates without the agreement of all towns within which the lake is located. The up side of that is that it assures changes will not be made on a whim, but on the other hand town boards have a lot more on their plates than water levels, which may not be a priority issue with them and over which, to our knowledge, they have never had responsibility or authority, or lake management expertise, which has long rested with the County.

Recently at least one town board member has suggested that summer target water levels of Long Lake are too high, and should be lowered. Each town has appointed citizen members to a joint committee to study the matter and report to their respective towns with recommendations. Neither Camp Tomahawk nor LLPA, together representing a significant majority of lakeshore owners and of total lakeshore, were invited to participate. That committee is considering not only lowering summer water levels but also starting the drawdown earlier, which would likely require many to get boats off from lifts earlier. It should be noted that eliminating the drawdown altogether is not off the table.

At the 2021 annual meeting of LLPA on August 28, ballots were distributed asking member's opinion of whether target summer lake levels and drawdown dates should be altered. Ninety-seven per cent favored no change to either (eliminating the drawdown was not considered because the overwhelming recommendation of the 2019 annual meeting to do just that met with no results).

A joint email from Camp Tomahawk and LLPA was directed to the towns and the Highway Department advising of this, and concluding "we also appeal to the Towns to include us in any lake level discussions." To date we have received no response from the townships, but the Highway Commissioner did write to reiterate that water level decisions are "up to the 3 Townships" and that they "determine how they take [outside] input on water level targets and drawdowns. "

In short, what influence LLPA or the Scouts have on the matter is unclear. If you don't want to see water levels lower in the summer than they have been in recent years, or to drop even lower in September, and there are a variety of reasons why many would not, we strongly urge you to contact your town board Chair and Supervisors. It does not matter if you are a non-resident and don't vote here-contact them and be heard. LLPA has said what it can say; now it's up to you.

Joe Thrasher

President – Long Lake Preservation Association.

Little Things

Can Mean A Lot

by Joe Thrasher & Lisa Burns

LLPA board members often hear the question from lakeshore owners, “What can I do—specifically— to help protect the lake?” This is especially so in a year of substantial aquatic plant growth, which 2021 was, when people become concerned with excessive weed growth (a “weed” is simply an aquatic plant in an inconvenient place). Everyone wants to avoid causing any harm, but can positive steps be taken by the typical riparian owner?

Yes. When it comes to plant growth and algae blooms, prevent runoff of nutrients into the lake (when you hear “nutrients,” think “fertilizer.”) Essentially all runoff contains nutrients to some extent. For many owners, this can start with not so much an act as an omission—stop mowing to the lakeshore. Even a small vegetated buffer helps. Another added benefit is it will keep geese off the lawn. If they can’t see over it they won’t walk through it.

Additionally, depending on the specifics of the property, there are small things which can be done which collectively can make a real difference, and financial assistance may be available. The Wisconsin DNR Healthy Lakes and Rivers Grant program may contribute up to \$1,000.00 reimbursement per project for five types of practices:

1. **Fish Sticks** Trees are anchored to the shore and are partially or fully submerged. This practice primarily creates food, shelter, and breeding areas for all sorts of creatures, but can also help prevent bank erosion. This practice may not be practical for the typical lot, but the rest are.
2. **Native Vegetation Planting** also includes trees and shrubs as well as smaller plants. This practice not only helps reduce runoff but adds great habitat for wildlife and pollinators and beautifies the shoreline. Templates of different suggested plants are available.
3. **Runoff Diversion** simply diverts water flow from the lake to other locations where it can soak into the ground. Depending on the topography of the lot, more than one may be indicated.
4. **Rock Infiltration** is an excavated pit or trench (within 1000 feet of a lake or 300 feet of a river) filled with rock that reduces runoff by storing it underground to infiltrate. This can be especially useful under eave lines and along driveways.
5. **Rain Gardens** are slight depressions in the ground planted with native vegetation, including flowers, which catch runoff and allow it to soak into the ground. They also add habitat and can be very pretty. They can be in one of two places – near the house to catch only roof runoff or farther out on the lawn to collect water from the lawn and roof.

Healthy Lakes and Rivers grants are not offered directly to landowners, but must come through local governments or qualified lake associations such as LLPA. We understand that the Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department is itself seeking grant funding for this purpose, and you may find out details by contacting Lisa Burns at lburns@co.washburn.wi.us. If enough owners express interest LLPA would certainly look into assisting (but keep in mind that LLPA is a purely volunteer association with no staff, so owner input would be critical). The current year application deadline is fast upon us, but it’s never too early to start planning for the future.

For more information visit <https://healthylakeswi.com/about/>.

RED HEADS OF LONG LAKE

by Byron Crouse

— Photos by Byron Crouse and Joe Thrasher



With our varied habitat around Long Lake, we are fortunate to have many birds to capture our interest ranging from waterfowl to raptors or colorful wood chipping sparrows. There are two redheads, however, that ‘turn our head’ when they swoop through our yards.



Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

The distinctiveness of the Red-headed Woodpecker comes from its striking and distinctive plumage with a solid red head to the bold black and white coloration of the back and

breast. When flying, its flash of red from the head and black and white body, combined with broad white wing patches scream out, “I’m a Red-headed Woodpecker and proud of it!” I remember seeing this red head on an occasional but regular basis when growing up. Then, their less frequent sighting became a very rare treat. Red-headed Woodpeckers declined by over 2% per year from 1966 to 2014, resulting in a cumulative decline of 70%, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. The State of Wisconsin classifies them as a bird of Special Concern because of their restricted range and decline in numbers. In the last few years, I’ve been excited to see them again on a regular basis around Long Lake. This link provides you recordings of the Red-headed Woodpecker: https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-headed_Woodpecker/sounds.

This past summer Hunt Hill sponsored speakers from the Red-Headed Recovery Project that was formed in 2007 to reverse the decline and encourage the recovery of Red-headed Woodpecker populations. Since 2008, Recovery Project volunteers have helped to monitor nesting Red-headed Woodpeckers and have supported research at the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, a University of Minnesota biological field station identifying optimal conditions to promote successful breeding in Red-headed Woodpecker populations. From the attendance and questions, it was clear there is a love of this bird in our area as well.

While there are some year-round residents in southern Wisconsin, our area is primarily a breeding region for the Red-headed Woodpecker. They arrive in this area in late April to May and commonly return to the same nest used previously. Courtship begins in May when the male calls and taps while presenting a potential nest cavity. He presents several new or previously occupied nest cavities to the female. She selects which nest cavity they will use to raise their young. They are very territorial and guard their region from other woodpeckers, kingbirds, and starlings. They use cavities 20 to 40 feet above ground in old snags found in pine and oak savannahs or oak barrens. These cavities have a round opening 2 inches in diameter and 8 to 24 inches deep. During the 20th century the chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease devastated trees, but the Red-headed Woodpecker benefited from the many nest sites and foraging opportunities that resulted.

The female will lay 4 to 6 eggs and both male and female adults, which are indistinguishable in appearance, participate in incubation for around 2 weeks. The chicks are altricial (helpless) when they hatch; they are naked, and their eyes are closed for the first 12 to 13 days. The young leave the nest around 4 weeks of age and the adults continue to care for the fledglings. It has been reported the adults may have another brood while still caring for the first brood.



The juveniles have a brown head, grayish belly and brownish-black back and black bars on the wing patch. In addition to eating insects acquired from their pecking, they eat acorns and berries, and are skilled at catching flying insects.

When grown, they will

be 7½ to 9 inches in length with a wingspan of 16 to 17 inches and weigh 2 to 3 ounces. Like other woodpeckers, the Red-headed has zygodactyl feet with two toes pointing forward and two pointing backward allowing for their stability on trees.

Red-headed Woodpeckers have predators. Snakes, such as black rat snakes and mammals, including raccoons and flying squirrels which climb trees to hunt Red-headed Woodpecker chicks and eggs. Adults are eaten by raptors, including Cooper’s hawks and peregrine falcons. Eastern screech-owls and red foxes also eat adult Red-headed

Red Heads of Long Lake continued

Woodpeckers. Red-headed Woodpeckers are often killed when they are hit by cars as they swoop after insects in flight.

While the numbers of Red-headed Woodpeckers have been declining, it should be noted that they have been in existence for a long time with fossil remains of a Red-headed Woodpecker found in Illinois that date back 2 million years.

While this may seem like a long time ago, fossil remains of birds found in China that date back 120 million years ago look nearly identical to today's Pileated Woodpecker.

Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)

I recall being in a dark forest as a child with dense foliage of tall oaks and maples combined with understory growth contrasted with occasional bursts of sunlight breaking through and hearing what seemed to be a prehistoric sound (https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Pileated_Woodpecker/sounds). This drew my attention to a large, striking bird undulating through the forest revealing a glowing red crest and bold black and white stripes on its head and neck. These features were distinctive enough for even me to determine this was a Pileated Woodpecker.

The Pileated Woodpecker is the largest woodpecker in Wisconsin with a length of 16 to 19 inches, a wingspan of 26 to 30 inches and weigh 8 to 12 ounces. Its flaming-red crest and black and white stripes down its neck along with extensive white underwings create an unforgettable image. Males can be differentiated from females by the stripe of red they have on their cheek.



Most of you will know you have a Pileated Woodpecker in your woods by the large pile of wood chips at the base of a dead or dying tree with a large rectangular hole as deep as 12+ inches being chiseled out where the bird was looking for carpenter ants and other insects in the tree. The have a long, barbed tongue that allows them to extract insects. They use their long neck to pull back from the tree, then pulling on their feet and driving their heads toward the tree to create a powerful strike

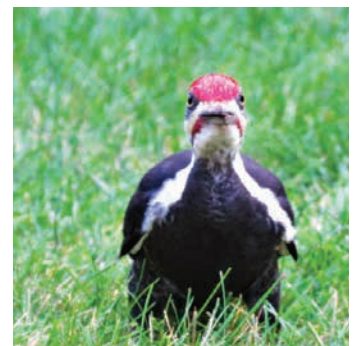


with their heavy bill. The loud, audible thunk can be heard throughout the woods.

Pileated Woodpeckers inhabit forests with large, standing dead trees. These forests can be evergreen, deciduous, or mixed woods. They live in wide and diverse forests, found in both rural or urban settings. They need dead and decaying wood since their primary food is carpenter ants but also feed on woodboring beetle larva, termites as well as caterpillars, cockroaches, and grasshoppers with 40 to 90 percent of their diet being ants. They supplement their diet with wild fruit and nuts, and you will see them at birdfeeders eating seeds and suet.

Dead trees also provide nesting opportunities to the Pileated Woodpecker. The male will begin excavating a nest cavity and does most of the work. The female will contribute the final touches as it nears completion adding the homey touches, climbing in the cavity and finishing the final carving. The entrance is an oval hole rather than the usual round hole of other woodpeckers with the cavity being typically 10 to 24 inches deep. Interestingly, it takes 3 to 6 weeks to create the nesting cavity and only rarely is used more than once by the Pileated Woodpeckers. Others, such as Wood Ducks, Red-headed Woodpeckers, European Starlings or Flycatchers will use these abandoned cavities. The female will lay 3 to 5 eggs in late April or May and incubate them for 15 to 18 days. When hatched, the chicks are naked and helpless (altricial) and the nesting period last 24 to 31 days. Pileated Woodpeckers are monogamous, and it is rare to see more than 2 adults together. They are territorial and protect a large area. They are here in Wisconsin year-round and while very protective of their area throughout the year, they are tolerant of others in their area during the winter. The oldest, documented Pileated Woodpecker was 12 years 11 months when it was recaptured and released during banding operations.

There are several things we can do to aid our Long Lake Red Heads. Both benefit from large dead trees. If we can leave several 'old snags' standing in a safe area on our properties, we provide both shelter and feeding opportunities for these birds. Feeders with suet, seed and/or fruit, especially feeders with an extended tail prop area so larger woodpeckers can feed upright and balance their tail for better footing, will attract these Red Heads to your back yard.



I hope you will enjoy our feathery neighbors.

PLEASE "WAKE RESPONSIBLY"

In 2021 LLPA board members have been participating in various Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Series seminars which are put on by UW-Stevens Point. One of the seminars titled "Local Boating Enforcement Grants" was led by the WDNR covering various grants that are available to promote lake safety. Although the focus of the seminar was not wake boats, the subject was immediately raised by other participants. Being such a prominent issue, at the end of the call multiple participants requested additional information about the regulations of operating wake boats and thus this lightly edited email from Lieutenant Darren Kuhn of the WDNR, set forth below with his kind permission.

"From: "Kuhn, Darren D - DNR"

<Darren.Kuhn@wisconsin.gov>

Subject: Wake Board Boats

Date: May 21, 2021 at 12:57:13 PM CDT

"First let me start by thanking you for your interest in the boating program and tuning in yesterday. Although wake board boats wasn't the specific topic for the webinar, it doesn't surprise me that it came up. As I said yesterday this is a hot topic in the boating world all across the country. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to address everyone's concerns. I'm responding to requests for information almost daily with reference to wake board boats and the large wakes that they create. Some of these inquiries are from concerned citizens or lake groups who want to know how they can eliminate this activity to protect their shorelines and prevent damage or personal injury, while others are from wake board enthusiasts, boat dealers and the boat industry wanting to know how the State is going to protect their chosen form of outdoor recreation. I think Sgt. St. Clair said it best yesterday that we all have to learn to work together on this particular issue.

"A lot of times, and this is a prime example, different forms of recreation pop up and become popular and the law can't keep up. Changing laws takes time and is often a balancing act. In the short term the State has relied on the local units of government enacting specific ordinances to address these local issues. The States' role in this ordinance process is to review these proposed ordinances to provide input to the local units of government on whether or not the proposed ordinance is in compliance with both State and Federal law. Below is some of the guidance we have been providing our local partners to aid them in the ordinance process.

"Available State Law – 30.68(4), Wis.Stats. Prohibited Operation: Creating hazardous wake or wash.

(a) No person shall operate a motorboat so as to approach or pass another boat in such a manner as to create a hazardous wake or wash.

(b) An operator of a motorboat is liable for any damage caused to the person or property of another by the wake or wash from such motorboat unless the negligence of such other person was the primary cause of the damage.

"30.635, Wis. Stats. Motorboat Prohibition. On lakes 50 acres or less having public access, motorboats may not be operated in excess of slow-no-wake speed, except when such lakes serve as thoroughfares between 2 or more navigable lakes. The department by rule may modify or waive the requirements of this section as to particular lakes, if it finds that public safety is not impaired by such modification or waiver.

"This helps to mitigate problems on many smaller lakes. This is much more restrictive than hazardous wake because slow-no-wake speed is defined as the minimum speed to maintain steerage control.

"Note: Conservation wardens enforce existing state laws and not local ordinances.

"Less Contentious Ordinance Options – Slow- No-Wake restrictions out to 200 feet from shore will address many of the natural resource complaints concerning shoreline erosion or property damage specific to riparian piers and docked boats. Requiring ballasted boats and wake surfing a further distance from shore or other boats may be a more pragmatic solution than attempting to ban their use completely.

"Scientific Data- Sharing some specific data from actual studies can help separate anecdotal complaints from real concerns. Studies below have shown that a 200-300 feet wakeboarding restriction could keep wave heights similar to many cruising pleasure and fishing boats. Data from studies by WSIA (Water Sports Industry Association) below:

		Maximum wave height (in)			
Distance from track (FT)		0	100	200	300
Cruising	Shallow	15.42	10.16	8.83	5.09
Cruising	Deep	14.54	9.95	7.19	6.32
Wakeboard	Shallow	21.82	11.18	9.13	6.93
Wakeboard	Deep	22.46	13.63	10.10	9.87
Wakesurf	Shallow	27.83	11.75	9.63	5.91
Wakesurf	Deep	26.14	19.88	15.89	12.92

"Leverage public outreach campaigns- Continue efforts with local units of government, lakefront property owners, lake associations and watercraft business and industry to educate our waters sport recreational users to wake responsibly.

- Stay at least 200 feet away from the shoreline, docks, or other structures.
- Keep music at reasonable levels. Sound travels and can be disruptive for lakefront property owners.
- Minimize repetitive passes on any one portion of shoreline.
- Boat operators taking ownership for their wake.

"I also attached a sign template that we have partnered with different groups to post at boat landings to aid in an educational campaign to address some of these issues.

"Thanks again for your interest in keeping Wisconsin's waterways safe for all to enjoy.

"Respectfully,

Darren
Lieutenant Darren D. Kuhn
Boating Law Administrator"

This is the sign referred to by Lt. Kuhn. Shortly you will see signs like this posted around the lake. Please use good, neighborly boating practices to make Long Lake safer and more enjoyable for all concerned.



FUN FACTS - DID YOU KNOW?

August 2021 early morning snapshot of the watercraft on Long Lake

- Total Boats (docked or on lifts) = 1,304
- Boats per acre of water (3,300) = 2.5
- Boats per mile of shoreline (99) = 13.2
- Pontoon = 587 (45% of total)
- Fishing Boats = 309 (24% of total)
- PWC = 159 (12% of total)
- Speed Boats = 137 (10.5% of total)
- Wake Boats = 59 (4.5% of total)
- Sailboats = 53 (4% of total)



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