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WHAT'S INSIDE

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Photo by Greg Kolbjornsen

2 Letter from the Chair by BUD ERICKSEN

Hello Everyone:

By now most of our boats are out of the water and our cabins are closed up or are in process of preparation for the winter season. This year with the lake lower than most of our previous summers, getting the boats out was a little more difficult. I trust your mission has been completed and you are in position to enjoy a beautiful fall season of colors and moderate temperatures.

As a Board we have continued to work this summer to complete our applications to the Wisconsin DNR for financial support on the boat cleaning station and the boat landing dock. The DNR typically supports boat landing docks built in compliance with the Wisconsin DNR Standards for approximately 50% of the construction costs. And the DNR supports the costs of boat cleaning stations for approximately 35% of the installation costs. Therefore, you can see why it is important to obtain their support.

BOAT LANDING:

The boat landing project, as you may remember, is a joint venture between the City of Milltown, the Milltown Township, and the Half Moon Lake Association. We approved the project at the Annual Meeting in July for our portion (not to exceed \$30,000). The design by Cedar Corporation of Menomonie, Wisconsin is now complete and a cost estimate by Cedar Corporation shows the cost of the project to be \$146,136.10. By adding the design fees the cost is \$160,134.00. The DNR Grants allow us to add the design fees to be split 50% to the DNR, 50% to the three local parties. With the design costs included, the project costs allocated to the HML Association is \$26,772.00. This comes in below our authorized \$30,000.00.

The completed design, which will be handicapped acceptable, will be submitted to the DNR on November 1, 2021. If they decide to participate in our project we should hear in January of 2022. Hopefully this will result in a new boat landing dock completed early next summer.

BOAT CLEANING STATION:

The Boat Cleaning Station submittal has been completed and submitted to the DNR. Once we hear from the DNR, we can start the process of purchasing and site work preparation for the machine. The cost has increased due to the year delay for Covid-19 to \$38,000.00. We anticipate the installation will be completed in early summer. The work can be completed independent of the boat landing as they are located to complement each other but are not dependent on each other. The grant from the DNR for the boat cleaning station is different than the grant for the boat landing. The boat cleaning station grant is paid over a four-year period, whereas the boat landing grant is paid in one payment.

Invasive Plant Species:

Our current effort this summer has been to attack the Yellow Iris plant that has taken over a lot of our shoreline. Thanks to the effort of Jim Benike who on his own treated the Yellow Iris at the beach, there will be different shoreline appearance by the existing boat landing next spring. You will all receive directions on how to treat the Yellow Iris if it is on your shoreline.

The Board is contracting with Barr Engineering to conduct another lake assessment on the current weeds and plants present in HML. This will be done in the summer of 2022. We are concerned about the amount of boat traffic into HML from other lakes currently infected with various invasive species. The best way to protect our lake is to identify any problems early to establish a correction method.

FISH:

On September 15 we received 5,700 - 6" to 8" walleyes from the DNR. They dropped the fish in two locations to spread them out. Doug Ebeling was instrumental in getting them delivered and distributed to HML.

I hope you all have a healthy winter and we look forward to seeing you on your return to Half Moon Lake next spring.

Thank you,
Bud Ericksen, Chairman of the Board



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Hello again, Half Moon Lake neighbors!

The leaves have turned, the birds and some of our lake neighbors have migrated south, and the docks and lifts are on shore. It's been a beautiful fall, and what a nice summer we had! It seems that each summer brings something new and memorable to Half Moon Lake. Some summers, it's the first time a youngster gets up on skis. Or a family member catches that monster bass. I remember one year the gradual appearance of the Northern Lights while floating in the middle of the lake on a warm summer night was an unexpected delight. This year it was the impromptu "battle of the guitars" that took place on opposite shores towards the south end of the lake one evening in June. As several of us enjoyed a relaxing sunset cruise, someone on the east side of the lake started playing a few tunes on the guitar. Before long, during a pause between songs, a guitar riff came over the water from the west shore. Then another pause, followed by a response from the east shore. As dusk settled in, we couldn't see whether the dueling guitarists were on their docks or up on shore. They traded riffs back and forth, each one more impressive than the last. In the middle of the lake, we (and the other boaters that had gathered) turned our heads back and forth like spectators at a slow-motion tennis match. As the musicians wrapped up their duel, I can only imagine that they tipped their hats in mutual respect. Whoever the two of you were that night, Thank You!



Editor's Column

Speaking of mystery people, Jackie Northard sent me a photo of an unknown waterskier getting one last(?) run in on October 12! Someone was out there maxing out the watersports season. If you were one of the dueling guitarists or the October waterskier, please drop me a note so I can give you due credit.

In addition to Jackie, we have several other contributors to this issue of the Loon Lines. Adam Ziegenfuss, grandson of Kathy and John Ziegenfuss, writes about his encounter with the "legendary lake legend" David Butler and the true fish tale that ensued. Keanna Kerrigan, a student at UW River Falls majoring in Field Biology and Conservation, writes about her summers as a child on Half Moon Lake. Ryan Hunwardsen writes about planting native vegetation to control erosion and runoff. Keanna Kerrigan and Leo Balestri contributed photos of Half Moon Lake flora and fauna. Greg Kolbjorsen contributed the 4th of July cover photos and other shots. Several other people contributed photos as well. Thank You to everyone who had a part in producing this issue. Pictures, articles, ideas, and questions are always welcome. Please send them to me at halfmoonlakeloonlines@gmail.com.

I'm also passing along news from Colton Sorenson, a Water Quality Specialist from the Polk County Land and Water Resources Department. Colton and his team found and removed seven rooted Eurasian milfoil plants and several plant fragments near the boat landing. Our best hope is that they caught it soon enough to prevent the spread. However, it is too soon to know for sure. It is a reminder that we have to maintain constant vigilance when putting boats in Half Moon Lake.

On a somber note, this summer we lost a great steward of the lake and a good friend of many of us. Sherm Gardner passed away at the age of 91. In this issue, I write about my own memories of Sherm, my next-door neighbor for almost 20 years. Happy winter. See you on the ice!

See you on the water!
Dave Balestri, Editor

Photo by Jackie Northard



It's Easy Being Green

How to Recycle Around Half Moon Lake

Since local garbage haulers do not pick up recycling, you can cart it home with you or bring it to several convenient locations near Half Moon Lake.

What Can I Recycle?

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Office Paper (in a Brown Paper bag)
- Glass/Plastic/Aluminium/ Tin Cans and Bottles
- Cardboard

Where Can I Recycle?

- Balsam Lake, east of the Government Center at the 4 Corners of Hwy 46 & Co. Rd. 1
- Milltown, near the Community Center, by the Softball Field
- Luck, by the Town Shop on 3rd Ave. (west of Library and Co-op)
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ON AUGUST 7TH, Emma Knighton, daughter of Ellen Butler, married Benjamin Hamm.

After a day on the lake with friends and family, the couple exchanged vows on Ellen's farm. Emma and Benjamin live in Seattle.

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Clean Boats Clean Waters

Water Clarity Remains Excellent

by Dave Balestri and Bob Cutshall

First, the good news: the water clarity was exceptionally good on Half Moon Lake this year. On Memorial Day, the clarity was 18 feet. On July 10, it was 17 feet. On Labor Day, it was 16 feet. In the 20 years that volunteers have been taking water clarity measurements on Half Moon Lake, we've never had a summer where 16 feet was the "worst" measurement taken. In a typical year the spring measurement is around 16 feet and it deteriorates to about 13 feet in August. The clarity on any given day can be affected by precipitation, boat traffic, and wind. In the larger picture, runoff from farms and yards contribute to compromised water quality, as do poor septic practices and large goose populations. I think it's safe to say the water stayed remarkably clear all summer long – helped, no doubt, by the early-summer drought. Next summer, David Loeffler and his son will take over monitoring duties.

In order to continue to protect our lake and its watershed, the Conservancy Board has hired Barr Engineering to do a simple study on current land use of property whose runoff ends up in the lake. The areas they will primarily be focusing on are Tamarack Bay and along Harder Creek. While we don't believe that current land uses are negatively affecting water quality in the lake, future changes in these uses could. The issue we are most concerned about is phosphorous. Phosphorous fuels plant growth that can lead to harmful algae populations and excessive weed growth in the lake. We have taken water samples in Tamarack Bay, along Harder Creek and in the lake. Barr will analyze these samples for phosphorous content and use this information in their modeling.

What the Conservancy is trying to determine from this study is which properties have the greatest potential to negatively impact the lake if the land use changes. Once we have this information, we can plan a strategy to work with land owners to preserve the excellent water quality that we currently enjoy in Half Moon Lake. We also want to encourage lakeshore property owners to create and maintain vegetative buffers along the lake. A buffer is made up of natural, unmowed vegetation. Buffers reduce runoff into the lake and capture sediment that brings phosphorous along with it. An added benefit of buffers is that they generally keep the geese away from the shoreline. See the article by Ryan Hunwardsen on page 14 for how to create an effective and attractive buffer.

Dan Leh
CBCW Volunteer
612-490-1002
halfmoonlake@hotmail.com





MILFOIL DISCOVERED IN HALF MOON LAKE

By Dave Balestri

Now, the bad news: Eurasian milfoil has been found in our lake. Eurasian milfoil is an invasive plant that spreads rapidly, creates large "mats" of vegetation on the surface of the water, and chokes out fish and native plant species. It looks very similar to North American milfoil, which is a native plant that is a natural cover for fish and poses no threat to boaters or swimmers. The best defense against Eurasian milfoil is prevention. The Clean Boats Clean Waters team has been working hard for years to educate boaters about Eurasian milfoil and other invasive species. Every summer, they monitor boats and trailers coming into Half Moon Lake, checking for hitchhiking weeds. Now that Eurasian milfoil has been found at the boat launch area, it will be critical to act quickly and decisively to prevent its spread and hopefully eradicate it completely. Here is the text of an October 6th email from Colton Sorenson, a Water Quality Specialist with the Polk County Land and Water Resource Department:

*Hi all,
When we were out on Half Moon Lake today, we unfortunately found Eurasian water milfoil at the boat landing. At first, we only found plant fragments and were hopeful that we were seeing a brand-new infestation. Unfortunately, we found (and pulled) seven rooted plants. There is a fair amount of native milfoil present at the landing also. All of the plants we found were near the docks (quick map below). As far as next steps, we will report this to the WDNR and can be involved with any meetings you might like to have to discuss options. There are WDNR grant options for new AIS (aquatic invasive species) populations. We weren't able to do any extensive monitoring today but may have the opportunity to do more monitoring in the coming weeks. If the population is restricted to the landing, management efforts would be more effective. If you would like to discuss this further, please feel free to reach out to Katelin or myself.
Thanks,
Colton*

On October 11th, Jim Benike, Bud Ericksen, and John Weber met with Colton Sorensen and Katelin Anderson, another Water Quality Specialist for Polk County. The main points of that meeting were:

1. Doug Ebeling should send a letter to attach to our boat cleaning station saying that Eurasian milfoil has been found in the lake for the first time as identified by Polk County water specialists.
2. Katelin and Colton will try to get names of qualified divers to remove the current crop of milfoil yet this fall.
3. The milfoil is in 2-4 feet of water. It is possible to have a training class at the beach next spring and have volunteers snorkel or canoe to check for milfoil.
4. We have tentatively booked Katelin to speak about Eurasian milfoil and Yellow Iris at the next lake meeting.
5. We will submit an application to the DNR for a grant. No details on the process yet nor do we have a cost estimate.
6. We asked to be included in the next sign order, a 4'x8' sign, for invasive species to be placed near the boat cleaning station. Approximately \$300-\$350 for materials.

We will provide more details when we learn more. Watch for an opportunity to help find and pull Eurasian milfoil next spring.

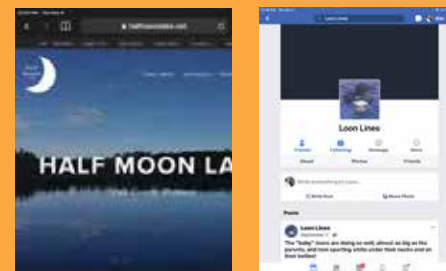
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Annual Oscar Lane Labor Day "Slow Man" Contest

Tommy Townsend won the annual Oscar Lane "Slow Man" contest with his "fisherman" entry. Thank you to all who submitted entries!



Recognizing Eurasian Water-milfoil and Native Look-a-Likes



Eurasian water milfoil is one of eight water-milfoil species found in Wisconsin and the only one that is not native. The most common native water-milfoil in Wisconsin lakes is northern water-milfoil. It bears a strong resemblance to Eurasian water-milfoil and identification between the two plants can be difficult. Using this guide helps to distinguish Eurasian water-milfoil from similar native aquatic plants.

Eurasian Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

- Delicate feather-like leaves. Leaflets are mostly the same length.
- Leaves are usually limp when out of the water.
- Leaves arranged in whorls (circles) of three to five around the stem.
- Usually twelve to twenty-one leaflet pairs per leaf.
- Long spaghetti-like stems.



Northern Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum sibiricum*)

- Rigid feather-like leaves forming a christmas tree shape. The lower leaflets are usually quite long.
- Leaves usually stiff when out of water.
- Leaves arranged in whorls (circles) of four to six around stem.
- Usually seven to ten leaflet pairs per leaf.
- Stem is usually whitish or whitish green in color.



Coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*)

Coontail is a free-floating aquatic plant without roots. It may be completely submersed or partially floating on the surface.

- The leaves are stiff and arranged in whorls.
- Each leaf is divided in a forked pattern.
- Leaf divisions have teeth along one margin.
- Leaves are crowded toward the tip of the stem creating the "coontail" appearance.



The Fauna of Half Moon Lake

Photos by Keanna Kerrigan (KK), Leo Balestri (LB), Dave Balestri (DB), and Greg Kolbjornsen (GK)



Bald Eagles



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Carter Benike married his bride Rubie Garrison on a deck overlooking Half Moon Lake.

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Ah, Summer!

Photos by Leo Balestri, Greg Kolbjornsen, and Allison Benike



All eyes on the Sunny



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Mother and Fawn



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Painted Turtle



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The Mermaid



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Tundra (a.k.a. Whistling) Swan Family



Fall 2021 Loon Report By Pat Mechelke

First, I would like to thank all of you who send me updates on our loons. Since we don't live directly on the lake and are not always at our cabin, I appreciate your sharing your loon observations with me. I keep a weekly journal on our loons including when they arrive at the lake, where they nest, when chicks are hatched, the status of the chicks and general loon behavior. This information is sent to the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute Loon Watch Program at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin. The Loon Watch program began in 1988 and enlists volunteers to monitor the loons on approximately 250 northern Wisconsin lakes. The program's goals are to help protect loons, track loon populations, and to educate people to better appreciate these awesome birds. We all love the two territorial pairs of loons that regularly summer on Half Moon Lake and want to do all we can to ensure that they continue to return and have every opportunity to successfully nest and raise their chicks.

Our two pairs of adult loons left the lake this year in early September. They normally head to Lake Michigan where they will feed for several weeks before heading south. Loons from our region typically migrate to the Florida gulf coast flapping their wings approximately 200 times per minute and reaching speeds of 70 miles per hour while on their 3-4 day journey. Loons lead a quiet winter life in the gulf swimming and fishing close to shore and adopting a drab appearance of gray and white plumage in contrast to the distinctive black and white plumage of the summer months.

As of mid-October our two juvenile loons can still be seen on Half Moon Lake. They tend to stay on the lake where they were born to feed and perfect their ability to fly until as late as November

when they meet up with other youngsters to fly south. They remain in the warm gulf waters for the next 2-3 years before flying north to lakes in the area where they were born. Current research shows that many of these loons do not find nesting lakes until they are five years old and tend to begin breeding when about six.

If any of you have any questions regarding loons, please feel free to e-mail me at tmechelke@gmail.com. Have a great winter and join me in looking forward to the return of the loons at ice out.



Credit Pat Mechelke

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A True Fish Tale

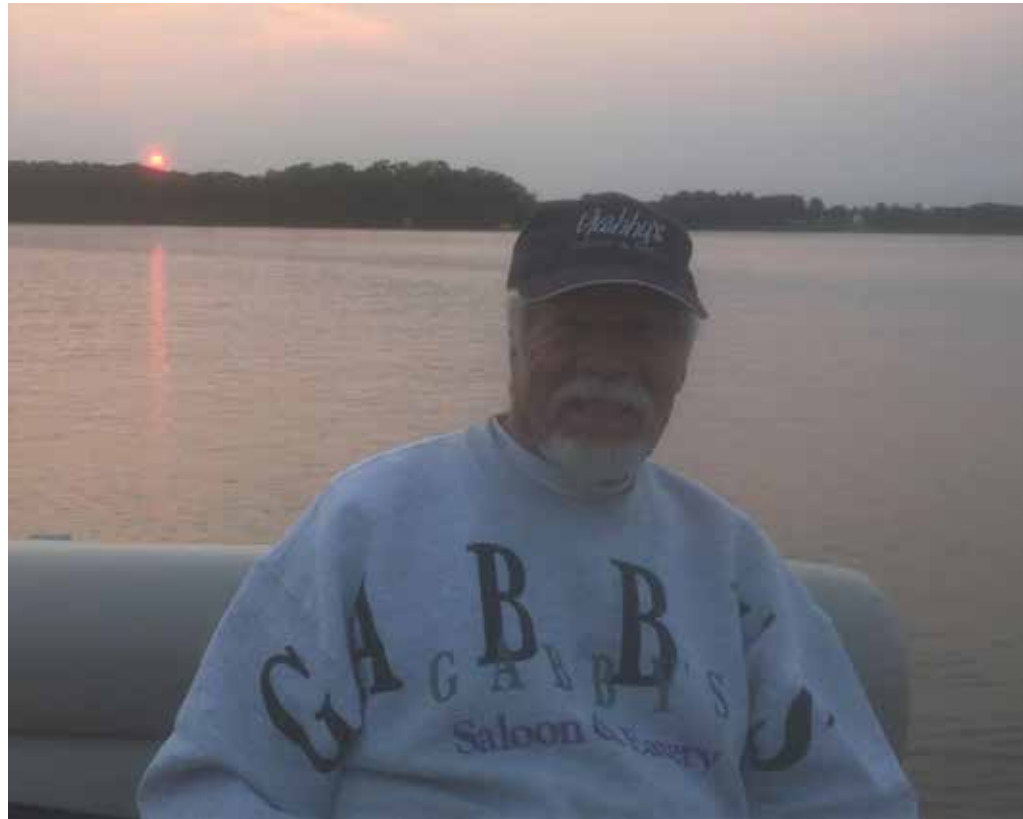
by Adam Ziegenfuss

MY NAME IS ADAM ZIEGENFUSS and I live in Colorado. I come out to my grandparents' cabin in Wisconsin on Half Moon Lake once a summer.

One of my favorite things to do when I get to Wisconsin is fishing because there is not a lot of fishing where I live. One day, I was fishing on the swim dock and catching some small fish with my mom. Then, we saw someone catching a really big fish near us with a fishing boat. He floated over and we talked. He offered to take me on his boat. I said, "Ya sure!" (I was born in Minnesota!). It was the legendary lake legend Mr. Butler! He showed me how to fish with his special lure. Within five minutes I caught the biggest fish I have ever caught. It was a largemouth bass. We fished for a while and snagged one more fish. Mr. Butler told me he got the lucky lure at the hardware store. The next day I went to the hardware store with my twin brother Dylan and my cousins to find it. We were so excited to find it and we purchased two of them. The lure is a long purple worm with a green tip. Also, we got ice cream on our way out. Later that day we went fishing with the new lures. I was fishing off of our pontoon boat and thought I had a massive weed on my line because it was not moving. Then, it started to move and I realized it was a fish. After a little while I was able to reel it in. It was a massive largemouth bass and we were really excited. Then we took it back and fileted it. We froze it and two days later we had a massive fish fry for dinner!

Thanks to the great Mr. Butler and my Grandparents John and Kathy Ziegenfuss for making this one of the highlights of my summer!





Sherman A. "Sherm" Gardner
1930 - 2021

This summer we lost one of the true icons of Half Moon Lake. Sherm Gardner, a fixture on the lake for thirty-some years, passed away in July. Sherm was my neighbor, my friend, and my mentor. Maybe it's fitting that I've been unable to find an obituary for Sherm - I think I prefer to remember him exactly as I knew him. What I know of Sherm and his life I learned directly from the man himself. So consider this as more a collection of my own memories of Sherm Gardner, rather than an obituary.

If it wasn't the very first weekend after Sarah and I bought our cabin on 124th Street, it was surely no later than the second weekend when we met Sherm. We were the new kids on the lake, and he was eager to share his knowledge – and his opinions – of everything having to do with the lake and cabin life. As Sarah and I surveyed our aging cabin and took in the task we had ahead of us, Sherm told us that it would take us three years to get it up to par, and then for the rest of our years we'd be constantly maintaining it. That was literally the first conversation we ever had with our new next-door neighbor Sherm. His prediction proved uncannily accurate.

Sherm and his wife Nancy bought their cabin in the early 1980s. They lived at the lake from late April until after the fall hunting season, when they would decamp to Sun City, Arizona. Even though I met Sherm when he was in his early 70's, he maintained an active lifestyle. He golfed regularly at the Luck course, where he "shot his age" on more than one occasion. He fished for crappie nearly every evening, sometimes with his good friend Doug Ebeling and sometimes by himself. He and Nancy kept a regular social schedule, pontooning off to meet friends down the lake for dinner and cocktails. Sherm was a regular at the VFW club on highway 46. He played trumpet in the VFW marching band. In the fall, Sherm hunted for goose. He would take off early in the morning in his vintage red Jeep CJ-7, with its rusted-out floorboards and "SHERMG" license plates. In Arizona, Sherm would continue to golf through the winter. And then every spring, he'd be back at Half Moon Lake, ready to launch his pontoon boat and start it all over again.

As a full-timer at the lake, Sherm decried the "river jumpers" that came over from Minnesota on the weekends. The big weekend "crowds", especially the jet-skiers, were the bane of his life at the lake. Curiously, though, more often than not he would intercept me (a weekend river-jumper from Minnesota) before I even made it into our cabin after arriving on a Friday evening. He would be eager to tell me of his recent crappie haul (he once claimed to have caught a bunch of crappies where each one would cover an entire 12-pack of beer; unfortunately, they had already been cleaned and put in the freezer before I could see them and - bummer - there weren't any photographs). Or he'd be over to share some vegetables that he had received in exchange for a pheasant he'd shot.

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My Half Moon Lake

By Keanna Kerrigan

To me, there is nothing better than waking up at sunrise to the birds calling and fog rolling across Half Moon Lake. Breathing in the fresh morning air and tiptoeing down to the lake to see loons, turtles, herons, otters... you name it. The stillness of the water interrupted as my kayak drifts along leaving a gentle wake behind. Eagles swoop overhead and a pair of loons float calmly by my side. I'll spend hours on the lake taking it all in, photographing the beauty, or fishing. When I return to our cabin, everyone else is still asleep. I quietly gather a breakfast for myself and a cup of coffee then retreat to the porch. There, I'll sit watching and listening to the water and wildlife. Hummingbirds buzz about and argue over who gets to drink from the feeder first. Chickadees swoop in and retreat each time with a single grain. Nuthatches cackle and strut up and down trees. Grosbeaks gorge themselves with birdseed. Goldfinches and cardinals brighten up the yard with their vibrant colors. Woodpeckers trill off in the distance. It's my favorite time of day, when everything is full of peace, energy, and bliss.

I have such fond memories of summer growing up on Half Moon Lake. I remember snorkeling around and trying to identify the different lake weeds. I'd also collect mussels with my cousin and let my brothers use them as bait for fishing. When it got too hot to fish, we'd all snorkel around and try to catch fish and turtles with dollar-store butterfly nets. It didn't work very well, but we managed to catch a few painted turtles who then became our "pets" for an hour or so. One summer, my brother Seth and I found two garter snakes and we "trained" them to wrap around our arms and to sit still on chairs. We turned a cooler into a terrarium for the snakes and caught lots of frogs to feed them. However, by the next

morning both snakes had escaped and we let the remaining frogs go unscathed.

When it wasn't nice enough to be in the water, my cousins and I would whittle. While the boys typically made wooden knives and spears, I attempted more intricate designs (key word "attempted"). If the wood got wet, or if I had selected a stick that was decaying under the bark, engraving was very difficult. Once I was fed up with woodworking, my mom, grandma, and sister could convince me to go on a walk. One time, while trekking through the woods, my sister Desiree asked what would happen if we saw a bear. My grandma, Peekka, joked "Well Desiree, I would trip you. And then I would run." Little Desiree scoffed and retorted "No. I'd trip you and I'd run!" We all laughed and continued on our mini adventure.



Sherm would wander over throughout the weekend. One time, he came over to show our kids the goose he'd shot. As I watched and waited for my animal-loving daughter to recoil in horror, I was surprised to see her lean in, fascinated as Sherm showed her the big bird's wing structure. Another time, as I was pitching wiffleballs to Jill, Sherm came over to tell me to take that bat out of her hands and replace it with a golf club. When he heard our son Leo practicing his trumpet inside the cabin, Sherm came over with his own trumpet and taught Leo how to play "Taps". Sherm would sometimes stand outside his cabin at 9:00 in the evening and play Taps out over the lake. I miss hearing that.

I think Sherm's favorite interaction with our family was supervising Sarah and me as we did outdoor projects. We'd work, he'd talk. He had earned the role of supervisor and critic through seniority and experience. He would generously open his garage to lend us any tools we might need. He made it clear that what was his was ours to use. We appreciated his advice and enjoyed his banter. One time, as we laid an underground electric dog fence, Sherm asked if we could put one around his bathroom to keep Nancy out.



Sherm was a dedicated caretaker of Half Moon Lake. For years, he took water quality measurements and gave updates and demonstrations at the annual meeting. He preached responsible lake management practices, like maintaining lakeshore buffers and not using lawn fertilizer. He knew the lake inside and out. As I gained his confidence, he shared his favorite fishing spots and go-to crappie rig (a red-and-white tube jig over a lightweight jighead). Eventually, he handed the water quality responsibilities over to me and Leo. He didn't actually ask if I wanted to do it – he just told me I was taking over and then showed me how to do it. I guess he was kind of my "lake Dad" in that respect.

Over time, through our conversations, I learned tidbits of Sherm's life before and outside of Half Moon Lake. Sherm grew up in south Minneapolis. He learned to swim in Lake Harriet. I think he went to Washburn High School. Even as a kid, he was an avid golfer. He attended the University of Minnesota, where he golfed for the university team. I know that at some point he was in sales. I think he worked for a window company. I know that he had a son that looked exactly like him and that he had a daughter. I regret that I don't remember their names. I, and others on the lake, will never forget Sherm, though.

Sherman A. Gardner, the Big Fish of the Half Moon pond, was 91 years old when he passed away.





Native plantings are a great way to liven up your lakeshore. Not only do these plantings look great, but they provide a great habitat for wildlife including birds and pollinators. Native plants require less water than lawns and help prevent erosion. The deep roots of native plants can significantly reduce water runoff and helps keep our lake clean. After the storm two years ago, we were given a blank canvas and decided to seed our bank with native grasses and wildflowers. Creating a native planting section can be as little or large as you want; any amount helps! Below are the basic steps that we took to get our bank started and can be used if you want to add native plantings to your property.

Site preparation will largely depend on what is currently growing on your shore, but the main goal is to clear as much of the existing vegetation as possible. If you currently have grass or weeds, simply mow or weed whip to remove as much material as possible. Afterwards, hand-turn or roto till the soil to get a depth of 2 inches of loose soil. If your existing area was initially densely populated with weeds, wait 2 weeks for weed seeds to germinate and grow and repeat the process. Finally, rake the soil to create a smooth seed bed.

We purchased our seeds from Prairie Restoration Inc. in Minnesota. They are a great resource and can help determine the best plants to use given your soil type and sun levels. Otherwise, you can do your own research and find seeds online or instore. Seeding is best done in the spring or fall, typically from spring thaw through the end of May or from August to first frost. The best and easiest method for seeding, and the one we used, is hand broadcasting. If you get a mixture of grass and wildflowers, spread the grass seed first. After the grass seed is spread, lightly rake the seed into the soil. Then broadcast the wildflower seed. Wildflower seed can be spread evenly or placed in patches, whatever you prefer. It's best to lay straw over the seed to help retain moisture, but not necessary. After seeding give the area a light water but be careful not to wash away the seed.



Native plantings will take time to develop, but you should start to see some progress after a month or so. Weeds will take advantage of the open area; however, don't worry about clearing them right away. If you walk on the area too much, you risk stunting the growth of the native plants. Once you see a good amount of growth, you can go in and clear out the weeds. I personally use the app PictureThis to identify weeds and plants. You can simply take a picture and it will give you the identity of the plant and a description of it and whether or not it is invasive. During the first year, we noticed a lot of the grasses started to come through, but our bank was still fairly patchy. This year, our second year of the bank restoration, our bank exploded with flowers and even more grasses. We were blown away with the vibrant colors and the amount of wildlife that took advantage of the new plants. We had bumblebees, honeybees, hummingbirds, monarchs, gophers, and more birds than we could count.

Native plantings are a great addition to your property, whether large or small! They provide a great habitat for local wildlife, protect our lake and look amazing. If you are interested in adding native plantings to your property, there are tons of resources available online to help you get started and I'd be more than willing to offer more insight into our process.



Creating a Natural Vegetation Buffer

by Ryan Hunwardsen

SOURCES:
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<insert photos from "Pages 14 and 15" folder. Credit Ryan Hunwardsen>