



May 2012, Issue 60

Lake Eau Claire Association
P.O. Box 229
Augusta, WI 54722
www.lakeeauclaire.org

Another Positive Step

by Fred Poss, President

The second public informational meeting about the problems and possible solutions for Lake Eau Claire was held Saturday evening at 7:00 P.M. at the Augusta Elementary School. Approximately 120 people turned out. All lake property owners were to be contacted in a letter by Marlo Orth and Brian Kellett informing them of the meeting. Our role as a lake association has been to facilitate such meetings and help gather speakers and information. The meeting was chaired by Kelly Jacobs, a land conservation staff person from Eau Claire County. Information was presented on the new 2012 Lake Management Plan, potential grants, and partnerships with both the Department of Natural Resources and Eau Claire County. Eric Olson from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point presented on the basics of a lake district governing board. Marlo Orth talked about the lake district petition effort going forward, and I provided a brief summary of the partnerships we need to build with the DNR, with Eau Claire County conservation staff, with the Eau Claire County Board, and later down the road, with markets which may purchase the sand we are able to remove from the sand traps we hope to create. The DNR has a lake grant of up to \$200,000 which it could commit to our lake rehabilitation, if we as property owners are ready to show we can provide a steady annual source of dollars to maintain the sand traps and aeration of the lake once the DNR installs these. Eau Claire County is also looking at a Three County Lake Grant which could provide very important dollar support to reduce annual maintenance costs to clean out the sand traps and maintain the aeration system. Many good questions were asked after each of the presentations. If we all can continue to listen and learn and work together, even more positive steps are ahead of us.

Nature Notes

Large Predator Update *By Mike Harden*

Much interest (and controversy) is generated by the status of Wisconsin's largest native predators; the timber wolf, the black bear, and the occasional cougar which has reappeared in the state. Growing up in the '60's, I recall that a sighting of any one of these animals would have made the newspaper, if not the TV news. Now, they have all made a comeback.

The cougar was found throughout Wisconsin prior to 1870, but was considered to be extirpated by 1920. Rare sightings after that were discounted as misidentifications, or possibly the result of an animal escaping from a private owner or traveling circus.

The advent of trail cameras, however, have provided reliable support to the claims of visual sightings by hunters and others. In 2009, a cougar was confirmed in Eau Claire Co. In 2011, there were 7 confirmed sightings, the last in Rusk Co. in November.

Timber wolves continue to increase in number. Eliminated in the '50's and not found in the state again until the '70's, a 1979-80 study estimated 25 in the state. By the winter of 2010-2011, the number had grown to an estimated 800 animals, considerably above the original management goal of 350 animals. Several individuals are inhabitants of eastern Eau Claire County. Contrary to the insistence of some of the patrons of my favorite cheeseburger establishment (no plug allowed), wolves *were not* stocked in the state by the DNR, but simply migrated in from Minnesota and the UP of Michigan. Being protected as an endangered species, their numbers have grown substantially. As of Jan 27, 2012, they were delisted from being a federally endangered species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. They are now a protected species under DNR management. A management plan is in the works. Whether a hunting and/or trapping season will be initiated is yet to be determined.

The story of the black bear is even more dramatic. In 1989, the estimated population in Wisconsin was about 9000 animals. By the fall of 2011, their numbers had grown to an estimate of 23,000 or so. Once found only in the North, their range has expanded throughout the state, nearly to our southern border. They are fairly common in the vicinity of Lake Eau Claire. Hunters from the south often come all the way up here to train their hounds on tracking bears in the forest near Hwy. H, and the Coon Fork Area.

Some problems result from these population increases. All may occasionally prey upon livestock, deer, and Wisconsin's fragile elk population. Bears cause damage to cabins, crops, and bird feeders, especially when they emerge from their winter sleep. Their direct risk to humans is very low, but they are very worthy of one's caution and respect. If you should encounter any one of these magnificent creatures, keep your distance, but enjoy the opportunity. Not long ago, such an occurrence would have been an impossibility.



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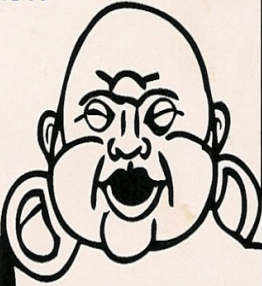
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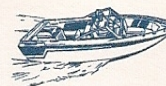


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fredposs@gmail.com

Vice-President - Vicki Reed E 19605 Cty. Rd. ND Augusta 54722 715.286.2040

reedvf@uwec.edu

Secretary - Mary Schutz E20350 Greens Landing Rd Augusta 54722 715.286.5583

m.schutz@centurytel.net

Treasurer - Dean Boehne 512 5th Ave. N Strum 54770 715.695.3131

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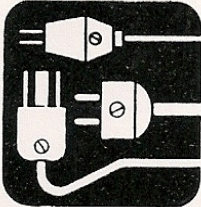
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