

Stories from our lands and shores

Lisa Griffin

I have been grateful to hear from area landowners how much they value this area and protecting our lake. I too have fond memories of playing next to the weeping willow hovering over our frog pond. In spring I would look for bird nests, frog spawn, and any other creepy crawlies that I could find. Summer meant sitting high in the tree, shaded from the sun, or cooling my feet in the slow spring that fed the pond. Fall held crisp air, changing colors, and the sounds of birds saying goodbye until spring.

Most of us have fond memories of the outdoors, many of which is tied to water. We would love to hear your Lake Ripley story. What brought you to the Lake Ripley Area? What do you value in the lake and surrounding lands? What are your favorite Lake Ripley experiences? Remember the one that got away?

Please send us your short story, pictures too, of your time at Lake Ripley. Stories can be sent via email to



Photo credit: Rosey Snellman- 1967

ripley@oaklandtown.com or by U.S. mail.

Excerpts may be posted in our newsletters, Facebook page, and could be included in future conservation efforts.

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# Ripples



Vol. 22, No. 1

Spring 2015

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FROM THE HELM

On Sunday April 19th, Lake Ripley made the news twice, well sort of. The *Wisconsin State Journal* had an article on Lake Ripley Country Club's 100th Anniversary. That same morning, the *CBS Sunday Morning* had a segment on Ole Evinrude and the invention of the outboard motor which was motivated by his unsuccessful efforts to bring ice cream to his girlfriend and future wife on the other side of the lake. Ice cream seems to have played an important part on Lake Ripley and has created many memories of after dinner boat rides to Alpine Village for a cold treat.



Lake Ripley was historically a motivating factor in the development on the entire area. Lake Ripley Park and the Village of Cambridge are connected to the lake by the same people, who settled the area and established the Village, and began the Country Club. George Wahl, who developed the Shore Place subdivision, was also involved in hotels and businesses in Cambridge. The founding fathers weren't far off when they marketed Cambridge as the "umbrella city".

The train line, that at one time connected London with Cambridge, was partially conceived to transport summer residents to the lake and its many lodges. Some of us may still remember the "ice house" on the west side of the lake, which harvested blocks of ice to send to Milwaukee and Chicago for refrigeration.

People, places and things come and go but the lake remains. Even Lake Ripley has changed. Ole Evinrude's invention has changed the way the lake is used. The arrival of invasive species has changed the biology of the lake. But, Lake Ripley is the constant that draws people to this area. People visit here, live here, recreate here because of the lake.



Ole Evinrude and his outboard motor.  
Photo credit: boattest.com

We are all passing through, but the lake remains. So, the way I see it, we have an obligation to protect 'our friend' for those that come after us. That's why we ask you all to do your part to keep the lake healthy and safe, so someday someone else can reminisce about the "good old days".

John Molinaro, Chair



## Be on the lookout for spiny water flea and starry stonewort.

Aquatic invasive species wreak havoc on our local ecosystems. They compete with native species for space and resources and can quickly take over an area. Lake Ripley residents saw this in the early 1990's with the explosion of Eurasian water milfoil. Zebra mussels are a more recent nuisance of which the final impacts to Lake Ripley are still unknown.

New threats have been found in relatively close proximity to our Lake. Starry stonewort, an aquatic algae, was found in Little Muskego Lake located in Waukesha County. Spiny water fleas, a type of zooplankton, have been found in the Yahara chain in Dane County.

Starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtusa*) is an underwater aquatic algae that grows in dense mats. Stonewort branches feel firm and smooth, can grow over 2 meters tall, and produce star-shaped reproductive structures called bulbils. Because starry stonewort doesn't have roots, it can dislodge from the lake bottom and impede navigation. Plants can then resprout making management a challenge if the entire plant is not completely removed. This can further displace native plant species, and cover fish habitat and spawning areas. Similar to a valuable native known as *Chara*, one way to tell them apart is that *Chara* stems feel brittle and do not usually have bulbils.



Starry stonewort resembles native *Chara* and can grow up to 6 feet tall. Photo credit: Paul Skawinski

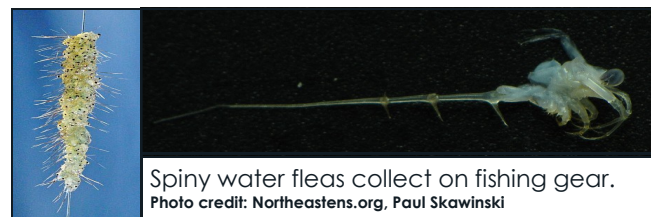


Star-shaped bulbils are produced on clear filaments that anchor starry stonewort to the lake bottom. Photo credit: Paul Skawinski

Spiny water fleas (*Bythotrephes longimanus*) are small predatory crustaceans that compete with native fish for food. Fish don't like to eat them because the spines become lodged in the fish's mouth or stomach. Fish then eat the native water fleas while the spiny population grows unchecked, altering the lake's ecosystem. When their populations get high in late summer, they collect in masses on fishing lines, clogging the first eyelet of rods, and damaging a reel's drag system.

Boaters and anglers are our first line of defense against spreading these and other aquatic invasive species. Simple steps can be taken to decrease the risk of these critters hitching a ride. Spiny water fleas can be spread by contaminated fishing gear and by water that is not drained from gear and boats when they leave the water body. Starry stonewort can be spread by boats and trailers that haven't removed plants attached to them. Boat props can also cut up starry stonewort allowing it to disperse and form new colonies elsewhere on the lake.

The LRMD will again participate in the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program to educate boaters, anglers, and other lake users about the threats and impacts of these species to Lake Ripley. Special thanks to Paul Skawinski, UW-Extension Lakes, who provided feedback and images presented in this article.



Spiny water fleas collect on fishing gear. Photo credit: Northeastens.org, Paul Skawinski

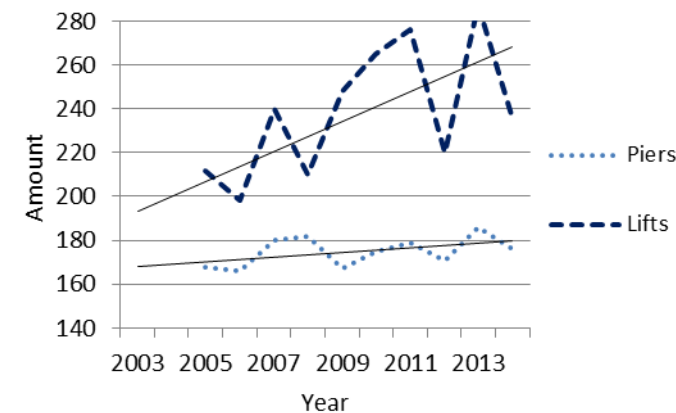
## Increases in boat lifts on Lake Ripley

Lake Ripley is a highly valued recreation lake by both lake front owners and lake visitors. Piers and boatlifts are a popular focus for boating and waterfront recreation.

LRMD Board and staff have conducted annual surveys to note recreational changes on the lake. Since 2003, a count of the number of piers, boat lifts, and type of watercraft found on and around the lake help gauge the recreational use on Lake Ripley.

A chart of the number of piers and boatlifts show an increasing trend. The highest year for both piers and boatlifts occurred in 2013 with 186 piers and 287 boatlifts. 2012 showed a decrease in boatlifts, but drought conditions could have impacted the amount of piers and lifts installed.

Piers and Boat Lifts 2003-2014



With the increase use of piers and boatlifts, we see an increase in "structure" along our shoreline. These and other types of structures, that would be placed below the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) are governed by both State Statute 30 and Wisconsin Administration Code NR 329, and are regulated by the Wisconsin DNR.

In 1914, the Wisconsin Supreme Court defined the OHWM as "the point on the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the water is so continuous as to leave a distinct mark either by erosion, destruction of terrestrial vegetation or other easily recognized characteristic".

This increased structure can have an impact on our lake ecology. Studies conducted on Lake Ripley show increases in shaded areas under piers and boats can alter the types of plants that are located under them. This shift in plants can further alter the types of animals that feed off those plants and ultimately the type of fish and other wildlife using the area.

WDNR rules to keep in mind when considering adding a boat lift to your existing pier are:

- ✧ The boat shelter, boat hoist or boat lift is placed and maintained by a riparian (an authorized agent or contractor may do the work on behalf of the riparian). The boat shelter, hoist or lift must be located entirely within the riparian's zone of interest.
- ✧ The boat shelter, boat hoist or boat lift is placed adjacent to a pier, wharf or shoreline. A boat shelter shall be connected to adjacent uplands by a pier.

If you have questions on your pier or are considering a boat lift, please look through the additional resources below. The WDNR website has a pier planner interactive key that can help determine if you may need to apply for any permits.

### Additional Resources:

WDNR-OHWM:  
[http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/general\\_info/ohwm.htm](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/general_info/ohwm.htm)

WDNR-Pier, Dock or Wharf exemption checklist:  
[http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/checklists/checklist\\_pier\\_wharf\\_082012.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/checklists/checklist_pier_wharf_082012.pdf)

WDNR-Seasonal Boat Shelters, Hoists, or lifts:  
[http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/checklists/checklist\\_pier\\_wharf\\_082012.pdf](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/checklists/checklist_pier_wharf_082012.pdf)

WDNR- Pier Planner:  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/recreation/piers.html>

Projects located in and around the shoreline may also fall under the jurisdiction of the Town of Oakland, Jefferson County Zoning, The Army Corps of Engineers, or other easement holders. Before you start any project, be sure to contact all parties who may have jurisdiction to ensure proper compliance.



Spring has sprung in the preserve

Winter has finally released its grasp over our area, and with each day, the sun lingers a bit longer in the sky. The first spring sandhill cranes landed on March 13th .

Other frequently seen birds include the great blue heron, great egret, Canadian geese, red tailed hawks, ring-necked pheasant, red winged black birds, tree swallow, bluebirds, sparrows, and finches.

Wood duck boxes and bluebird houses are dotted throughout the preserve. If there is a successful hatch of wood duck ducklings, these tiny creatures launch themselves from their homes, sometimes higher than 15 feet, to the ground below. Please view these structures from a distance to help ensure a successful hatch.

It's not just the birds that come back to the preserve that make spring so exciting. Many hibernating amphibians wake up from their winter slumber. You can hear chorus frogs and see turtles basking on downed logs. Dragonflies, Damselflies and other insect life is now seen either looking for food, or trying not to become a meal!



Photo credit: savingcranes.org



A male twelve-spotted skimmer  
Photo credit: WDNR

Don't forget the plants that are sprouting or even flowering! With all this wonderful wildlife making their home in the preserve, we want to limit any disturbance. Staying on trails is the best way to enjoy the sights and sounds. Stress to animals nesting could result in an unsuccessful hatch, or use up important energy reserves of young animals.

**Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but pictures, kill nothing but time— Author unknown**

Visitors utilize the preserve for various reasons. Seasonal hunting and trapping activities occur within the preserve boundaries. Please keep your dogs leashed and on the path to avoid any conflicts between users. Don't forget to bring a way to pick up their droppings and dispose of properly. Plastic litter is harmful to the wildlife. We want to ensure the safety for all who enjoy this area.

Preserve Rules

- Hours:** Open from sunrise to sunset.
- Dogs:** Dogs are allowed if leashed and restricted to established trails. Pet owners shall immediately collect any pet waste and properly dispose of such waste off-site.
- Bicycles/vehicles:** Not allowed beyond the parking lot.

**Trail use:** Please stay on the trail to minimize wildlife disturbance and trampling of restored vegetation.

**Littering/vandalism:** It is illegal to litter or deface, destroy or vandalize any structure, sign or natural growth.

- Hunting:** Hunting is permitted with a valid license and during legal hunting seasons, and hunting dogs may accompany their owners. Preserve users are asked to wear bright clothing during hunting seasons. Only portable blinds and deer stands are permitted, and must be removed at the end of each day.
- Trapping:** Restricted trapping privileges are granted through an annual lottery system, and the payment of an application fee.
- Feeding of wildlife:** The feeding of any wildlife is not allowed within the Preserve.

Maintaining these wild areas from invasive species is a great way spend time in this naturalscape and promote stewardship of our land and waters. Volunteers are always welcome and help keep maintenance costs down.

Grants awarded for invasive species control

An Aquatic Invasive Species Grant was awarded to the LRMD from the WDNR for the control of a newly found invasive wetland plant.

Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) otherwise known as common reed grass, was detected last spring during the WDNR's Long Term Trend monitoring on Lake Ripley. Not to be confused with native phragmites, this highly invasive plant can grow up to 15 feet in height, crowd out native vegetation, and alter wetland ecology and hydrology.



Invasive phragmites crowds out other vegetation.

With early assistance from the WDNR and UW-Whitewater Professor Dr. Nicholas Tippery, genetic analysis was conducted to verify this plant was the invasive species. District staff also worked closely with the WDNR to develop a management plan.



In winter stands are visible since vegetation remains upright. Photo credit: Paul Skawinski UW-Extension Lakes

This five year grant allows for monitoring, manual and chemical control, and area reseeding with native plant species. Ongoing monitoring for phragmites both at this site, and throughout Lake Ripley's watershed, will continue as a priority of the District.

Invasive plants and animals have impacted our lake and watershed. Eurasian water milfoil, curly leaf pondweed, and zebra mussels are a few of the foreign invaders that have altered our lake's environment. Most aquatic invasive species are carried to our lake by boats and trailers.

The LRMD was again awarded a Clean Boats, Clean Waters Grant to provide education and engage boaters at the Town of Oakland launch. Boaters are informed about the importance of draining all of the boat's water, properly disposing of bait, and making sure there are no plants or animals are attached to their boats or trailers.

Lianna Spencer will join us as this year Clean Boats, Clean Waters intern. Volunteers are needed to ensure we reach as many boaters as possible. If you would like to learn more about the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program or assist us in our invasive species monitoring, please contact Lisa Griffin at 920-423-4537 or [ripley@oaklandtown.com](mailto:ripley@oaklandtown.com).

This is a great opportunity for civic groups or those looking for Silver Chord hours to gain practical knowledge on species identification, to promote stewardship in our area, and support educational and outreach opportunities.

CBCW 2014 results:

- ☼ Last year interns and volunteers spent 206 hours at the launch
- ☼ 407 people were contacted
- ☼ Most frequently asked questions related to bait laws, live fish determinations, and draining water from equipment.

We will participate in the statewide Drain Campaign on June 13-14, to help raise awareness among anglers that draining livewells and buckets containing their catch can stop the spread of invasive species.

The LRMD is grateful for the continued assistance from the WDNR in our efforts to detect and control invasive species in and around Lake Ripley.



Fall electrofishing was conducted on Lake Ripley on October 20, 2014. Fall electrofishing is conducted using a large boomshocker boat for the collection of young-of-year (YOY) walleye and adult bass. An electric current temporarily stuns fish in the immediate vicinity of the boat for collection, identification, and to collect length measurements. All fish are then returned to the lake.

Sampling on Lake Ripley was conducted at two gamefish stations, both 1.5 miles long (3 miles and 1.78 hours total effort) where only gamefish were collected. Two additional stations, each .5 miles long (1 mile and .67 hours total effort) were sampled where all fish species were collected.

Fall electrofishing provides an indication of the health of the fishery through estimates of gamefish and panfish relative abundance, gamefish population size-structure, and gamefish and panfish recruitment.

Gamefish Summary

Largemouth bass	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	180	173	192	273
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	74	58	67	114
Length Range (inches):	2.2-18.4	2.1-18.6	1.8-17.7	2.1-18.5
Average Length (inches):	6.7	8.4	8.7	7.9

In 2014, largemouth bass catch rates were 74/hour, compared to 58/hour in 2013, 67/hour in 2012 and a high of 114/hour in 2011. The number of largemouth bass over 14-inches (current legal harvestable size) was 6% in 2014, compared to 5% in 2013, 7% in 2012 and 5% in 2011. The majority of fish sampled in 2014 (57%) were 3.0 to 4.9-inches in length indicating good recruitment of small fish into the population. The largemouth bass population in Lake Ripley is naturally reproducing and no stocking is currently conducted by WDNR.

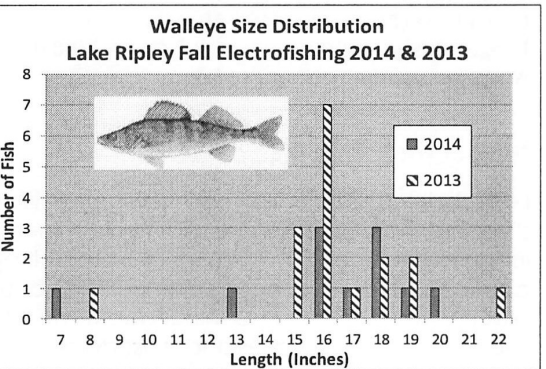
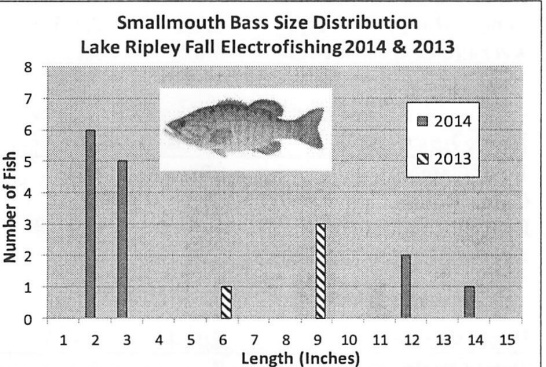
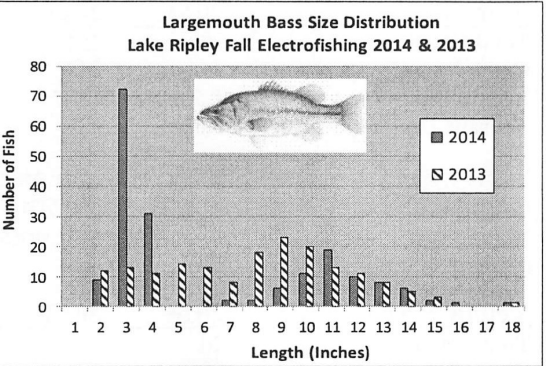
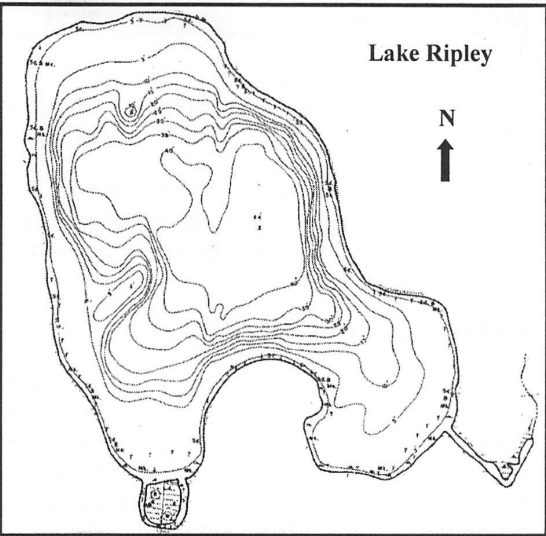
Smallmouth bass	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	14	4	10	12
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	6	1	3	5
Length Range (inches):	3.1-15.6	7.5-10.9	5.3-15.7	3.1-14.9
Average Length (inches):	6.0	9.8	10.5	8.7

2014 smallmouth bass catch rates remain low at 6/hour, compared to 1/hour in 2013, 3/hour in 2012, and 5/hour in 2011. The smallmouth bass population in Lake Ripley is naturally reproducing and no stocking is currently conducted by WDNR.

Walleye	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	12	17	23	20
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	5	6	8	8
Length Range (inches):	7.7-20.5	8.2-22.3	12.1-20.6	7.5-18.2
Average Length (inches):	16.5	16.8	15.9	14.3

Walleye catch rates and size distribution are comparable to prior surveys. The presence of a YOY walleye in 2014 indicates some level of natural reproduction is occurring since no stocking occurred in 2014. In 2015, WDNR plans to stock 8,360 large fingerling walleye into the lake.

We thank Laura Stremick-Thompson, Wisconsin DNR Fisheries Biologist, for the information and charts used in this article!



Northern pike	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	22	12	7	3
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	9	4	2	1
Length Range (inches):	8.8-29.7	10.1-38.3	10.8-35.3	20.0-20.5
Average Length (inches):	18.2	26.3	20.8	20.3

The largest northern pike sampled during 2014 fall electrofishing was 29.7 inches in length. Electrofishing is not an effective method for sampling northern pike, as pike population data is best obtained using fyke nets set during spring spawning. The northern pike population in Lake Ripley is naturally reproducing and no stocking is currently conducted by WDNR.

Panfish Summary

The panfish community is typically comprised of bluegill, yellow perch, rock bass, white bass, pumpkinseed, black crappie and green sunfish. Bluegill were the most abundant panfish species sampled in 2014 fall electrofishing, followed by yellow perch, rock bass and pumpkinseed. A small number of black crappie and green sunfish were also sampled.

Bluegill	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	240	254	435	285
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	358	348	565	425
Length Range (inches):	1.5-8.8	1.4-7.8	1.1-8.5	1.1-8.5
Average Length (inches):	5.6	4.3	4.2	3.7

In 2014, 43% of the bluegill sampled were greater than 6-inches in length, compared to 10% in 2013, 23% in 2012 and 9% in 2011. Young-of-the-year (YOY) bluegill were abundant indicating good reproduction in 2014.

Yellow Perch	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	26	9	17	23
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	39	12	22	34
Length Range (inches):	2.3-6.1	2.5-5.0	2.1-6.4	1.9-7.6
Average Length (inches):	3.6	3.6	4.3	4.6

Rock bass	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	20	15	10	15
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	21	21	13	22
Length Range (inches):	3.3-9.9	4.5-9.8	3.0-8.6	5.4-9.3
Average Length (inches):	5.8	7.0	5.6	7.4

Pumpkinseed	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total Catch:	7	26	28	20
Catch Rate (fish per hour):	10	36	36	30
Length Range (inches):	1.9-7.0	3.0-8.0	1.9-7.8	3.5-7.6
Average Length (inches):	5.4	5.7	5.1	5.8

Non-game Species

Lake Ripley supports a diverse non-game fish community including: bowfin, grass pickerel, white sucker, brook silverside, golden, emerald and mimic shiners, bluntnose and fathead minnows, yellow, black and brown bullhead, longnose gar, central mudminnow, blackstripe topminnow, Johnny darter, Iowa darter, bigmouth buffalo and common carp. Historically, Lake Ripley also supported populations of several intolerant fish species, including blackchin and blacknose shiner and banded killifish (also a Special Concern (SC) species), two additional SC species, lake chubsucker and least darter and one Threatened (T) species, the pugnose shiner. Due to their small size, fall electrofishing gear is not ideal for sampling most of these species. However, larger-bodied fish such as the lake chubsucker are detected more readily. Lake chubsuckers were not sampled during 2014, 2013 and 2012 fall electrofishing, but were found in similar surveys conducted in 2011, 2009 and 2006. Small numbers of white sucker, grass pickerel, yellow bullhead, brook silverside, bluntnose minnow, golden shiner and bowfin were also sampled.

