

LAKE DISTRICT OFFICE

Oakland Town Hall
N4450 County Rd. A
Cambridge, WI 53523
(608) 423-4537
ripley@oaklandtown.com
www.lakeripley.org
@LRMDLS2020



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jimmy DeGidio
Chair
(608) 921-1340

Debbie Kutz
Treasurer
(920) 650-9122

Georgia Gómez-Ibáñez
Secretary
(608) 423-9898

Craig Kempel
Commissioner
(608) 423-3605

Keith Kolb
Commissioner
(414) 659-6293

Doug Maurer
Commissioner
(608) 515-3976

Walt Christensen
Jefferson County Rep.
(920) 723-1320

LAKE MANAGER

Lianna Spencer
ripley@oaklandtown.com
(608) 423-4537

WEED HARVEST CREW

Ed Grunden
Richard Moen
Bruce Crump
Dennis Zick

FROM THE HELM

Sly Like a Fox

As spring slowly works into April, I try to get outside and enjoy the beautiful evening when all the wildlife is becoming active. One of the coolest things I experienced last week was a fox den. I was enjoying an afternoon walk and saw a movement in the woods. I stopped and stood still for a few seconds and saw three red furballs moving in the leaves – red fox kits!

There are two fox species that live in Wisconsin, the gray fox and red fox. Both species are the same size, roughly ten pounds and between 32-45 inches long. The red fox is found mostly in west central and southern parts of the state. Foxes don't form packs, but they will live in the same area throughout their entire life. Both females (vixens) and males (tods) care for the kits. Their keen senses make them good hunters.

The rain was turning to snow, and the ground was slowly changing color with the flakes steadily coming down. Two of the kits were snuggling together, and the other was ten feet away by itself. They saw me standing there and seemed interested in my presence. I kept my eye on the one closest to me and walked a few steps closer to see a mound of dirt piled up by a tree, and what looked to be a tunnel in the ground. This must be their den! As I was observing it from afar, the kits started working their way towards it. These two kits seemed content to stay together and were very intuitive. I then turned my attention to the lone kit and saw it walking toward another hole about 20 feet away and disappearing into a second den.

Just two weeks earlier, I saw one of the adults running. Never did I think I would



An adult fox wandering through the Preserve.

(Sly Like a Fox, page 2)

SLY LIKE A FOX CONTINUED

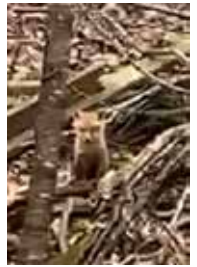
walk up on a den with three kits looking for warmth from each other! I have returned several times to the den to see them cuddled together and joyfully playing without a care.

When you're out on your spring walk, be observant! Look closely around the woods and fields, you might experience something you'll never forget. Woodlands, prairies, and wetlands have so much

to offer, we just have to take a moment to notice these things.

To be sly like a fox: cunning and experienced, they can get what they need, usually in the dark of evening or night.

Jimmy DeGidio, Chairperson



Can you find the pup?

NAVIGATIONAL BOATING LANES IN LAKE RIPLEY

Hi friends! We wanted to share this photo so all boaters know where the District's weed harvester will be creating community navigational lanes this season. The District's harvester will be cutting these navigational lanes every week to reduce the amount of prop chop created from boat propellers. Please use the navigational lanes whenever you can!

If you see the boat patrol on the lake during the weekends, feel free to go up to them and request a free boat inspection! No citations will be issued if you request a boat inspection – this is strictly for educational purposes and to make sure your boat is in proper working condition with the proper equipment!



A CLASSROOM ON THE LAKE!

Some years ago, the Lake District collaborated with Cambridge High School's science teacher, Pam Levenson, and her AP Biology class to produce the "Pontoon Classroom". Since that year, this has become an annual event. A fleet of three or four pontoons, each with a different lake-science activity, spend a half day on the lake, on a still summery day in September. The students spend time on each pontoon, with the different presenters, learning about lake history from sediment-core analysis, water-quality testing, aquatic plants, the weed-harvesting program, and watershed activities.

After an article appeared in one of our Ripples, some lake residents wondered "What about us? How about a pontoon classroom for us?!". So, we tried one in June. The weather that day was, well, frankly miserable. Even so, a small but interested group turned out!

We would like to offer this opportunity again, this summer, probably in July or August. If this sounds like a fun way to learn more about your lake, please let us know at ripley@oaklandtown.com, or call our office at 608-423-4537. If there is enough interest, we'll set up another summer Pontoon Classroom!

THE LITTORAL ZONE: LITERALLY ESSENTIAL!

The littoral zone of the lake is that shallow area around the edge of the lake. This is where 90% of the life cycles of fish, frogs, and turtles happen, here in the sunlit water where aquatic plants can live. Lake Ripley's water quality and health literally depends on a healthy littoral zone with flourishing aquatic plants.

People's recreational activities also involve this littoral zone. This is where our piers are located. This is where our boats set off for the deeper open water, so it's understandable that residents might wish for open water around their piers and by their shoreline.

We need to begin "thinking like a lake". Understanding the importance of the littoral zone to the health of the lake is the first step. The second

step is to appreciate aquatic plants for all of the ecoservices they provide to our lake. Just as trees provide us with oxygen, aquatic plants provide underwater oxygen to fish and all the tiny animal forms that are essential to the lake's food-web.

We all value "clean, clear water". Aquatic plants stabilize the lake bottom, so sediments stay put. Aquatic plants absorb nutrients from the water, preventing algal blooms. Aquatic plants buffer the shoreline from erosion. And the many folks who value peaceful moments on the lake watching wildlife, are usually observing that wildlife in the littoral zone.

Indeed, everything we most appreciate about Lake Ripley depends on our respectful appreciation of the littoral zone.

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE AND BEETLES!

Purple loosestrife is a highly invasive wetland plant that is native to Eurasia. A healthy purple loosestrife plant can grow over six feet tall with multiple flowering stems of hot fuchsia/pink flowers that can release between two to three million seeds per plant! This beautiful pinkish-purple plant entered the northeastern United States in the late 1800s, reaching Wisconsin sometime after 1900. This aggressive plant flourished and was soon crowding out many native wetland species, reducing biodiversity within these ecosystems. Today, purple loosestrife is found all across the United States and Canada.

But wait! There are organizations out there working to slow the spread of this invasive plant species by using beetles. Yes, beetles! There are two specific beetle species, also natives of Eurasia, that eat only purple loosestrife plants – the black-margined loosestrife beetle and the golden loosestrife beetle. These beetles can be reared to battle the spread of purple loosestrife – and the District is doing it! This control method is known as "bio-control".

During the spring, volunteers dug up purple loosestrife plants, and potted them in a controlled area where they will begin to grow. By mid-May, beetles will be ready to be collected from the wild and placed on the growing purple loosestrife plants. These plants will provide the necessary food



Photo by: Upper Sugar River Watershed

for these herbivorous insects to grow into adults. Once they are adults, they will begin to procreate and soon there will be thousands of beetles! The beetles will be released in late summer in known purple loosestrife areas, to eat up the loosestrife plants! Reducing the amount of purple loosestrife will allow native wetland plant species to reestablish themselves in these areas.

The District is once again partnering with the Rock River Coalition, Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department, and the Severson Learning Center to raise the plants and beetles, which will be released around Lake Ripley's watershed, and other areas where purple loosestrife is an issue. We are proud to continue battling invasive species in our watershed!

COLORFUL WOOD DUCKS RETURNING

A strong summer storm in 2020, with heavy rain and wind gusts over 40 mph, split a large limb from a majestic black walnut tree in our back yard a few blocks north of Lake Ripley. The separated limb, which measured almost two feet in diameter, left a permanent scar on the tree's main trunk. The rotted cavity, where water had been trapped for several years, created a pocket which soon became a favorite resting place for squirrels after their many successful raids on my bird feeders.

Now fast forward one year to an early spring morning in 2021 while I was sipping coffee. The abrupt arrival of a fast-flying bird caught my attention as it made several passes around that same black walnut tree. With what seemed like an impossible acrobatic maneuver, the bird swung sharply, reducing its speed abruptly to zero, and executed a perfect landing on the open pocket of the black walnut tree.

The female wood duck with her gray-brown head and brownish, green, glossed crest seemed out of place perched in the tree compared to the usual assortment of finches, cardinals and other songbirds that frequent our back yard. A white tear drop shaped patch surrounded the brownish-black eyes. Her throat was white, and the breast was gray-brown stippled with white, fading into the white belly. Her olive brown back with a shimmer of iridescent green blended perfectly with the surrounding back drop providing remarkable camouflage.

While the female wood duck surveyed the tree cavity, another fast-flying fowl streaked past my kitchen window observation post and executed another flawless landing on a limb some six feet above the first arrival. While the hen wood duck was striking enough in appearance the drake wood duck dropped my jaw in awe. His crested head of iridescent green and purple with a white stripe leading from the eye to the end of the crest and another narrower white stripe from the base of the bill to the tip of the crest. His throat was white,

and his chest was burgundy with white flecks gradually grading into the white belly. The vivid color combination exceeded artistic imagination!

The pair spent several minutes inspecting the possible nesting site, and then with a flurry of wings the pair was gone as quickly as they arrived. Maybe the tree opening was not deep enough, or more likely the location is too close to humans and the long distance to important wetland habitat eliminated this location as a nesting site.



Photo by: Dave Vanden Heuvel

The visionary foresight of early conservationists from the Audubon Society and the Sportsman Conservationists, led by Theodore Roosevelt, protected birds migrating across boundaries; this is known today as The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

This legislative directive ended the lucrative plume trade and regulated waterfowl hunting, saving the wood duck and its highly sought-after plumage from annihilation. The 1934 Duck Stamp Act legislation, which requires all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age or older to purchase annual waterfowl hunting stamps, supplies the funds that go directly to protecting wetlands.

Groups like Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever work with state and local organizations that have propelled the waterfowl conservation movement to new heights. Look no further than

(Colorful Wood Ducks, page 5)

COLORFUL WOOD DUCKS CONTINUED

The Lake Ripley Management District Preserve as an example of successful wetlands restoration! Our Preserve is a shining example of what forward-thinking individuals can accomplish with the extensive resources of government and conservation groups with a grass roots love of nature.

To enhance waterfowl nesting at the Preserve, the District has placed wood duck nesting boxes at 8 different locations in and around the wetlands. The original boxes are made of wood, many of which have succumbed to the elements and are being replaced with composite boxes which will hold up longer. Every winter when the ground is completely frozen, the metal poles holding the boxes are lowered for cleaning, nesting material replacement, and the contents of the boxes are examined for signs of a successful hatch. The District's Chair Jimmy DeGidio and I performed this winter ritual back in January, which included the replacement of 3 weather damaged boxes. All boxes showed signs of hatches – some successful and a couple unsuccessful due to box failures. Those boxes were modified to last another year or replaced completely.



Jon Tilp helping clean out the wood duck boxes

The anticipation of opening a box and the feeling of accomplishment when a successful hatch is found gives this person some perspective of what John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt were thinking when the conservation movement began.

The next time you visit the Preserve in the spring and early summer, spend some time observing the wood duck boxes. The thrill of seeing the fast-flying waterfowl entering a box at full throttle is priceless, and maybe, if your timing is right, you may see the ducklings leaving the box for the first time. At the very least you will be spending time in a wonderful place. To quote John Muir "In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks".

Paddle on my Friends,
Jon Tilp



Jimmy DeGidio helping clean out the wood duck boxes.

The inside of a wood duck box.

NATIVE PLANT SALE SUCCESS!

Over 900 native plants will be planted in yards and shorelines this spring/early summer thanks to much interest on the part of Lake District residents! This will recreate much needed native habitat for our native butterflies, bees, birds, and other wildlife in our community around the lake. Each single action, combined with others, contributes something impressively big to our lake and watershed.

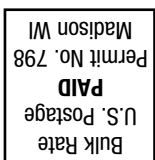


"The health of our waters is the principal measure of how we live on the land" – Luna Leopold

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

Go check out our website www.lakeripples.org for more information on the Lake District!

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED



Ripples
Lake Ripley Management District
N4450 County Rd. A
Cambridge, WI 53523