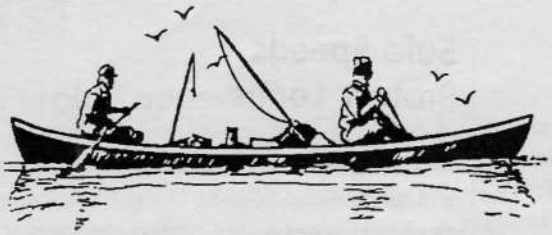

Turtle Flambeau - Trude Lake

Property Owners' Association, Inc.

August, 1999 **Volume 4 Number 1**

Words from the President

— Paul Gottwald

First, I want to apologize for the lateness of this newsletter. Too many things came up this spring and I lost track of time. We'll try to do better in the future!

Here are some things for you to follow through on:

1. Membership fees are due again. Prompt payment is greatly appreciated. We also need current addresses for everyone, as your Flowage address has changed. Fire numbers have now been assigned in the Town of Sherman and have changed in the Town of Mercer. We need your *new* address for our records and mailings.

2. Most of the association work is being done by just a few members. We need involvement from more of you. Please give some serious thought to this and respond to the questionnaire in this newsletter. Two important projects are the purple loosestrife survey and the new Walleye Watch.

3. Dennis O'Brien (DNR Flowage patrolman) informs us that problems with illegal garbage in the dumpster at the landings, chainsaw use at campsites, driftwood removal and littering, have lessened. He still asks that we let him know when we see improper things happening on the Flowage.

4. The Town of Mercer has passed a Personal Watercraft Use Ordinance. We hope to have the Town of Sherman pass a similar ordinance shortly.

5. Some of your current officers (especially me) are in need of a breather. We hope to have a committee soon to work on getting more of you to serve as officers. Let us know if you are interested in helping out.

6. You may have heard about the "walleye overbagging" case made by Sue Miller, our former DNR warden. She was able to make an excellent arrest of three men who had taken well over their bag limit on walleyes on the Chippewa Flowage. She was able to do this because she got a 'tip' from someone. I encourage you to report to Stuart Pfeiffer, any of this kind of activity you see. We all need to play by the rules, and anyone taking multiple daily bag limits is not playing fair! (Information provided is kept confidential.)

Your help is needed —

DNR has implanted radio transmitters in several flowage fish, lake sturgeon, walleye, and muskellunge. Fish biologists are following the movement of these fish in order to gain information on spawning and life cycles. What does this mean for us? Simply, if any fish with transmitters are caught, you are asked to release the fish unharmed. If the fish is injured, making survival questionable, and the fish is kept, please return the transmitter to the DNR with information on where the fish was caught. It would also be helpful to let the DNR know of any fish caught and released. The contact at DNR is Jeff Roth, Fish Manager (715-476-2240), Mercer Ranger Station.

The turnout for our annual meeting was disappointing. Do you have any ideas on how to improve the turnout?

Board Meeting Dates

1999-2000 Fiscal Year

Attention members! Mark your calendars for the 1999-2000 fiscal year's Board of Directors' Meetings. These meetings are open to all members. Members are encouraged to attend. Board meetings provide an opportunity for members to comment on and discuss issues of interest to them. Your thoughts and ideas are important to us. The meeting dates are: Monday, October 4, 1999 and Thursday, March 9, 2000. Members will be notified by mail of meeting places, times, and agenda.

Coming Events

August 4 — Loon Day in Mercer. Call 715-476-2389 for information.

August 5 — Turtle Flambeau Flowage Pontoon Boat Tour. Mercer. Call 715-476-2389 for information.

August 5 — Brat Fry in Mercer. Call 715-476-2555 for information.

August 7 — Fireman's Annual Corn Roast in Springstead. Call 715-583-9979 for information.

October 4 — Board Meeting, time and place to be announced.

March 9, 2000 — Board Meeting, time and place to be announced.

Walleye Watch

Stuart Pfeiffer, our new warden in Mercer has contacted me regarding a "Walleye Watch" program. The following is what he had to say in a letter to me.

— Paul Gottwald

"After observing the high level of activity during this spring's fish run it is clear to me that I need a lot of help in protecting spawning walleye in Iron county. In particular, I believe that the fish below Lake of the Falls dam need a lot more protection than I can provide by myself. Due to the large numbers of fish, easy access, and isolated location these fish are very vulnerable. I would like to start a volunteer "Walleye Watch" program at the Lake of the Falls. My goal is not necessarily to catch poachers but to deter them from taking fish. I am looking for volunteers, to work in groups of two or more, to watch the fish during the peak times of the spawn, a period of approximately five to ten days. I consistently observed people at this site from sunset to 4:00 am. I suspect there is activity after 4:00 am as well. Any help would be greatly appreciated but I believe these fish really need protection all through the night.

"I would equip the volunteers with caps identifying them as volunteers in the "Walleye Watch" program, a gas lantern for use in the shelter, and a cellular phone to use to contact me with if there are any problems. I would also post the area with signs warning that the area is patrolled by volunteers of a "Walleye Watch" program. Volunteers would be expected to do no more than be visible and watch for people taking fish. Deterrence is the goal of this program. If someone were observed taking fish, the volunteer should take no action other than to call me, write down their observations and get the vehicle license plate number, if possible.

"The purpose of this program is to provide an opportunity for concerned citizens to help protect their fish by deterring poachers from taking them. This program has been very effective in areas where it is in use and would serve the dual purpose of providing outstanding protection to the fish spawning at Lake of the Falls and would also free me up to concentrate on working other spawning areas on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and elsewhere in the county.

"If you can help, please indicate on the volunteer response form included in this newsletter. If you have questions, give me a call at 715-583-4461."

Safe Speeds Protect Loons

As spring brings a resurgence of fishing and recreational boating to the Flowage, caution is necessary to protect our loon population. The months of May and June are particularly dangerous for nesting loons. Loons build shallow nests near the water's edge. Boat wakes can wash eggs off the nest or cause adults to abandon the nest, leaving unattended eggs to hungry sharp-eyed predators. Loons whose first nest has been destroyed or abandoned will usually attempt to renest. Chicks born late (mid-July through August) may not be old enough or strong enough to migrate south by ice time and will perish. So, slow down to no-wake speeds near shorelines and grassy areas, and keep an eye peeled for a mother and her chicks in open water. While the new state law for PWC is *no-wake within 200 feet of any shoreline* (including islands), it's also a good rule for any boater!

— Summarized from "Loon Talk" Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute

Water Quality Project

— Arlen Wanta

One of the things I am frequently asked is "What is the Turtle Flambeau Flowage-Trude Lake Association doing? One of the projects we have begun is lake monitoring. Lake monitoring is made up of many parts, all relating to water quality.

As part of this project, we use a Secchi disc. This is an 8" diameter black and white disc that is lowered in the water on a rope until it can no longer be seen, the rope is marked, the disc is then lowered a bit more and then slowly raised. As soon as you see the disc, the rope is marked again. If there is a difference in those two marks, the average is determined and used as the water clarity depth. Taking these readings at the same location of several areas of the lake will develop a water clarity profile at the lake over a period of time.

In addition to water clarity monitoring, we monitor the amount of dissolved oxygen in the lake water. The Association is part owner, along with three other associations, of a dissolved oxygen (DO) meter. The DO meter reading is recorded at the same locations the water clarity readings are taken. Over an extended period of time, these readings will chart the changes in clarity and dissolved oxygen of the water due to algae growth or other reasons. This information provides data showing the basic health of the lake's eco-system.

We will begin water chemistry monitoring as soon as the equipment is available to us. These tests will include checking for phosphorus and chlorophyll.

Monitoring for undesirable plants such as purple loosestrife and Eurasian water milfoil is also part of our Association's project. We do annual surveys during the appropriate season when it is easiest to identify the non-native plant and eradicate it before it invades our lake and, in some cases, displaces native species.

There are many other programs and projects that may be of benefit to our lake, such as the zebra muscle watch, loon watch, and others. Island watch is a new program being implemented in the North Central region lakes to protect sensitive islands.

If you would like to become involved in any of these projects, or if you want more information or have questions, call me at 583-4491 or call any of our Association officers.

The success of these projects depends on involvement of all members.

Purple Loosestrife

Purple loosestrife is true to its name: It lets loose "strife" upon lakeshores and wetlands — a single plant can produce two million seeds annually. Large stands of loosestrife knock off native plants such as sedges and cattails. An incursion can overgrow marshy areas, which denies marsh birds their habitat. Particularly affected are species of concern like the Least Bittern, the American Bittern, the Least Grebe, and the Black Tern, says Bernard Blossey, Director of Cornell University's Biological Control of Non-indigenous Plant Species Program.

Our purple loosestrife survey and eradication project is one of the most important things we do for our lake. Other lakes and wetlands have been overrun with this plant with the result that valuable habitat has been lost. We ask you to volunteer and help on this project.

Volunteers are needed

Are you looking for another reason to cruise the scenic waters of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage? Would you like to provide a worthwhile lake community service? The DNR is looking for volunteers to participate in this year's purple loosestrife survey of the Flowage shoreline. A survey route takes about 2 hours to complete. Two-person teams work best — one person to operate the boat, and one person to survey the shoreline. The survey can be conducted any time between August 1 and August 15 when the plant is in bloom and can easily be identified. For further information contact Jeff Wilson at the DNR office in Mercer (715-476-2646). If Jeff isn't there, you can leave a message on the 24-hour voice message service. Please call. Your help is greatly needed for this worthwhile effort.

Biography of New Warden

The new Conservation Warden in Iron County is Stuart Pfeiffer. Stu transferred from Lafayette County to Iron County in June of 1998. Stu is married to Karen and has three children, Stacia, Derek, and Brett, who attend Mercer School. Stu's parents own a cabin east of St. Germaine and Stu has been coming to the Northwoods as often as possible for 30 years. The Pfeiffers are all very excited to be living in Iron County and plan on making Mercer their permanent home. Stu graduated from University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, where he majored in Resource Management. Stu never planned on becoming a Warden but did know that he wanted to work for the DNR and wanted to do what he could to preserve and protect our natural resources for future generations. After college, he worked at Devils Lake State Park as a park ranger before being hired as a warden in 1982. He believes that effectively protecting the great natural resources in Iron county is possible only with your help and cooperation. Stu looks forward to meeting you and exchanging ideas on how we can work together to make Iron County a better place for all of us.

Get involved in Association activities

Since its inception in 1996, the Turtle Flambeau-Trude Lake Property Owners Association, Inc., has established itself as a voice on the environmental and conservation issues concerning the Flowage area, and a resource for its members. Up to now, this has been accomplished by an eight-member board, six committees, the Association newsletter, and the efforts of a relatively small, but dedicated, group of members. However, as we look to the future, we are looking for *additional* members to become involved in Association activities.

We are not asking for a large time commitment or special talents; board positions and committee activities require only a modest amount of time, and a willingness to provide a helping hand. We know from your letters and comments that you are concerned with Flowage issues, so please remember that in order for the Association to remain effective and achieve its purpose, we need your help!

To volunteer, or to obtain additional information before becoming a volunteer, please fill out the reverse side of this form, cut along the dotted line, and send it to the Association at: PO Box 631, Mercer, WI 54547. Be a part of what we're doing! Please volunteer to help. Also, the membership fee form is on the reverse side of this form. Please fill it out and send it in with your $15.00 renewal fee today. Thank you!

(Don't forget to include your new Flowage address)

Name _____ Phone ( )

Address _____

I would like to volunteer some time by helping the Association as a:

❑ Board member ❑ Committee member

❑ Helping with the newsletter ❑ No preference ❑ Would like more information

Looking for loons

— From "LoonWatch," Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Northland College, Ashland, WI

What would a trip to the Northwoods be without the sight of a loon feeding in a quiet back bay or the echo of a tremolo call in the twilight? While visitors to the north can find loons printed on everything from mail boxes to coffee mugs, t-shirts, and placemats, finding and observing real birds is often more challenging. This information offers some tips on how to observe loons while minimizing impacts on nesting and chick rearing.

Loon Calendar — When to View Loons

A somewhat shy and solitary bird, the loon is not often seen near public beaches, busy resorts, or boat launches. Nesting loons are even more difficult to find. The season for loon observation in the upper Midwest begins shortly after ice-out, usually in late April or early May. During May, nesting territories are established. Loons are territorial. Territorial behaviors include aggressive running and splashing on the water (termed "the penguin dance") and the male territorial "yodel" vocalizations. Loon pairs cement their bond using such behaviors as bill dipping, paired swimming, nest building, and copulation.

Spring is a fascinating time to observe loons but it is also a critical time in the birds' life cycle. People can easily disturb loons and cause nest abandonment. While loons with a history of nesting on more developed lakes can acclimate to human activities, loons on remote lakes can be very sensitive to human presence. If you are observing loons in the spring, give the birds more room, you should stay as far as possible from the birds and view them with binoculars or a spotting scope. If the birds sound alarms such as the tremolo call (a quavering laugh) or the penguin dance, you should give the birds more room or leave the area. The best rule of thumb is to stay far enough from the loons that their activities aren't disturbed.

During June, most loons are incubating eggs. It is important not to frighten the birds from the nest during their 28-day incubation period. This is particularly critical during the final days of incubation which often coincide with the Memorial Day weekend. After the chicks have hatched, the loons generally move to a chick nursery area. This is usually a quiet

Continued on Page 5

A note from the editor

— Linda Zumpf, Editor

In the interest of saving paper and printing costs, I have included the involvement form and the membership fee form below and on the reverse side of this page as "cut outs." I put them on pages 3 and 4 of the newsletter so that you wouldn't have to cut up the large page and could still keep all the articles intact. Please take the time, today, to fill out both forms and return them to the Association with your membership fee. We greatly appreciate your support and help in any way you can give it.

Membership Application Form

Yearly Membership Fee Form

Turtle Flambeau - Trude Lake Property Owners' Association, Inc.

Date _____

Name(s) _____

Permanent/Home Address: _____

New Flowage Address: _____

Flowage Phone: _____ Permanent/Home Phone: _____

Send newsletters and mailings to: ❑ Permanent/home address ❑ Flowage address

The membership fee for the fiscal year July 1, 1999 through July 30, 2000 is **$15.00**. Make checks payable to **Turtle Flambeau-Trude Lake Property Owner's Association** and mail to **P.O. Box 631, Mercer, WI 54547.** Do not send cash in the mail — you may give cash payments to Paul Gottwald or Jim Leever.

❑ Cash ❑ Check ❑ $15.00 Enclosed

(continued from Page 4)

bay where the youngsters are protected from predators, excessive disturbance, or heavy wave action. Again care must be taken so that the loon family is not stressed by human presence.

As the chicks mature, the adults will leave them on their own for longer time periods. Adults are often seen in groups during late July and August, calling and swimming in what may seem to be repetitive patterns. This is called the "circle dance" and biologists hypothesize that it is tied to migration and staging behaviors.

Perhaps one of the most interesting times to observe loons is during migration. In fall, large groups of loons may gather, or "stage" on the Great Lakes or inland lakes. Adult loons begin to migrate first, usually in September, followed by the juveniles in late October and early November.

Many loon nests will be destroyed this spring by gulls and raccoons. Predation problems are even greater in lakes where people scare the birds from their nests, leaving the eggs or young exposed to predators.

Loon Hot Spots

Though viewing wildlife depends to some degree on luck, there are a few areas in the Upper Midwest where your chances for spotting loons are most favorable. Lakes larger than 500 acres are more likely to support loons, although loons may be more difficult to find on large bodies of water. While some lakes may be accessible by foot, a small boat or canoe may optimize your chances of seeing a loon. Binoculars, a spotting scope, or a telephoto lens for your camera are also helpful tools to remember.

In Wisconsin, the counties of Vilas, Oneida, Forest, and Sawyer have large numbers of resident loons. In the northeastern part of the state, lakes near Minocqua, Eagle River, and Mercer are prime locations. In the northwest, the Hayward area is a good starting place. The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage in Iron County and the Chippewa Flowage in Sawyer County have the largest densities of nesting loons in the state. In the summer, it is possible to find non-breeding loons on Lake Superior, particularly around the Apostle Islands.

Lake Sturgeon

The Flowage has a population of lake sturgeon which appears to be fairly low in numbers and comprised of mostly large, old fish. Adult sturgeon spawn only once every 3-5 years. Prime spawning habitat is limited to only a few small locations throughout the Flowage system and past surveys show no evidence of successful natural reproduction.

Past telemetry work has helped biologists in discovering movement patterns and important information on spawning activities. To date, studies have concluded that sturgeon are found concentrated at certain locations throughout the Flowage at specific times of the year. Extensive migrations to spawning areas occur sometimes a year in advance of the actual spawning act. Past research was limited in scope because of the short-term monitoring capabilities dictated by a two-year transmitter battery life. New, state-of-the-art, programmable transmitters, recently implanted into several fish, will allow biologists to track individual sturgeon over the next 30+ years. This will be a great aid in discovering critical information about all life stage requirements of this population.

As more knowledge is gained about the spawning habitat deficiencies and other limiting factors, implementation of specific management techniques will help to assure the survival of this population in the Flowage.

Walleye

The Flowage supports a self-sustaining walleye population comprised of three separate sub-populations; the Manitowish River, Lake of the Falls and in-lake spawning populations. Within the lake spawning group, several distinct sub-populations may exist. A telemetry project, involving implants similar to the sturgeon project, is underway to help increase our knowledge of the existence and importance of these spawning sub-populations to the fishery. Up to 20 adult walleyes will be implanted this spring and monitored for movement over the next few years.

Muskellunge

Information on the demographics of the musky population are lacking. This study is designed to provide details regarding adult spawning concentrations. Due to the large size of the Flowage and the abundance of spawning habitat, past survey efforts have been unable to sample adequate numbers of musky to permit statistical analysis of the population. More information is necessary to adequately evaluate the state of the population, stocking program, special regulations and reasons for unsuccessful natural reproduction. Approximately 20 fish are projected to receive an internal transmitter this spring. Migration and spawning behavior will be monitored to augment existing data and to improve our understanding of this species in the Flowage.

Your help is needed

If any fish with transmitters are caught, anglers are asked to release the fish unharmed. If the fish is injured making survival questionable and the fish is kept, please return the transmitter to the DNR with information on where the fish was caught.

Your assistance in releasing the study fish will help assure the health of this fishery in the future.

Shoreline Restoration

In July of 1998, the Iron County Land Conservation Committee sponsored "The Iron County Lakes and Rivers Institute Workshop." The workshop drew over 100 interested lakeshore owners from our area including many of our Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake members.

Some of the important topics discussed at the workshop included the alarming rate at which Northern Wisconsin lakeshore is being developed and that negative effects can be reduced by proper landowner planning, management and restoration, if necessary.

A DNR inland lake sustainability study conducted in 1997-1998 researched the impact of shoreline development on wildlife populations. This study found that many ground nesting birds, such as thrushes and songbirds were less numerous on developed lakes, while species such as robins, cowbirds, grackles, and blue jays were more populous.

The study used the green frog as an ecosystem indicator for aquatic life as shoreline development increased. There was a decline in frog abundance. These frogs function as indicators for other animals such as salamanders, reptiles and other frog species which depend on shoreline environments. Other studies have found that shoreline development impacts water quality, fisheries, aquatic vegetation, woody debris (habitat), and mammal populations. But perhaps most important to people are the impacts on the aesthetics of lakes. Sociological surveys have shown that people who live on and visit lakes are seeking tranquility, natural beauty and "wild" characteristics and that creation of lawns, riprapping shoreline and large obtrusive homes and buildings detract from the "Northwoods" aesthetics.

The TFF is unusual in that its shorelines are largely undeveloped. While this is a tremendous asset, there are opportunities for landowners on the flowage to further enhance shorelines through protection and restoration. Restoration of shoreline is increasingly popular amongst lakeshore property owners in the upper Midwest with workshops, training sessions and funding available to recreate natural shoreline on developed lakes.

Restoration is simply the establishment of native trees, shrubs, grasses or wetland plants. Its benefits include improving water habitat for fish, amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic insects, increasing terrestrial diversity, and visual screening of structures and aesthetic improvements.

County land conservation departments, DNR, and other resource professionals are available to work with landowners and develop restoration plans which take into account how an owner uses his property and ecological and aesthetic improvements. In many instances, funding is available for plants, seeds, and even structural improvements, such as erosion control.

Next summer, the TFF Association hopes to participate in a research study on shoreland restoration. Landowners who are interested in exploring restoration can contact the Association for more information. Perhaps you are tired of mowing that large lawn or are worried that waves and ice are eroding your valuable shoreline. If so, perhaps restoration is an option you would like to explore.

Homeowners interested in further information on shoreline restoration should contact their county conservation extension office. The Iron County number is 561-2595, in Hurley.

P.O. Box 631
Mercer, WI 54547

Turtle Flambeau - Trude Lake

Property Owners' Association, Inc.