

LAKE DISTRICT OFFICE

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 @LRMDLS2020

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FROM THE HELM

Hard Work Really Does Pay Off!

Over the past four months the Lake Ripley Management District's hiring committee has been searching for our new Lake Manager. The hiring committee members are Debbie Kutz, Georgia Gómez-Ibáñez, Keith Kolb and myself. We brought forward the top candidate to the District's December board meeting for approval.

I would like to introduce to you Lianna Spencer. Lianna graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater with a bachelor's degree in marine biology and freshwater ecology and is a more recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a master's degree in Environmental Conservation. Lianna has worked for the Lake Ripley Management District in the past and has happily volunteered her time over the years!



During her time working and volunteering for the District, she has completed many tasks that have contributed to making management decisions. Some of Lianna accomplishments include: conducted three full aquatic plant inventory surveys, a shoreland and shallows survey, a non-game fish inventory survey, participated in the pontoon classroom event, and set up a booth at the farmer's market to educate citizens about invasive plants within our lake. The data accumulated from those activities are the building blocks for projects such as developing management plans, preserving and protecting important lands, and providing outreach and education experiences to our citizens.

Lianna shared the following comments with me and the Board would like to congratulate Lianna on her new career with us. Welcome!

"When I was offered the position of Lake Manager for the district this fall, I could not have been more pleased! Lake Ripley is an important lake to me, as I grew up in Lake Mills and would often visit Lake Ripley. The size of our watershed allows for the District to be able to create and accomplish manageable goals and activities that are sure to protect and enhance the overall quality of the lake and the land the District owns. My passion for land-and-water based education and protection makes me a great fit for the District. I am truly thoroughly excited to see what goals we can accomplish together!"

Jimmy DeGidio, Chairperson

COST SHARE PROGRAM AND NATIVE PLANT SALE

Gardeners know winter is the season to plan next spring's plantings. The Winter Ripples reminds residents about our Cost-Share Program and Native Plant Sale. Why would the District be interested in yards around the lake? These yards are the lake's most immediate watershed! Encouraging lake-friendly yards and shorelines is an important way we can help improve water quality and overall lake health. These programs help achieve that goal by providing information and reducing your costs.

Our Cost-Share Program offers professional advice and pays half the cost of qualifying lake-friendly projects, including riprap installations on eroding shorelines. Planting native trees and shrubs, raingardens, and shoreline buffer gardens also qualify for cost-share funding.

Why the emphasis on native plants, shrubs and trees? The history of our lake tells us that its water quality was excellent when the lake was surrounded by wetlands, prairies and woodlands. Native plants infiltrate rainfall, recharging groundwater and preventing run-off and erosion. That original landscape has been replaced by homes, driveways, patios, lawns and roads, all of which produce runoff.

The original, native landscape also housed and fed all the native creatures. When we choose to plant native plants in our yards, we are both restoring a system that can protect water quality

as well as restoring essential habitat.

Since 1994, the District has cost-shared 7,805 feet of shoreline restoration! We have budgeted cost-share funding for both new projects and old ones in need of repair. If you have concerns about your shoreline, please call our office (608-428-4537) or email Ripley@oaklandtown.com to ask for a consultation. Or you can read about our program on our website (www.lakeripley.org).

If you are ready to plant a lake-friendly native buffer, raingarden or garden and reduce your lawn size, please take advantage of our native plant sale. There are plants of every color, size, bloom times and sun-needs. If you need help choosing the best plants for your yard, we can help! You can view all the plants at www.Agrecol.com. Get your plant order to us by **Friday, February 26th** and we will do the rest! Our one huge order gives everyone the very reasonable wholesale price!

For more information on native shrubs and trees go to <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/>. In our area the best trees for birds, mammals, and pollinators are oaks, followed by willows and cherry. 84% of the residents responding to our Public Opinion Survey chose "water quality" as their top choice for quality of life as a lake resident. We can achieve this together by creating lake-friendly yards!

LAKE DISTRICT PRESERVE FIREWOOD EVENT TO CONTINUE THIS WINTER!

Back in 2017, the District organized a free firewood event for our residents. Through a local contractor, we were able to identify many standing dead trees that were in need of being taken down for safety reasons. We have once again completed that process and have identified over 30 trees that should be dropped this winter. The trees will be

dropped within the month and we are planning to set a few dates for folks to come and cut the logs up for firewood in late January or early February. Please check our Facebook page and website for details about the upcoming event or call (608)-423-4537. You will need to bring your own chainsaw and a way to haul your wood home.

CARP BARRIER INSTALLATION

Common carp are native to Asia but were introduced throughout the world for food and sport in the mid-1800's. Carp are fast-growing bottom feeders that uproot aquatic plants and churn up sediment that can affect water quality. Spawning generally occurs from May to August when water temperatures are around 63-79° F, with the season peaking in mid-May to June. Spawning carp move into warm, shallow, vegetated areas where splashing and physical activity can uproot and flatten aquatic plants. Lake Ripley first recorded the presence of carp in the lake back in 2007. Since then, the District and the DNR have performed bi-annual fish surveys, revealing the carp population to have remained relatively low. However, that doesn't mean that the possibility of a carp problem within our lake is nonexistent.

The District's Board has decided that proactive management is the best way to move forward in dealing with the carp!

The District is working on installing a carp barrier on a culvert near the lake's outlet creek. This barrier will be similar to but stronger than a snow fence. It will be erected across a culvert, to prevent the carp from swimming upstream and possibly entering our lake. The District will fully maintain the structure which includes but is not limited to: maintaining its structural integrity, cleaning off any debris that has accumulated, and repairing any issues that arise. Using proactive management will prevent the District from having to deal with a potentially bigger issue in the lake itself in the future.

THE RESIDENT ALBINO DEER

As many of you may have seen on our Facebook page, back in early December, I came face-to-face with the albino deer that has been seen in the District's Preserve! Seeing an albino deer is considered rare, and according to legend – it is lucky! Albino deer lack pigmentation and often have a completely white hide and pink eyes, nose and hooves. Albinism is a recessive genetic trait that is observed in only one in 30,000 deer. Besides their lack of color and impaired eyesight, albino deer are otherwise completely normal. They don't have any other health implications and can grow to full-size. Unfortunately, most albino deer do not live a very long life. Their white hide makes it difficult for them to be able to blend in with their surroundings, making them easy prey. Albino deer are protected by law. Albino deer are different than piebald deer; piebald deer are deer that have blotches of white coloration on portions of their hide that are usually dark in color. Piebald deer are much more common with the trait showing up in one in 1,000 deer. The young, albino female in our Preserve was nestled down

in her daybed but stuck out like a sore thumb amongst all the brown foliage surrounding her. I was able to watch her for about 15 minutes before she stood up, met up with another deer (who was completely camouflaged - I had no idea she was there!), and calmly strolled off into the woods. It was an incredible sight and I hope she is able to find some comfort in our Preserve this winter!



THE BANDED MALLARD

A long-time friend and Lake District advocate, Jon Tilp, approached me a few months ago with this really unique story. Our Preserve offers educational experiences like this one everyday and it's inspiring to hear these types of stories being told. I hope you enjoy this article as much as I do! -Jimmy.

As first light came, I spotted a group of ducks flying high over the far end of the Lake District Preserve. A few blasts of my call quickly turned the group and the silver flash of their wings identified them as mallards. With wings cupped, the ducks dropped from the sky and I was able to pick out a drake from the flock. Moments later, with bird in hand I was surprised to find a small, stamped metal band on one leg. Harvesting a banded bird is somewhat rare. In my 40+ years of waterfowl hunting I have only taken a few banded birds, mostly while hunting the Mississippi backwaters around my hometown of Rock Island, IL. A nine-digit tag number along with instructions on how to report the bird were clearly visible.

The North American Bird Banding Program advises "Data from banded birds are used in monitoring populations, setting hunting regulations, restoring endangered species, studying the effects of environmental contaminants, and addressing such issues as Avian Influenza, bird hazards at airports and crop depredations. Results from banding studies support national and international bird conservation programs such as Partners in Flight, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and Wetlands for the Americas."

After a few clicks on the computer, I received notification that the mallard drake I harvested was banded on October 29th, 2018 near Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

My favorite aspect of waterfowl hunting is not the taking of game but rather the chance to experience the fall migration of these birds from their summer nesting areas in the far north to the wintering sites in the southern United



States and extending as far as the southern hemisphere. Through the efforts of the Lake Ripley Management District, we have some of the best opportunities to view and experience the waterfowl migrations in their natural habitat at the Preserve and on Lake Ripley.

Teal are the earliest migrating waterfowl departing their Southern Wisconsin breeding grounds in September or early October followed by our local wood ducks. The observation deck at the Preserve is my personal favorite for early season waterfowl viewing. Just before dusk the wood ducks will show off their aerobatic skills and pierce the stillness with a sharp high-pitched tone. This past season I was able to identify the following ducks at the Preserve and the surrounding marsh areas: Teal (blue wing, green wing and cinnamon), Wood Ducks, Mallards, Bufflehead, Ring Necked,

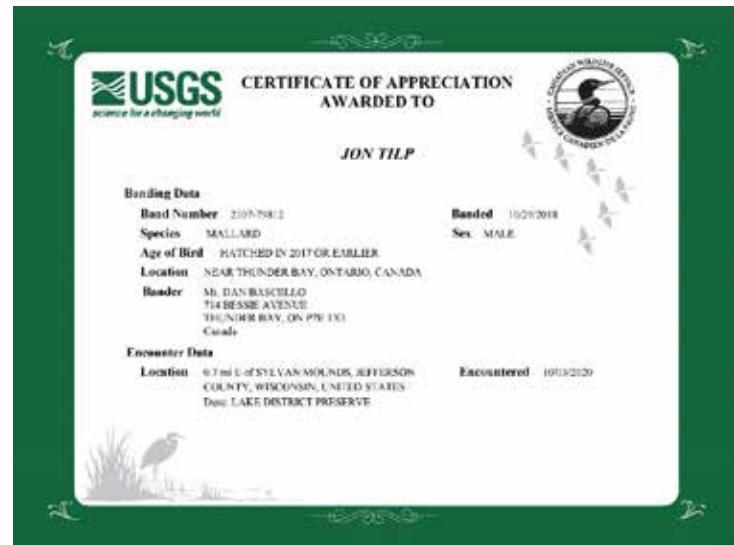
(Banded Mallards continued, page 5)

BANDED MALLARDS CONTINUED

Common Golden Eye, Hooded Merganser, Northern Shoveler, Spoonbill, Wigeon, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup and Red Heads.

Another excellent place to view the waterfowl is Lake Ripley along Ripley Road just before winter freeze up. Typically, the groups further out on the lake are diving ducks (the shyest migrators) feeding on seed parts of aquatic plants, fish, insects, crustaceans and other invertebrates.

The Preserve and its important migratory bird habitat are testament to the work of the Lake Ripley Management District. Working to maintain the water quality of Lake Ripley by managing the Preserve watershed has in turn created a place for all of us to enjoy nature.



THE BIOLOGY OF BURLS

Forests are a breath of fresh air...literally! Forests hold all kinds of wonders for everyone to enjoy. The plants, animals and fungi all have secrets, and if you're paying attention, you can always learn something from Mother Nature!

Trees have one of the most intriguing, best kept secrets. Have you ever seen a large, unusual growth on a tree? The growths can be found near the roots, in the middle of the tree, or it can even be a ring all the way around the tree. These unusual growths are called burls. By definition, a burl is a large, woody, rounded swelling usually found on a tree trunk. Scientists have yet to be able to explain why some trees grow these burls, but research suggest burls are a result of some type of damage to the tree. The damage could come from insects, bacteria, fungi, or environmental damage, and it causes the tree's growth hormones to secrete profusely, forming the burl. Burls are illegal to remove and if they are removed, it makes the tree extremely susceptible to disease and death.

Burls come in all shapes and sizes. I've seen many burls over the years, but nothing quite like the one I spotted in our Preserve the other day. It looks as if this tree got naturally broken off about halfway

up its trunk and a burl formed over the entirety of the tree, trying to save it from further destruction. The tree has not gotten any bigger, but the burl is absolutely massive! So, keep an eye open for this beauty next time you are in our Preserve! But remember, please don't touch it. And as always, leave only footprints.



PARTNERING WITH UW-MADISON ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

Back in October, I connected with Mark Oleinik; he is a professor from the University of Wisconsin – Madison who lives around Lake Ripley. Mark teaches Civil and Environmental Engineering at UW-Madison and has a group of engineering students that were looking for a capstone project. Being a local Lake Ripley resident, he is well aware of the issues our watershed is facing. He proposed a few different ideas for projects that were management for his students and by working together we were able to come up with the one that seemed like the best fit for the District and our mission.

The students are going to be evaluating the Preserve's wetlands by developing a streamflow model for the Lake Ripley watershed. This project will shed light on flood flows, sediment load, and nutrient concentrations under the current conditions. We are excited to get this project started early next year. If you are walking through the Preserve and see people who look as if they are performing a study, it might just be these students! Feel free to say hi to them and ask them about their project.

Be sure to visit, to LIKE and FOLLOW our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/LRMDLS2020

The District is in the process of updating our website to make it more user-friendly!
Be sure to check back in February for the update!



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