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Brian Hartmann and Anthony Walker surfing on May 14



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SUMMER - 2022

Loon Lings

HALF MOON LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT



Photo by Sarah Balestri

Jump into Summer!

WHAT'S
INSIDE

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Letter from the Chair

by BUD ERICKSEN



As I write this, I look at my calendar and see that we are well into the Spring season; however, Spring got a late start this year. On Tuesday, April 19 we saw three four wheelers out ice fishing. They cruised the lake with no concern of soft spots and appeared to be having fun. But high winds and milder temperatures finally conspired to clear the lake of ice on April 23rd or 24th, right about the average ice-out date. April was colder than normal though, putting some chores a few weeks behind schedule.

The Board has been busy throughout the winter preparing for DNR approvals on the Boat Landing, the Boat Cleaning Station, and the treatment of Eurasian Water Milfoil recently found near the existing boat landing. As this has been one of the busiest offseasons for the Board, the projects have been divided and directed by various Board Members. Following is the status of these major efforts.

THE BOAT CLEANING STATION:

The Boat Cleaning Station activities have been directed by Doug Ebeling. He has stayed on top of the process from North Carolina. He has an article and some pictures under a separate article in this Loon Lines. Doug has done a wonderful job and has the equipment ordered for an early Spring delivery.

THE WATERMILFOIL RAPID RESPONSE:

Jim Benike has been in charge of the Milfoil Rapid Response submittal to the Wisconsin DNR. Jim has been working with Margaret Rattei, a Senior Biologist with Barr Engineering of Minneapolis. Jim and Margaret have spent serious time in developing our submittal to the Wisconsin DNR Rapid Response Grant. The early treatment methods will require a chemical application that will hopefully eradicate the areas of concentration of the Eurasian Milfoil. The DNR has cautioned us, though, that it will be highly unlikely for a single treatment to result in total eradication; therefore, we are also preparing a long-term Aquatic Plant Management Plan to be approved by the Wisconsin DNR for the continuation of treatments going forward. Jim has written an article which appears elsewhere within this Loon Lines. Jim has worked very hard to develop the program as now submitted to the Wisconsin DNR and will continue to lead our efforts this summer.

BOAT LANDING:

The Boat Landing design documents were submitted to the Wisconsin DNR on November 1st. The design documents were prepared by Cedar Corporation of Menomonie Wisconsin. We anticipated an answer from the DNR at year's end. However, with COVID continuation the DNR was unable to meet and evaluate the submittals until April 12th at which time our submittal of \$160,786.00 was approved. The approved value includes all the fees and is divided amongst the three cost-sharing partners: the City of Milltown, Milltown Township, and the Half Moon Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District. Our share of the costs is \$26,797.72. This is below the maximum limit of \$30,000.00 which was approved at our Annual Meeting last summer.

by Keanna Kerrigan

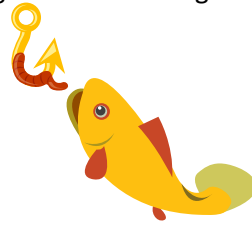
Many types of fishermen and fisherwomen ply the waters of Half Moon Lake. I see The Baiter, The Collector, The Lounger, and others - but I feel like I'm in my own category. I've fished Half Moon Lake my entire life and I've had great "luck."

Growing up, I was a last-cast fisher. I would beg my parents, "oh please just one more cast pleeeeeease." They'd grudgingly agree, and more often than not, watch me reel in a big sunny or a nice bass. Lately, I've been more of an all-terrain fisher. You'll see me fishing from in the water, from a dock, or on a boat or paddleboard. One could also call me a simple fisher. I don't bring a net, a tackle box, bait, snacks, or drinks when I go fishing. I just go down to the water with my trusty open-reeled fishing pole topped with one of my three favorite lures.

I'm also an explorer; I stray away from the popular fishing places like "the point" and "the sunken island." Instead, I find my own spots and I typically reel in one after another. But really, I could fish all day even if nothing was biting. Maybe that's why it seems I'm always catching more fish than my family, friends, and neighbors (sometimes even combined) – I just really love being out there fishing. And, I might have a bit more patience than the others.

THE OTHER TYPES OF FISHERS ARE:

- The Amateur - sighs and groans "not yet" when asked if they've had any luck
- The Baiter - always has worms, leeches, and/or minnows on hand; won't leave home without them
- The Collector - has the big tackle box/es with lures for every scenario (never uses at least half of them)
- The Dawn/Dusker - keeps a peculiar sleeping schedule; seeks walleye and other game fish
- The Fibber - lies about catching fish or exaggerates the size
- The Kiddo - either loves fishing or gets bored and refuses to take a fish off the hook. Also loves to ask questions like "can we go swimming?" and "are we done yet?"
- The King of "Almost" - almost catches fish; can't quite ever get them in the boat *cough cough my brother Damian*
- The Lounger - the one who likes to tag along to relax or read a book



- The Recluse - mostly goes alone; silence is necessary
- The Storyteller - makes fishing seem like the best thing in the world; has seen the Loch Ness monster and/or Bigfoot on expeditions
- The Techie - decked out with a great trolling motor and state-of-the-art fish finder



Editor's Note: Keanna Kerrigan is the granddaughter of Mary and Paul Vierow. She contributes articles and photos to the Loon Lines. Keanna just graduated from University of Wisconsin River Falls, with a degree in Field Biology and Conservation. She is starting a new job in her "field" (pun intended) – helping with prairie restorations. She'll be doing controlled burns, removing invasive species, and planting native plants. Congratulations, Keanna!



While the approval of the DNR grant is great news, we now have to bid the documents, hire a contractor and determine the construction schedule. The schedule will probably require a mid-summer or late-summer start. Construction will require building a cofferdam and dewatering prior to placement of the concrete slab. The slab will then require nearly 28 days to cure and reach its required strength prior to driving cars and trailers over the slab. The Board, in conjunction with the City of Milltown, the Milltown Township and our Board will develop a timeline for construction and an alternate landing area during the construction process. You will be notified as soon as the schedule is completed.

The addition of the Boat Cleaning Station, the construction of the Boat Landing and the treatment of the Eurasian Milfoil will require attention and understanding from all of us. We will be notifying all of you as we develop the various schedules, and if they cause any limitation on activities in any area of Half Moon Lake. There will be a lot of activity on the lake this summer; we will appreciate your understanding of and cooperation with any inconvenience.

We all look forward to a great summer on Half Moon Lake and hope we all return in good health.

Thank you,

Bud Ericksen, Chairman of the Board

Half Moon Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District Commissioners & Other Resources

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"The Lake Life". 20" x 16" oil on gesso board by Sarah Butler Sumner, daughter of Mary Martha and David Butler.

The Aker/Surdyk family visited the Outer Banks of North Carolina last October. Left to right: Carol, Scott, Matt, Cooper, Sara (Aker) Surdyk, Dan Suryk, Carter, and Megan. Sara and Dan were married in August.



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**Half Moon Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District
 2023 Annual Budget Proposal
 Jan 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023**

REVENUES:		LAKE MANAGEMENT CONT.-	
Tax Levy	32,803 - same as 2022	Capital Fund- saving for Aquatic Invasive Species treatments	10,000
Lottery Credit	450	Total Expenditures	33,120
Interest	50	2023 Operating Budget Tax Levy -	32,803
Total Revenues	33,303	Total Saved Capital Fund- For AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) treatment -	115,500
Cost of Operations:			
ADMINISTRATION	620		
INFO AND EDUCATION- Biannual newsletter, annual meeting	9,000		
LAKE MANAGEMENT- Clean Boats, Clean Waters (CBCW) beach monitoring and ILIDS (internet landing installed device sensor) camera	13,500		

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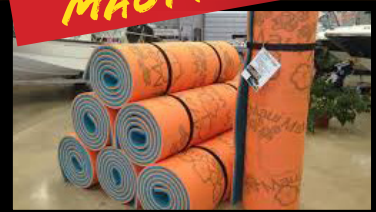
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Clean Boats Clean Waters

Boat Cleaning Station

The DNR approved our grant request for a boat cleaning station at the public launch. The station uses a waterless cleaning system that is charged by an off-grid, 450 watt solar array that charges the battery that runs the unit. The battery should handle up to 85 boats per day. The vacuum tank is emptied by the satellite portable toilet vendor after about 400 uses. The whole system is connected to the internet so that its usage can be monitored remotely. The software also includes an automatic tamper alert system.



The station will be installed in late May to early June. The total cost is \$35,420 of which of the grant will cover \$19,193. The boat cleaning station will help keep our lake clean and lessen the risk of introducing more invasive species. Please take advantage of this free system and encourage your friends to PLEASE clean their boats before launching. As you know we have high boat traffic therefore this is especially important. We strive to keep Half Moon Lake pristine.

by Doug Ebeling

Water Quality Update:



The Half Moon Lake Conservancy has recently completed a high level study that will help us prioritize important land areas to focus on within the watershed in our efforts to protect the lake from harmful substances entering it. The study was performed by Barr Engineering. Copies of Barr's summary memorandum, assessment maps of the watershed and a recording of Barr's presentation to the Conservancy board are available on the HML website.

While it isn't the only substance that can be problematic in a lake, phosphorous is the one that generally causes the most harm. High phosphorous levels can cause increased growth of algae and large aquatic plants, which can result in decreased levels of dissolved oxygen - a process call eutrophication. High levels of phosphorous can also lead to algae blooms that produce algal toxins which can be harmful to human and animal health. At that point, the lake loses most of its recreational appeal and value as wildlife habitat. The good news is that the current phosphorous levels in HML are very low (20 ppb). This is one of the reasons that the lake is so pristine. Surface water coming into the lake currently has phosphorous levels ranging from 190 to 310 ppb. These levels are not problematic at this time. The focus of the Conservancy is the future. Changes in land use within the watershed could potentially have a negative impact on water quality. The Conservancy's goal is to monitor any changes and work with local land owners in a cooperative manner to minimize or avoid any harm to the lake. We also will look for opportunities to improve the quality of water entering the lake. Both of these objectives can be accomplished in a number of ways: establishment of conservation easements, construction of or restoration of wetlands, construction of rain gardens or other facilities that remove harmful substances from surface water runoff, construction of shoreline buffers or by purchasing property and leaving it in its natural state.

As noted above, the news for now is very good. We hope to keep the lake healthy and pristine in the coming years and appreciate the lake community's support of our work.

by Bob Cutshall



Aquatic Invasive Species

by Dan Leh

Welcome to Spring 2022 on Half Moon Lake!!!!

I have been asked to educate our Lake District on what we do each day at the boat landing from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Since 2004 when the CBCW program was initiated, hundreds of workshops have been held and thousands of people in over fifty counties have been trained as watercraft inspectors. Lake residents, county board members, tribal community members, representatives from county park and forest programs, boat marina operators and realtors have attended the workshops to learn how aquatic invasive species (AIS) threaten Wisconsin waters. They also received instructions on how to organize a watercraft inspection program, how to approach boaters, perform boat/trailer checks, record pertinent data and report suspect specimens.

With the guidance of a CBCW handbook and a resource kit full of aquatic invasive species information, trained inspectors are the frontline defense against AIS. On Weekdays, weekends and busy holidays, teams of watercraft inspectors across the state educate boaters on how and where AIS are most likely to hitch a ride and how to perform a watercraft inspection. During watercraft inspections, inspectors engage boaters in conversation about the AIS prevention steps and keep a record of how many people they talk with. They report this information to a statewide database that tabulates both paid and volunteer watercraft inspector data.

Our Half Moon Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District currently has no volunteers, so we pay our inspectors 7 days a week from 8-10 hours a day based on boat traffic. On some holidays, like 4th of July, we may employ two inspectors. The primary goal is to stop any boat from launching prior to cleaning off vegetation from the boat and trailer. It is our first line of defense against unwanted aquatic invasive species.

EURASIAN MILFOIL UPDATE

by Jim Benike, Board Member

Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) was discovered by Polk county water specialists on October 6, 2021. Members of the Lake District met with Polk County on October 11 to plan a strategy to eliminate the EWM. We hired Barr Engineering to lead us through the permitting and treatment process. The lake was surveyed for EWM and eight locations totaling 10 acres were found primarily near the boat landing but one location was mid-lake near the East shore. The depths ranged from 3-13 feet deep.

This spring we will resurvey the lake for EWM. When the lake temperature averages 60 degrees a licensed aquatic contractor will treat the areas with ProcellaCOR (Florpyrauxifen-benzaldehyl) which is noted for not harming native plants and for dispersing quickly. There will be public notices as required by the DNR.

We will conduct a post-treatment survey in late-June to monitor our results. If individual plants are found, we will probably have to hand pull them.

Assuming we will not be 100% successful, we are preparing now for 2023. We will need to have a formal aquatic plant management plan for 2023 which will be coordinated with Polk county, the DNR, and Barr Engineering. A management plan is required to receive future DNR grants.

We expect to have more information at the annual meeting which will be post-treatment. We are considering offering through Polk County an Eurasian Water-Milfoil vs Northern Water-Milfoil identification class to help people learn how to identify and dispose of EWM.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

INSPECT your boat, trailer, and equipment and **REMOVE** visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud before leaving the water access.

DRAIN water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells, and bait containers before leaving the water access.

REPORT new sightings.

DISPOSE of unwanted bait and other animals or aquatic plants in the trash.

SPRAY, RINSE, or DRY boats and recreational equipment to remove or kill species that were not visible when leaving a waterbody.

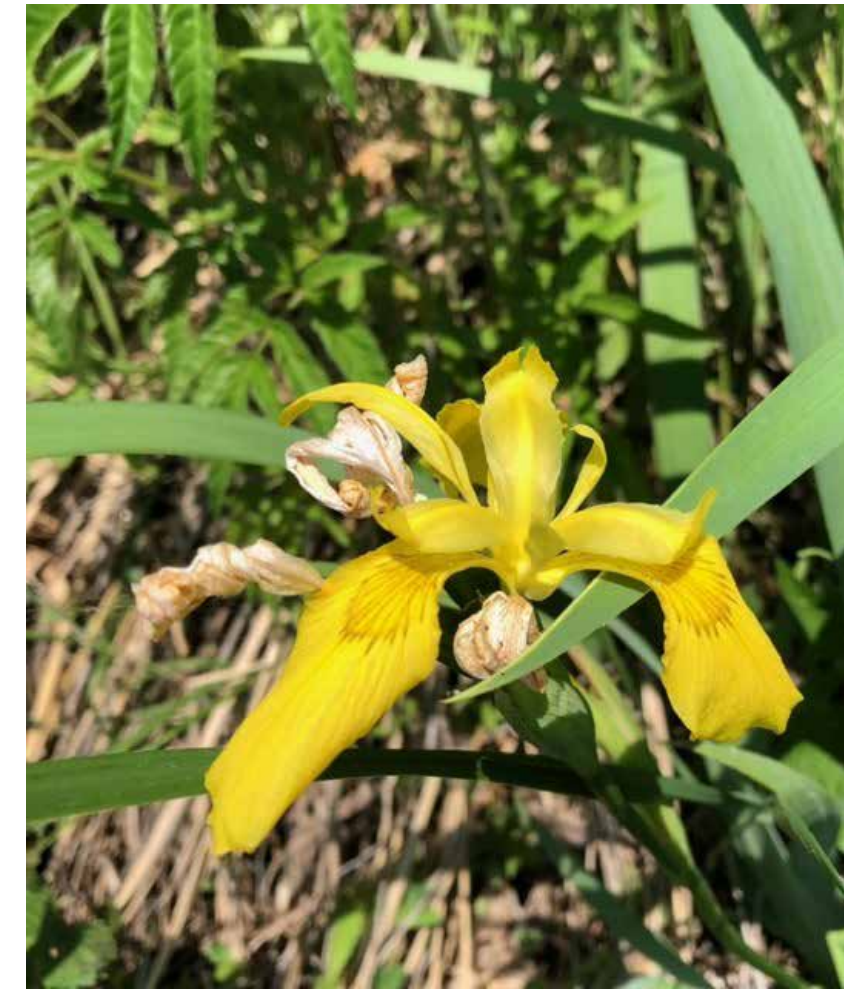
See you on the water!

REMINDER TO WATCH FOR YELLOW IRIS

As property owners you can eradicate invasive Yellow Iris. Yellow Iris blooms from Memorial weekend to mid-June right at shoreline. There are several methods to control it including digging up the roots and spraying.

The Wisconsin DNR recommends Glyphosate (Roundup or Groundclear). Spray as if you are painting the plant, not getting any on surrounding vegetation.

For further information look up WSDNR Yellow Iris on the web. For assistance or identification here on the lake, contact Jim Benike: 507-254-1063, jimbenike@benike.com.



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By David J. Butler

Should the new dam raise the lake level of Half Moon Lake or lower the lake level? In 1928, that was the burning question being argued by people with varying interests around the lake. The Commissioner from the Wisconsin Public Service Commission, who was presiding at a hearing on the issue, told the crowd, "The level will not be raised beyond the normal level of the lake. The normal level will be determined by looking at the varying levels over the last 20 years." He then asked the crowd for comments as to what the lake level had been. The answers were affected by the level of the lake they preferred. Charley Johnson fed cattle along-side Harder Creek north of the lake before the beavers built their dams, so he wanted a low level that would not cause his land to be flooded. There were five resorts around the lake and the owners preferred a higher lake level to make better swimming beaches. Mads Bank, the owner of the electric power plant on Balsam Lake, wanted a lower dam in order to keep a constant flow of water coming down the steam to his plant. The Township trustees were worried a higher level would wash out the new road they were building around the south end of the lake.

The Commissioner ended the meeting by saying he would send out a surveyor to get an answer. The order came out saying the dam will be built at an elevation of 97.80 feet. The dam was built. Later it was found the builders had made a mistake and built the dam with an elevation of 98.50 feet. A supplemental order was entered saying "it appears there has been no damage caused by the higher level, so the dam will remain at 98.50 feet".

More details and photos of the old dam can be found in *The History of Half Moon Lake, a Story of Trust*, written in 2013.

The Spring 2022 Loon Report

For those of you new to Half Moon Lake and unfamiliar with loon behavior a brief account of what to expect during the summer months follows. Adult loons migrate every September mainly to the Gulf of Mexico and return in the spring upon ice out. Generally, the loons are monogamous and return every year to their same territorial lakes. We have been fortunate over the years to usually have two pairs on Half Moon Lake. On April 20th of this year, as the ice was out, our first pair of loons arrived on the north end of the lake and by early May a second pair was spotted on the south end.



Male and female loons work together to build a nest of dead plant material in May or early June. Nesting sites are usually on weedy shorelines or small boggy islands near the shore. Loons usually lay two eggs and take turns incubating them. During this time, it's vital that people stay at least 200' away from nesting sites as causing the adult to leave the nest makes the eggs vulnerable to predators such as eagles, raccoons, and snapping turtles. If you see a loon lying flat on a nest with its head down, please distance yourselves.

Chicks hatch within 25-28 days and immediately take to the water. From birth, loon chicks can swim but their first week they may spend half their time riding on their parents backs for protection and warmth. The parents feed them for the first eight weeks of life. They are also able to dive soon after hatching but have difficulty staying submerged and tend to pop up like corks. Thus, it is imperative that while boating, we vigilantly look out for these newly hatched babies.

Loons are protected by State and Federal laws as migratory, nongame birds. Harassing protected loons can carry a fine of

\$1000 and 90 days in jail. If you see someone harassing one of our loons, please attempt to educate the offender, and if necessary, call the DNR or the nearest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement Office. We can all help protect our loons by using nonlead fishing tackle, participating in the WI DNR'S monofilament recycling program, following the 200' rule, and especially during nesting season by controlling our boat speeds in nesting areas to prevent wakes that can wash out nests. We are so fortunate to have two pairs of loons on our lake, please help to protect them so we can all enjoy their eerie calls and beauty during the summer months. If you have any questions about loons or loon behaviors you observe, please feel free to e-mail me at tmechelke@gmail.com. Have a great summer!

Pat Mechelke – Half Moon Lake Loon Ranger

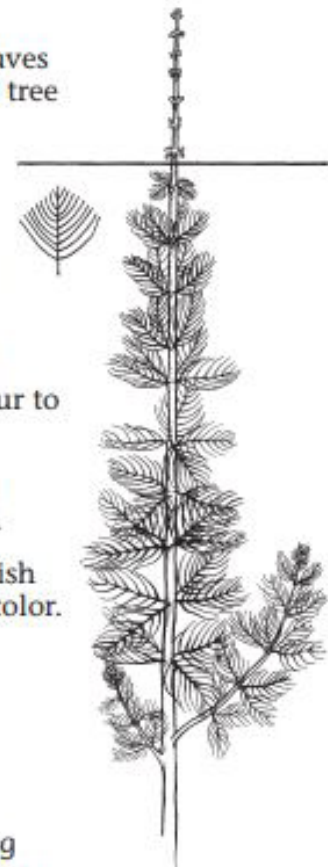
Recognizing Eurasian Water-milfoil and Native Look-a-Likes

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.



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.



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.



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.





photos by Keanna Kerrigan

trumpeter swans... a success story

By Dave Balestri

Over the last few years, the sights and sounds of trumpeter swans have become a common occurrence on and around Half Moon Lake. In spring, you can sometimes see them starting to gather in the neighboring fields. In summer, you can frequently see them on "29th Lake" on 190th Avenue, on Mud Lake just south of Highway 8, and on the unnamed pond on 180th Street near East Balsam Baptist Church. In fall, as neighboring ponds and smaller lakes begin to freeze over, these huge birds converge on the north end of our lake, gathering by the dozens, until the encroaching ice forces them to move further on. I have been lucky enough to be directly under a flock of trumpeters as they flew overhead, and I will tell you... they are LOUD! It's an amazing experience to look up and see a low-flying flock of birds that weigh upwards of 25 pounds each, with wingspans of five feet, calling at the top of their lungs.

This is notable because just 20 years ago, trumpeter swans were basically nowhere to be seen. In 1935, only 69 Trumpeter Swans were believed to live in the continental U.S. In 1989 Wisconsin initiated a recovery program to increase the trumpeter swan population. Evidence of the program's success is literally all around us.

The following article is reprinted by permission. It originally appeared in Volume 40, Issue #1 of Lake Tides, a publication of the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership. The accompanying photos are of trumpeter swans in and around Half Moon Lake, taken by Leo Balestri (LB) and Keanna Kerrigan (KK).

by Paul Skawinski, Statewide Citizen Lake Monitoring Network Educator

Wisconsin's heaviest bird – the trumpeter swan – is an iconic, all-white bird that prefers large, open wetlands with an abundance of diverse aquatic vegetation to eat. Trumpeters are enormous birds and require at least 100 yards of open water to noisily run across as they prepare to fly.



ALMOST LOVED TO DEATH!

These majestic swans suffered a precipitous decline from the 1600s to the early 1900s. Trumpeter swans were hunted for their feathers to decorate hats, and their down-covered skins were turned into powder puffs. Only 69 trumpeter swans were believed to remain in 1935, with some additional swans in isolated areas of Alaska and Canada. Wisconsin began a recovery program in 1989 to increase the trumpeter swan population. Each year, 37-50 eggs were collected from Alaska and were hatched at the Milwaukee County Zoo from 1989-1997. The program was a terrific success, with a 93% hatching success rate

(typical hatching success rate in the wild is 60-80%). These hatched birds were eventually released into northern Wisconsin wetlands. Each wetland selected



NATURE NOTES

by Dave Balestri

I subscribe to a few magazines and newsletters from the Wisconsin DNR. Here are a few tidbits that I've come across recently.

- June 4-5 is Free Fun Weekend in Wisconsin. Fishing is allowed throughout the state without a fishing license. State park admission and trail fees are waived statewide. Wisconsin has 49 state parks, 15 state forests, and 44 state trails. The closest state park to Half Moon Lake is Straight Lake State Park, just a few miles east of Luck.
- Anglers are allowed by Wisconsin law to fish and travel along any navigable waterway if they keep their feet wet and stay in the stream.
- It is illegal to use crayfish as bait. Harvesting of crayfish is allowed for disposal or for eating, but an angler cannot possess fishing gear and a live crayfish on a Wisconsin waterbody at the same time. This rule is meant to help prevent the spread of the invasive rusty crayfish.
- The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin conducts field trips throughout the state all year long. Activities near Half Moon Lake range from archaeology to Monarch butterfly tagging to helping put bands on Saw-whet owls. A full list of field trips is online at wisconservation.org/field-trips. You can filter the results by area to see what's nearby. An example is shown at the right

201. Banding Ducks Hands-On

Stealthily ascend into an elevated blind under the cover of darkness and watch ducks gather during sunset/sunrise at the Collins Marsh Wildlife Area. See biologists capture ducks with a cannon-net, then help catch and even band ducks yourself! A great hands-on experience to learn about waterfowl ecology and management. Fundraiser for NRF. Ages 8+

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201-B. THURSDAY, AUGUST 18, 4:30-8:30AM

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Here I am on page 10 rather than the usual page 3 for the Editor's Column. If you've made it this far, then you've probably noticed that this issue is packed with information about the state of our lake and the many activities that our lake stewards are undertaking to protect and improve the lake and its watershed. This information – especially the news about Eurasian Milfoil and about the temporary closure of the boat landing – will affect virtually every person that recreates on Half Moon Lake. That's why this issue is coming out earlier than usual, why there are more words and fewer photos than usual, and why I'm back here on page 10.

In addition to all the important news packing the first half of this issue, there is some fun stuff in here as well. We have a couple "where in the world are Half Moon Lakers?" photos to share, including my own on this page (I joined a bicycle tour of Cuba this April; that's me on the right with our Cuban guide "Laz"), we have good news about the stocking of walleyes, and we re-print an article about the incredible recovery of Trumpeter Swans in northwest Wisconsin.

Also, Keanna Kerrigan, granddaughter of Mary and Paul Vierow, contributes another article – this time about her own fishing adventures and the types of fisherpeople she sees on Half Moon Lake. David Butler contributes an article about the history of the lake, and I try to explain what all these committees and organizations are and what they do.

Pages 14 and 15 are dedicated to the notes from last year's annual meeting. The HML Protection & Rehabilitation District is required by its by-laws to publish the notes of the previous year's meeting prior to the upcoming meeting. There's lots of good info in these notes. This year's meeting will be Saturday, July 16th at 10:00 a.m. at the public beach.

This issue's cover photo is a "blast from the past". One of those "kids" is 19 years old now; the rest are in their 20s. If you have pictures, article ideas, questions, or suggestions for future issues, please send them to me at halfmoonlakeloonlines@gmail.com.

Here's to a fun summer!
Dave Balestri, Editor



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to receive trumpeter swans had to meet a long list of habitat criteria to give the swans the best chance at survival and reproduction. A total of 394 trumpeters were released into Wisconsin wetlands. 2014 was the year of the most recent ground survey to locate all nesting pairs of trumpeter swans. A total of 253 nests were documented, with over 60% of those being in northwest Wisconsin, but nests were found as far south as Racine and Grant Counties. In 2015, researchers used aerial surveys to count the breeding population of trumpeters. That year, the total Wisconsin breeding population was estimated at 4,965 birds, and in 2019 the estimate increased to 6,106!

LIFETIME BONDS

Trumpeter swans form lasting bonds even before sexual maturity, and most will mate for life. A pair that discovers a good habitat and successfully raises a family will return year after year to nest, occasionally using the exact same nest as before. They use mounds of vegetation to build a nest to raise their young. Some trumpeters will harvest the vegetation

themselves, but many prefer to repurpose a beaver lodge, muskrat mound, or small floating islands.

LOVING THE NORTHERN CLIMATE

Although these birds do migrate, they do not fly to Central America or Florida. They stay much closer to home. Wisconsin swans tracked with satellite transmitters during migration were found to migrate as far as 607 miles to southwestern Illinois, but some migrated as little as 41 miles between Crex Meadows Wildlife Area and Hudson, WI. In an ongoing study of trumpeter swans, researchers outfitted a group of swans with satellite transmitters, and you can see their current locations by visiting <https://trumpeterswan.netlify.app> and clicking on "Most Recent Locations" at the top of the page.

If you want to learn more about swans and their recovery in Wisconsin, check out this presentation from the 2021 Wisconsin Water Week by retired Wisconsin DNR Avian Ecologist Sumner Matteson: WI's Trumpeter Swan Recovery Program: A 30-YR Retrospective on Research, Management, and Collaboration (https://youtu.be/woJNdxpR_rQ)



photos by Leo Balestri

Look-A-Likes

Trumpeter swans may be confused with other large white wetland birds such as mute swans, tundra swans, or pelicans.



Mute swans are slightly smaller with an orange bill and typically hold their neck with more of a curve. The trumpeter swan's bill is all black, except in juveniles where there may be a pinkish patch on the side.



Tundra swans are smaller than trumpeter swans and have a small yellow patch in front of the eye. The area where the bill meets the head is V-shaped on trumpeter swans and U-shaped on tundra swans.

by Dave Balestri, with input from Bud Erickson and Bob Cutshall

Half Moon Lake Conservancy. Half Moon Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District. Clean Boats Clean Waters. The Loon Lines. The Loon Ladies. What are these entities? And who are these people? I've been here at Half Moon Lake for 20 years, and I don't think I've ever been sure who is who and what is what when it comes to the various people, groups and committees that care for and protect Half Moon Lake and its watershed. Figuring that a few other people may be confused as well, I dug into it a bit. Here then, is a summary of each.

HALF MOON LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT

In 1973, the Wisconsin legislature recognized that many of the state's cherished lakes were deteriorating or under the threat of deterioration. Recreation on the lakes was on the rise. Water pollution was threatening wildlife and the overall health of lakes. Agricultural runoff was causing increased eutrophication, a process by which a body of water becomes enriched with nutrients, particularly nitrogen and phosphorous, increasing the amount of plant and algae growth and robbing the lake of oxygen.

Seeing the need to protect - and in some cases rehabilitate - inland lakes, the legislature created Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin statutes. Chapter 33 defines regulations and protection for public inland waters. Subchapter IV of Chapter 33 outlines the right for areas around public lakes to set up Protection and Rehabilitation Districts. "Districts may be created for the purpose of undertaking a program of lake protection and rehabilitation of a lake or parts thereof within the district" (section 33.21). In addition to a lot of other words, Chapter 33 indicates that "Management of the affairs of the district shall be delegated to a board of commissioners" (section 33.28(1)). The legislation further defines the role of the board, the requirement for an annual meeting, and the eligibility for voting for and serving as commissioner on the board.

In 1994, the Polk County Board created the Half Moon Lake Public Inland Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District ("the District"). Essentially, the District is a government entity with fairly limited powers. One of the few governmental powers of the District board is that it can levy taxes on the riparian owners of property on the lake. The original board members created our District's by-laws, which are largely a simplified version of the state statute. The by-laws specify the powers and

duties of our Board. The primary responsibilities are laid out in Section 7.

They are:

1. Initiate and coordinate research and surveys for the purpose of gathering data on the lake, related shore lands, and the drainage basin.
2. Plan lake rehabilitation projects.
3. Adopt and carry out lake protection plans and obtain any necessary permits therefor.
4. Maintain liaison with officials of state government involve in lake protection and rehabilitation.
5. Implement the decisions of the electors at annual and special meetings.
6. Control fiscal matters of the District. The Board may levy taxes or use special assessments for the purpose of carrying out protection and rehabilitation projects or lake management activities. The Board has authority to borrow money when in temporary need.



Our current District Board members (commissioners) are Bud Ericksen (Chairman), Doug Ebeling, Robert (Bob) Cutshall (Secretary), Jim Benike, and Ellen Butler (Treasurer).

HALF MOON LAKE CONSERVANCY

The Half Moon Lake Conservancy is a 501.3.C non-profit corporation founded in 2003 by David J. Butler. Its focus is to protect the lake from land uses on nearby properties that may harm the lake. Its geographical area of concern includes the entire watershed that drains into the lake. The Conservancy tries to preserve the native habitat in and around the lake. Fundamentally, its focus is on land use. The Conservancy can and does own property. For example, in 2010 the Conservancy bought two lake lots totaling 31.5 acres and an easement of 8 acres on Tamarack Bay. It also purchased land north of the lake, on Dau Road. That parcel



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FINGERLING WALLEYES STOCKED IN HALF MOON LAKE

by Doug Ebeling

Last September the DNR provided Half Moon Lake with approximately 5,270 walleye fingerlings. Fingerlings are 6-9 inches long and have a much higher survival rate than the previously stocked fry. From what we could tell, all the fish looked healthy. The walleyes were stocked at both the north and south boat landings. The south landing has never been used for stocking before. Utilizing two locations and stocking larger fish should give this batch a good chance of success. Since Half Moon Lake has a size restriction of 18", it will take several years for this year's class to reach keeper size. Please be patient if you catch a small walleye. Remove the hook gently and return the fish to the water as soon as possible.



consists of 35 acres of marsh, woodland, and meadowland through which Harder Creek meanders before draining into Half Moon Lake. The land has trails for hiking and cross-country skiing.

While both the District and the Conservancy are concerned with the well-being of Half Moon Lake, they are completely independent of each other. Unlike the District, the Conservancy is not a government entity and therefore can't levy taxes or assessments. Its members are not voted on by landowners around the lake. The current board members are Ellen Butler, Bud Erickson, Bob Cutshall, Eric Johnson, John Weber, David J. Butler, and David W. Butler.

CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS

Clean Boats, Clean Waters (CBCW) is a watercraft inspection program sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The program was initiated to take a front line defense against the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Through the CBCW program, inspectors are trained to organize and conduct a boater education program in their community. Adults and



youth teams educate boaters on how and where invasive species are most likely to hitch a ride into waterbodies. Inspectors perform boat and trailer checks for invasive species, distribute informational brochures and collect and report any new water body infestations. The Half Moon Lake CBCW leader is Dan Leh. Dan has been instrumental in securing our camera system at the boat landing, leading expeditions to identify weeds in the lake, and hiring young people to inspect boats at the landing. It is an ongoing effort to keep everyone on the lake informed and vigilant.

HML CONSERVANCY BOARD



Pictured left to right. Ellen Butler, Bud Erickson, Bob Cutshall, Eric Johnson, John Weber, seated is founding member, David J. Butler. Not pictured: David W. Butler.



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**HALF MOON LAKE PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING
JULY 17, 2021 – SUBMITTED BY BOB CUTSHALL**

Bud Ericksen called the meeting to order at 10:11 a.m. The meeting was held at the public beach on Half Moon Lake. Board members present: Bud Ericksen Ellen Butler Mike Dau Jim Benike Doug Ebling Bob Cutshall I.

1. Approval of the meeting agenda
 - a. John Misner made a motion to approve the agenda as prepared by Bud Ericksen.
 - b. Chris Schneider seconded the motion.
 - c. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Bud Ericksen gave a brief review of the Wisconsin boating regulations and encouraged everyone to become familiar with them and follow them.
3. Bob Cutshall presented the meeting minutes from the 2020 annual meeting and asked if there should be any corrections made to them. None were offered.
 - a. Doug Ebling made a motion to accept the minutes as drafted.
 - b. Steve Minn seconded the motion.
 - c. The motion was unanimously approved.
4. Vote for board members
 - a. Bud Ericksen's term is expiring this year but he is willing to continue serving on the board.
 - b. John Misner nominated Bud for the open position. There were no other nominations.
 - c. Steve Minn seconded the nomination.
 - d. Bud was unanimously elected to serve an additional three year term.
5. Ellen Butler presented the Treasurer's report dated July 11, 2021.
 - a. The budget for 2022 will be the same as the one for 2021. There will be no increase in the tax levy.
 - b. Dale Kastner made a motion to accept the report and approve the 2022 budget.
 - c. Doris Christoffersen seconded the motion.
 - d. The motion was approved unanimously.
6. New boat ramp at the public landing
 - a. Because of Covid and other issues this did not get completed this past year.
 - b. Reese Bracken made the following motion: "The board shall be authorized to continue working with the Wisconsin DNR, the Village of Milltown and Milltown Township to design and fund the construction of a replacement boat ramp. The board shall further be authorized to enter into agreements to pay for the new ramp subject to the following conditions:
 - i. The district's contribution shall not exceed one third of the net cost of the new ramp and dock (after receiving the DNR grant).
 - ii. In no event shall the district be authorized to spend in excess of \$30,000 for the design and construction of the new ramp and dock."
 - c. Herb Townsend seconded the motion.
 - d. The motion passed unanimously.
 - e. A question was raised regarding the use of a temporary ramp during construction of the new one. Bud Ericksen will look into this matter.
7. Mike Dau gave the Township report that dealt with boating accidents, road and culvert work, public access at the south end of the lake and Covid relief funds that Polk County has received from the federal government.
8. Jim Benike gave the loon report: here are two pairs of loons on the lake. The pair on the south end has two chicks and the pair on the north has none.
9. Invasive species
 - a. Jim Benike gave a report on the treatment of yellow iris (invasive) on the lake. The contractor we hired treated all of the plants that were identified on the DNR permit, but the iris has spread considerably beyond these limits. We will do this again next year and hopefully be able to treat most of the remaining plants on the lake. We also plan to hire Barr Engineering to do another invasive plant study not later than 2023.
 - b. Jim also stated that property owners can legally treat yellow iris that is on their property. Please contact Jim directly if you are interested in doing this. You do not need to get a permit, but still must follow DNR regulations. Jim's contact information is: (507) 254-1063 or jimbenike@benike.com
 - c. Jim also discussed dealing with buckthorn issues. Anyone interested in eradicating buckthorn on your property should contact Jim about this matter also.
 - d. There was a long discussion about the use of funds that the district has set aside to deal with any invasive species issues that might arise. The district has been putting \$10,000 per year into a capital fund. Its current balance is approximately \$133,650. In order to clarify the board's authority to use these funds, the following motion was made by Chris Schneider: "The board shall (upon unanimous approval of all board members) be permitted to spend money in the Capital Fund for the investigation, prevention, containment or treatment of invasive species (plant or animal) that may affect or are affecting the lake without a specific authorization at an annual meeting."
 - i. Reese Bracken seconded the motion.
 - ii. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Doug Ebling gave the fishing report: The Wisconsin DNR will stock the lake with 5,790 walleye fingerlings (6" to 8" long) in the fall of 2021. This is considerably more than they have done in the past. Doug also noted that the DNR will be doing a fish study in a number of Wisconsin lakes and Half Moon Lake will included in this study.
11. Ellen Butler gave a summary of the 4th of July activities: The cost of the fireworks this year was \$4,400. This is entirely paid for from advertising revenue generated from the Loon Lines newsletter.
12. Loon Lines: Dave Balestri has taken over this responsibility from Kim Butler. Dave encouraged lake property owners to submit photos and human interest stories to him for publication in the newsletter.
13. Clean boats/clean waters
 - a. Dan Leh stated that we have increased our "in person" monitoring from 8 hours per day up to 10 hours. While our personnel at the landing do still encounter some resistance to having their boats checked, the vast majority of people visiting the lake understand the need for this and are cooperative.
 - b. Our camera operates 24 hours per day and we do contact the DNR when boats enter the lake that are not in compliance with DNR regulations.
 - c. An average of 35 boats per day come into the lake.
14. Half Moon Lake website
 - a. Joe Lonski maintains the website and stated that we had over 2,400 site visits this past year.
 - b. The website is HalfMoonLake.net.
15. Boat cleaning station
 - a. Doug Ebling noted that the boat cleaning station was another casualty of the Covid problem this past year.
 - b. The current cost of this equipment is just under \$35,000. There is DNR grant money available to pay for part of this.
 - c. Dan Leh made a motion to authorize the board to spend up to \$25,000 on this equipment.
 - d. John Weber seconded the motion.
 - e. The motion passed unanimously.
16. Goose round up
 - a. This effort began two years ago. Last year there was no problem with geese on the lake, so nothing was done.
 - b. This year the geese were back in large numbers, especially near the public landing. Bud Ericksen stated that the Dep't. of Agriculture (DOA) was able to capture and remove 21 geese this year.
 - c. A special thanks to Angela Misner who helped coordinate this year's roundup with the DOA.
17. Change to the district's bylaws
 - a. The district's bylaws were adopted in 1994 and, to the best of our knowledge, have not been amended since then. Article III, Section 7 of the bylaws permits the board to spend up to \$5,000 at its discretion without prior approval at an annual meeting. The board would like this amount raised to \$10,000 (primarily as a result of inflation).
 - b. There was a vote on this matter that was approved but it was pointed out that we hadn't followed the correct procedure to do this as stated in the bylaws. The board forgot to give legal notice of this proposed change prior to the meeting. The board will present this request again next year but with prior notice being given.
18. Meeting adjournment
 - a. John Weber made a motion to adjourn the meeting.
 - b. Steve Minn seconded the motion.
 - c. The meeting was adjourned at 11:58 a.m. Subsequent to the adjournment of the annual meeting, the board met briefly to elect officers for the coming year. The following individuals were elected unanimously. Chairman - Bud Ericksen; Secretary - Bob Cutshall; Treasurer - Ellen Butler

ANNUAL LAKE DISTRICT MEETING
Saturday, July 16, 10:00 am
at the Public Beach

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