



September 2012, Issue 62

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

SOMETHING VERY FISHY IS GOING ON....

More good news on the effort to improve the fish population in Lake Eau Claire. After the past two years of major spring floods, the DNR reported that our fish population took a serious hit in the number of large game fish in the lake. To address this problem, last fall in early October, our association began to add half-log spawning structures to Lake Eau Claire. These structures are often referred to as "fish cribs." But if you have read previous articles I have written on this subject, you know they are not the typical square, chimney-like log constructions standing upright about six to ten feet tall on the bottom of a lake. Our "fish cribs" are about one foot off the bottom and consist of two cement blocks with a half-log about eight feet long strapped on top of them. Pine branches are stuffed into the top and bottom of the cement blocks. Fish seek to spawn under wood like the logs we provide, and the pine branches attract bugs and minnows which provide a food source for the spawning fish. A total of 86 half-log structures will have been added to Lake Eau Claire. If this message reaches you in time, please know we always assemble between 8:30 and 9:00 AM at the north boat landing. Bring a pair of heavy work gloves. We will finish by lunch time. Previous volunteers have said how good they feel about rolling up their sleeves and actually doing something to help our lake. Contact President Fred Poss, 715.286.9413, if you have any questions.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!!

Don't forget to put Saturday, January 5, on your calendar. That is the date for our annual Lake Eau Claire Holiday Dinner Party. All the specific details of the party will be coming to you in a newsletter announcement nearer the holidays. But save that date! The annual holiday gathering is a great time to reconnect with everyone in our lake community. (And like last year, I promise to make a very short speech :)

Congratulations To the Newly Elected Board Members

Mike Harden
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Email: mikeandnano@sbcglobal.net

Patricia McHugh
Phone: [715.835.0370](tel:715.835.0370)
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Nature Notes

Waterfowl Issues

By: Mike Harden

Anyone who knows me is aware that I am an avid fan of birds. Birds of prey, waterfowl, songbirds, game birds; I am fond of them all. Here on Lake Eau Claire, we are blessed with an abundant and widely varied avian fauna. Our lake is home to a wide variety of water birds; herons, cormorants, kingfishers, gulls, cranes, and a large number of ducks and geese. We are treated to migratory visits by pelicans, loons, grebes, swans, and others. Normally, all of these species live in a healthy balance with we humans and the lake ecosystem. However, sometimes the natural balance can be upset, and problems result. Such has become the case with our duck and goose population.

I myself feed birds. Woodpeckers, finches, orioles, hummingbirds, grosbeaks and others all benefit from my efforts from time to time. However, intensive feeding of wildlife of any kind can result in problems. It unnaturally concentrates the animal in a smaller area, which results in a concentration of waste, and the pathogens that are carried in that waste. Diseases such as avian cholera, duck plague, and avian botulism can occur in a bird population when wastes build up to a high level.

According to the US Dept. of Agriculture, a Canada goose defecates 3 or so times an hour, dropping a total of about one and a half pounds of feces per day. A flock of 100 geese can add over a ton of feces to a lake ecosystem each month.

Bird feces contain pathogens that can cause disease in humans as well. Such diseases are called zoonotic diseases. Examples include giardiasis (beaver fever), which causes severe gastroenteritis, explosive diarrhea, and bloody urine. Salmonella and cryptosporidium present in these feces can also cause intestinal disease if accidentally ingested by swimmers. A fluke (flatworm) present in bird droppings, burrows into the skin and causes swimmers itch. On land, goose, duck, or gull droppings can cause a disease called psittacosis, from chlamydia bacteria in the feces that may be inhaled when the feces are stirred up during cleanup. Beaches at Lake Altoona and Lake Eau Claire are occasionally closed due to high concentrations of E. Coli bacteria, also found in bird waste.

Besides bacteria and viruses, the nutrients found in bird waste, particularly Phosphorus and Nitrogen, contribute to severe algae blooms. A bloom is simply a population explosion of algae when conditions are right; usually when the water is warm and nutrient levels are high. If that bloom involves cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green algae), the condition may result in toxins being produced that affect the liver (hepatotoxins) or the nervous system (neurotoxins). These toxins can cause disease and sometimes be fatal to dogs who ingest the water, or they may cause illness in small children or in people with compromised immune systems. Some studies have led scientists to speculate that exposure to cyanobacteria toxins may be a contributing factor in the development of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease).

So, I am of the opinion that it is imprudent, if not downright hazardous, to allow waterfowl to concentrate in unnaturally high numbers over an extended period of time.

Many individual property owners have devised various methods to keep their numbers down. Municipalities often allow special hunts to reduce numbers. Others have banned the feeding of waterfowl altogether by ordinance. This is not only an aesthetic issue, but an issue of public health that is only growing as hunter numbers continue to decline, and waterfowl numbers (particularly Canada geese) continue to grow.

LAKE DISTRICT APPROVED!

by Fred Poss, President

By a vote of 21 Yes to 5 No, the Eau Claire County Board voted to approve the Lake District for Lake Eau Claire on Tuesday, September 18. The fact that such a large majority of county board members voted to support the creation of the lake district shows how strong the case is for our plan and for implementing the proposed partnerships which will fund restoration and improvement of our lake. The vote demonstrates the 2012 Lake Management Plan constructed by Dr. Rod Zika, our resident lake scientist, has sound science and careful budgeting. Anyone interested in reading the fifty-plus page document can go to our lake association's website at www.lakeeauclaire.org.

Many local residents have been asking me about what is next and when will things start happening. I am very pleased to report significant steps are already underway. The week of September 17 to the 23 Dr. Zika and myself arranged for a DNR mapping specialist, Neil Trombly, to go with us into the upriver country east of the lake between Skid Row landing and Troubled Waters bridge. While a map exists of that back country, it is not up-to-date because every spring brings major changes from floods. A map as exact as possible is needed using GPS technology to identify precise locations for the three proposed sand traps as well as mark back channels that are blocked with sand and logjams. Our lake plan calls for removing the blocks and logjams in order to re-establish good river flow. If the flow of the current can be restored, two important goals can be reached. First, fish spawning and wildlife habitat upriver can be restored and renewed as fresh water can begin to reach into dead pockets upriver. Second, with increased current, lake science tells us that the natural scouring effect of the river will begin to dig out the river channel. Coupling the removal of blockages and the installation of sand traps with the natural benefits of an increased current flow is how we can move forward with restoring and protecting Lake Eau Claire.

Other goals in the 2012 Lake Management Plan include installation of an aeration system in the deep west end of the lake, installation of sand traps on Hay and Muskrat Creeks, the building and installation of more fish spawning half-log structures (fish cribs), and the unblocking of the river channels east of Skid Row. I am organizing a group of volunteers to add 16 more half-log structures on Saturday, September 29. Once the last load of these spawning cribs are in that will bring the entire year's total to 86 structures. I wish to thank all the great volunteers who have come forward from our association and from the Augusta Bass Club for their wonderful assistance in improving the fishing in our lake.

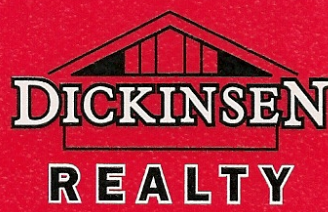
The mapping project now underway should finish most of the travel part of the investigation by the end of September. Hopefully, by that time the DNR office in Madison will have finished their review of a Variance for Dredging which they required of us this summer. I wrote and sent off the latest draft of that variance request last Tuesday with changes they required. Once we receive the go-ahead from DNR, the plan is to get contractors into the sand trap sites, get their estimates, award bids, and if the weather cooperates before winter, we may even begin initial heavy equipment work. However, as we have no control over the state agency approval times or over Mother Nature, please know that we eagerly look forward to implementing the Lake Management Plan as soon as possible.

I also want to take a little time to speak to two specific groups of people. First, as President, I want to take this space to sincerely thank so many association members who have volunteered to assist with the political effort necessary for the vote to pass. In the years ahead, all of you will be able to look back on your contributions of time and effort and be able to know you were an integral part of restoring Lake Eau Claire. Of course, as President, I also need to speak to those who opposed the formation of the lake district. And just as I said at the county board vote, I promise here in writing to continue to listen to all concerns you have and do my best to reach consensus and agreement. To that end, this coming Wednesday I am attending a meeting of the Eau Claire County Land Conservation Commission. On the agenda for that meeting are two major points. One will be discussion and potential action on county lake rehabilitation funds of about \$50,000 for our lake. Two, the proposed county-wide conservation fee, part of which could be used each year to reduce the mill rate tax on lake residents, is also up for discussion and possible action. With continuing focus on finding funds to reduce resident costs and using scientific means to determine where and when to start removing sand, I believe we now have a much brighter picture for the future of our lovely lake.



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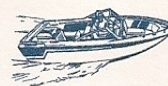
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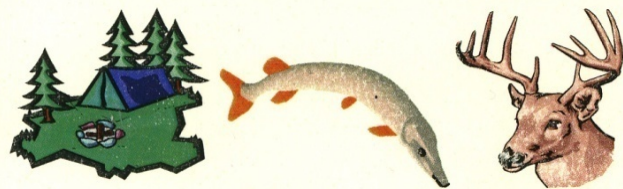
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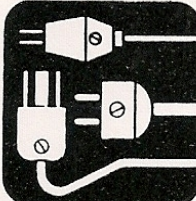
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