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WEED HARVEST CREW

Leo Allen
Jim Jermain
Richard Moen



FROM THE HELM

The Return of the Hummers

Last Saturday afternoon, I was doing lawn work and had to go into the garage to get a battery for the mower, when I heard a humming noise above my head. I looked up and saw a disoriented Ruby-throated hummingbird flying into the top of the ceiling and looking for an escape. I quickly found my fishing net to try to catch it. My ceiling is high, so it took me 10 to 15 minutes to get her into



The hummingbird that was trapped.

the net. She made a chirping noise while she let me untangle her from the net. I was then able to place the bird into my hand and pet it for a few moments while it recovered before it flew up into a nearby branch of an oak tree.

The nickname "hummer" comes from the birds flapping their wings so fast they create a humming sound. Only measuring a few inches long, they have amazing memories and will return to the same feeding spot every year. They remember the flowers and feeders from past visits and how often the flowers refill their nectar.

The birds migrate up to 3,000 miles per year. According to Geoff Labaron, Director of the Audubon Society, "For the 2.5-inch hummingbird, the few

thousand miles traveled between breeding grounds and winter habitats is huge. The annual trek covers 3,000 miles from as far north as Alaska and Canada to southern Mexico."

These birds can travel 500 miles in a single stretch! Labaron also says some Ruby-throated hummers fly the 500 miles nonstop across the Gulf of Mexico during the spring and fall migrations.

HUMMERS CONTINUED

There are over 350 different species of hummingbirds. They feed during the day and sleep at night. While migrating they will fly day and night. Hummers eat twice their body weight every day while visiting hundreds of flowers daily.

If you want to put out a feeder, you can make your own sugar water by boiling four parts of water with one part of refined sugar. Do not add food coloring to the sugar water as it can make the birds sick. Be sure to clean your hummingbird feeder at least once a week with vinegar and water. If you're trying to attract hummingbirds to your yard, you should plant flowers that bloom all times in

the summer – and wouldn't you know it, native plants serve as the best food! While hovering when feeding, Lebaron states that the birds beat their wings 50 times per second. They hover over their food instead of landing. Their wings propel them forward, backwards, and even upside down.

When you get a chance visit the Lake Preserve and look for the hummers, you'll be surprised how good the bird watching can be.

Chair,

Jimmy DeGidio



Luckily, she was able to regain her composure and fly away!



The Preserve is a great place for birdwatching!

NESTING BIRDS NEED YOUR DOG...

On a leash! From now through October be sure your dogs are on-leash when you walk in the Preserve. Many grassland and wetland birds are ground-nesters. An intrusion by a dog, however innocent, can cause the parent birds to abandon their nest permanently. Please respect the Preserve as a place where grassland birds especially find a safe place in our prairie. Grassland birds have suffered the highest decline in recent years. Our prairie must be a place where they can thrive!



Baby birds in a nest in the Preserve.

MEET YOUR HARVESTERS!

Richard Moen

Richard was born and raised in the Lake Ripley area and has been visiting Lake Ripley since he was a young boy. As a Rockdale local, he is very familiar with the lake having spent his summers swimming, casting fishing lines, and skiing across the shimmering surface of our lake. To Richard, Lake Ripley has always felt like home.

As he starts his seventh season with us, Richard thinks the lake hasn't been this healthy since the mid-1960s. A key part of maintaining the lake's health is the District's Weed Harvesting Program, which Richard believes is absolutely essential. Through his six years of experience operating the harvester, he has seen the direct benefits of controlling aquatic invasive species. The extensive reduction of Eurasian watermilfoil in the East Bay has allowed for a flourishing ecosystem where native water lilies can thrive. This not only enhances the natural beauty of our lake but also fosters a more vibrant habitat for local wildlife.

But Richard's work goes beyond just managing "weeds"; it's about improving the overall

recreational experience for all of us who love Lake Ripley. The visual appeal of a cleaner, healthier lake makes it more inviting for swimming, fishing, and simply soaking in the sun. By tackling invasive plant species, Richard ensures that everyone can enjoy the best that the lake has to offer, whether it's a quiet canoe ride at dawn or a lively family picnic on the shore.



Richard Moen is starting his seventh season with us!

Jim Jermain

Jim and his wife Kari have lived on Lake Ripley since 2017. Having spent over two decades in Madison, Jim and Kari have discovered that Lake Ripley is a hidden gem. When it came time for Jim to think about retirement, his coworkers asked what he would do with his free time, and he joked that maybe he would drive the "weed machine" on the lake. As luck would have it Kari saw a Facebook post about an opening in the spring of 2023 – so he applied. Since then, Jim has become a vital member of the Weed Harvesting crew!

With two years under his weed harvesting belt, Jim has learned so much about the Lake District, our water quality program, and the Town of Oakland. He has a lot of fun running the harvester and helping maintain the equipment throughout the season. As he's worked closely with aquatic plants, he's gained a newfound appreciation for their crucial role in our lake's health. While some plants are beneficial, others can disrupt the balance and



Jim Jermain is starting his third season with us!

impact the beauty of our beloved Lake Ripley. He conveys just how important it is to keep our waters clean, not only for the joy it brings to residents but also for preserving the lake's rich history that resonates with the community.

HARVESTERS CONTINUED

Leo Allen

Leo has been living around Lake Ripley for 14 years. Back when he was dating his wife, they would take joyful pontoon rides around Lake Ripley, creating memories that would make the lake become a special place for them. Now, as an avid fisherman, Leo knows he can always reel in a good catch – and Lake Ripley has never let him down. And now that his children have all grown up, he's excited to be able to share our beautiful lake with his grandchildren.

As a responsible homeowner, Leo recognizes the delicate balance between human activities and environmental preservation. With a fisherman's perspective, he has become aware of how lawn runoff can directly affect water quality and the lake's fishery. Because of that, he minimizes his lawn care applications that could inadvertently lead to algae growth and harm the fishery. Instead, he embraces the concept of native planting around the shoreline, knowing that these plants play a vital role in filtering runoff and maintaining the ecosystem's health.

As Leo makes his way around the lake, he feels a sense of fulfillment. The sight of residents smiling and waving from their piers makes him smile,



Leo Allen is starting his second season with us!

reinforcing the notion that the lake is not just a body of water, but a gathering place for families and friends. Children jumping up and down, waving excitedly at the harvester, remind him of the impact their collective efforts can have on future generations. It's for these children, who will create their own memories at Lake Ripley, that Leo dedicates his time and energy.

Richard, Jim and Leo take pride in helping keep our lake as clean as possible. Next time you see the guys out on the lake, be sure to give them a wave and thank them for all of their hard work throughout the summer!

CALL ME, MAYBE?

The Lake District gets a lot of calls about potential violations around Lake Ripley, but we do not have the authority to deal with many issues. Here is the correct contact information for the right folks to call when you see something that concerns you:

- Someone was acting recklessly on Lake Ripley! Who do I call? → Call the Town Police at 608-501-8153. The Town of Oakland Police Department have their own boat patrol out on the lake most weekends who will handle these types of complaints.
- Someone has cut down trees along the shoreline! Who do I call to discuss this? → Call Jefferson County Zoning at 920-674-7130.
- What are Ripley Park hours? Admission fees? Shelter rental? E.coli? Beach conditions? For any question regarding Ripley Park → Call the Cambridge Activities Program at 608-423-8108. They manage this park.
- When does the public pier go in? What about the public boat launch? There is a buoy that seems to be in the wrong place. How much is a seasonal boat launch pass? Who can I talk to about this? → Call the Town of Oakland at 608-423-9635 for these questions.
 - o All concerns about erosion control: call Town of Oakland at 608-423-9635.

As always, you can call us whenever you'd like! We are here to help.

MAKING WAVES: DNR GRANTS FUND SCIENCE-ON-THE-LAKE SURVEYS THIS SUMMER!

Lake Ripley is not just a beautiful lake that we are lucky to live near, it's a vital ecosystem that supports a diverse array of plants and wildlife. As residents who cherish our lake, it is crucial to remain engaged in its ongoing health and sustainability. Recent grant funding, provided by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), will aid us in our efforts to monitor and protect this invaluable resource.

The first grant, aptly named the "Lake Ripley Habitat Assessment," will facilitate a comprehensive series of surveys that will help us monitor the ecological health of Lake Ripley. The surveys we will be conducting include:

- Point-Intercept (PI) Survey: This assessment plays a crucial role in monitoring aquatic plant life, giving us insights into species diversity and abundance and helps us with the weed harvesting program.
- Nearshore, Nongame Fish Survey: Understanding the fish populations in our lake is essential for maintaining a balanced ecosystem. These surveys will be essential for recognizing any shifts in species diversity and abundance that could indicate larger environmental changes.
- Shoreland and Shallows Survey: This will help us evaluate the quality of the shoreline and shallow water areas, which are vital habitats for various species.
- Pollution Load Estimation Tool (PLET) Survey: We will be identifying potential sources of pollution to better manage and protect our lake's water quality.

These surveys (except for the PLET survey) should be carried out every five years. Our last comprehensive assessment was completed in 2020. As many of you know, understanding the dynamic nature of our lake is vital for ensuring that



DNR's Arthur Watkinson measuring the clarity on Lake Ripley using a secchi disk.

it remains a vibrant ecosystem for both the wildlife that inhabits it and the residents who enjoy its beauty. The results of our previous surveys can be found on our website (www.lakeripley.org/plans-reports-surveys/), providing an insightful look into the changes our lake has experienced over the years.

The PI survey, specifically, will allow us to map and assess the distribution of aquatic plants, which plays a significant role in understanding the health of our lake. Aquatic plants are vital for maintaining water quality, providing habitat for fish and other wildlife, and supporting the overall ecological balance. We will update our Aquatic Plant Management Plan with the findings from the PI survey so that we can implement informed strategies to protect and enhance our aquatic vegetation, as well as update our weed harvesting protocols.

Adding another layer to our efforts, we will also participate in the Wisconsin Frog and Toad

(Making Waves, page 6)

MAKING WAVES CONTINUED

surveys, which aims to assess the populations of these significant amphibians. Frogs and toads are important bioindicators of ecosystem health, as their presence and abundance often reflect the quality of their environment. By recording these populations, we can gain a clearer understanding of the ecological dynamics in Lake Ripley watershed.

In addition to the Habitat Assessment grant, we received another Surface Water Grant from the DNR. This grant will enable us to continue our participation in the DNR's Citizen Lake Monitoring Network program, a citizen-driven initiative that promotes local involvement in lake health monitoring. Through this grant, we will also:

- Continue gathering water quality data from the Lake Ripley watershed.
- Conduct a Bank Assessment for Non-Point Source Consequences of Sediment (BANCS)

survey to understand sediment issues affecting our lake.

- Share our findings and the work we are doing with all of you, ensuring that our community remains engaged and informed.

As residents of Lake Ripley, we all share a responsibility for preserving our beloved lake. Thanks to these grants, we are equipped to take meaningful steps toward understanding and enhancing the health of our aquatic ecosystem. By participating in these surveys and monitoring programs, we can help ensure that Lake Ripley remains a vibrant and sustainable environment for generations to come. Together, let's celebrate these achievements and continue to contribute to the well-being of our lake!

If you see us completing these surveys out on the lake this summer, make sure to give us a wave and say hello!



Dave Marshall conducting a nearshore, nongame fish survey with electro-shockers.



Our Water Quality Technician, Dwight, measuring flow at one of our monitoring sites.

CRITTER CONDOS

On a sunset stroll through the Preserve's woods, you find a forest full of activity...full of life. As you begin your walk on the wood's trails, a rustle captures your attention and a cottontail rabbit bounds gracefully for cover. Nearby, a gray squirrel scampers up the trunk of a majestic maple, and the unmistakable call of a blue jay scolds you from a branch above. As the curtain of darkness falls, your senses heighten. Your nose intercepts the pungent, earthy odor of leaf mold, fungi, and rotting wood drifting on the breeze. Your ears snatch a few "who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?" notes of a barred owl among the chirps of the crickets. Then, almost as if it were orchestrated, you catch a flicker of movement up above! With a quick turn of the head, you catch the floating form of a squirrel as it leaps from a snag. The dead tree – stripped of its bark and standing stark against the deepening twilight, becomes transformed under the moonlight – no longer a skeleton of wood but a vital part of the wood's story. It's then you realize that in your forest, even dead things have appeal...a life of their own.

Snags – by night they can look ghostly in the moonlit darkness. In reality, they teem with life. Over 70 kinds of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, not to mention swarms of insects, spiders, millipedes and other invertebrates use snags – which are standing dead or dying trees. These critter condos provide den, nest, and feeding sites, as well as sites for food storage, perching, preening and courtship rituals. Dead wood benefits wildlife – and you can help manage for it!

There are a couple different types of snags: hard vs soft. Hard snags have rotten centers, a solid exterior and usually a few limbs attached – these make the best den trees. As snags decay, the wood softens and becomes punky, and the limbs gradually fall off. Soft snags, with their pulpy wood fibers, make good forage sites for insect-eating birds and excellent nest sites for woodpeckers and songbirds, such as black-capped chickadees.



The same goes for downed logs near the water. Have you ever snagged your line on a snag while fishing? As frustrating as it may be to lose a lure, every good angler knows that fallen logs in a waterbody provide fish with a sheltered, shady place to rest. Downed logs in water are especially vital and should be kept in place as long as possible. Wood ducks, hooded mergansers, common goldeneyes and buffleheads all need tree cavities for nesting. Herons, egrets, eagles and ospreys build their nests high atop snags standing in or near water. Snags serve as lookout towers for keen sighted fish-eating birds, such as belted kingfishers.

Once a snag has toppled over, it doesn't lose its value to forest wildlife. Downed and rotting logs provide moist and earthy homes for salamanders, shrews, earthworms, millipedes, centipedes and more! Squirrels will cache their food within the soft fibers of the fallen trees. Hollow logs can be used by foxes as winter dens. Chipmunks use downed logs to scurry through the forest, sprinting log to log. These trees are also important in forest regeneration. These rotting logs provide a good growing medium, rich in nutrients, for tree seedlings to get a healthy start in life.

So next time you consider removing that dead or dying tree from your front yard or shoreline – remember that it serves as a home, a food source and a nutrient source, but only if you let it.

TURTLE CROSSING!

Keep your eyes out for turtles crossing the road. Slow down, and if needed, help them cross the road in the direction they were traveling.

Did you see a turtle? You can submit any turtle sightings (alive or dead) to the Wisconsin Turtle Conservation Program! Here is the website to submit your sightings:

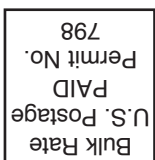
<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Wildlifehabitats/TurtleConservation>



A big snapping turtle seen on Park Road.

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Ripples
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