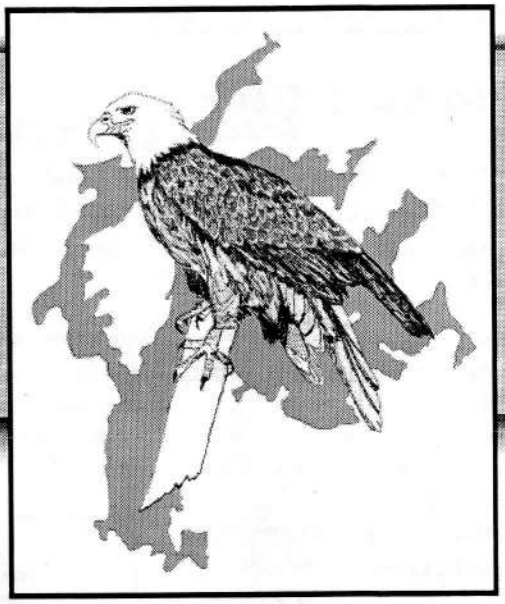
Turtle Flambeau Flowage
and Trude Lake
PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.



P.O. Box 631 - Mercer, WI 54547
Fall/Winter 2004

--- President's Letter ---

Years ago my grandmother told me that the older a person gets the faster time goes by. Boy, was she right! I haven't finished summer fishing and here it is November. Soon we will be plowing snow. Before that happens I hope we can all get some good fall fishing in, but before I go fishing I better finish this letter.

Our joint association/WDNR fish habitat improvement project, Adopt-A-Crib, has been very well received. At our fall meeting, the board of directors approved the purchase of a pontoon boat to use in moving cribs out into the lake. Kalvin Patzer and I drove to Barnes, Wisconsin, to look at a pontoon boat that the Eau Claire Lakes Fish and Game Club modified to use in placing cribs in lakes in their area. We hope to have our modified pontoon ready for the spring of 2005. For further details and the 2005 crib building schedule, please read our feature article in this issue.

We continued water testing this past summer. Wally and Sally Dodge headed up the purple loosestrife survey. Several locations were found and the plants destroyed. We also conducted surveys for exotic zebra mussels, spiny water fleas, and Eurasian water milfoil. The good news is that so far none of these were found. If you are interested in learning more about exotic species prevention, the Iron County Lakes Alliance will be sponsoring a "Clean Water, Clean Boats" training program in April, 2005. The workshop will focus on how to recognize exotic plants and animals that can be transported from lake to lake on boat trailers, boats, or in live wells and bilges. The day long class will be led by WDNR instructors and is important for anyone using lakes and rivers. We will try to let everyone know more about this class when we have a date, time and place set. Thanks to all the summer volunteers for their survey work!

While work continues on planning for the Rest Lake Dam regulation and group campsite modifications on the TFF, we have no news to report at this time.

Association memberships are continuing to grow. Remember to tell your friends and neighbors about our association. If you need a membership application, please call Jim Leever or me.

Enjoy the holidays; enjoy the winter and thanks to all for your support.

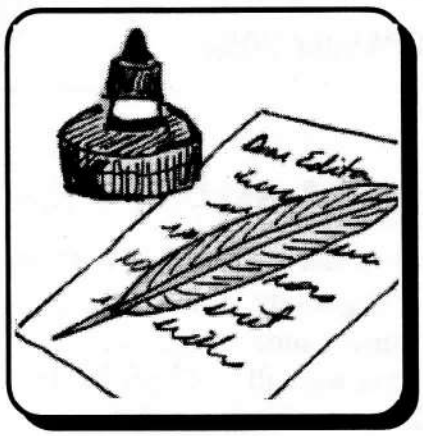
Arlen Wanta

Letter to the Editor

This new column is a pilot project that we hope will serve as a forum for discussion of issues and information pertinent to the flowage. The letters we print do not represent the opinions of the newsletter committee or Association. If you would like to submit a letter, please send it to us at PO Box 631, Mercer, WI 54547

Dear Editor,

I am writing to the newsletter because I'm concerned about expanding ATV traits. Living on the flowage is a wonderful experience and I would like to keep it as peaceful as possible. ATVs are useful utility vehicles but the popularity of using them for recreation troubles me. They are loud, destructive to soils, cause erosion, pollute, and they do not promote a healthy life style. For many riders, an ATV is more a thrill ride than an experience communing with nature. I believe that the Turtle Flambeau Flowage was primarily developed for experiencing nature. AVT use near the flowage threatens this experience. Some months ago I was told that a county board member commented on the need for an ATV park in the southern half of the county such as one proposed for the northern part of the county. I have also noticed people riding their ATV's on Popko Circle, which I learned was illegal. To get the facts on the ATV park proposal, I called Charlie Zinsmaster, Iron County Forester, Jim Kichak, Mercer Town Chairman, and Opal Roberts, Town Clerk of Mercer. Charlie was familiar with the possible plan to locate a forty-acre ATV park on Iron County land off of Swamp Creek Road. To learn more about the specifics of this park or expanded trail systems I called Jim Kichak. He said that the proposed park was to be

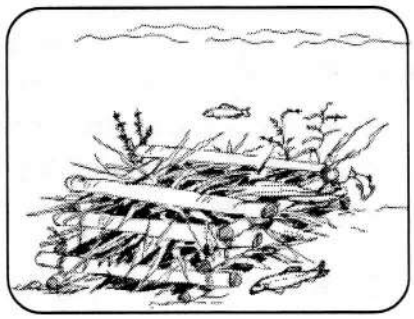


discussed at the county board meeting in mid October. He was not aware of any new trails near the flowage being developed. I also asked him about the process used to designate a road for ATV's. I was a bit concerned about how easy it is to get a road authorized for ATV travel. Mr. Kichak informed me that all an individual has to do is request to be put on the agenda for the next town meeting. If no one is there to oppose the authorization, ATV travel rights will be granted. I then began to wonder how the other residents of such roads would find out that their road was being considered for ATV travel. So I called Opal Roberts. She explained that the agenda for all Town of Mercer meetings are posted the Monday before the meeting at the Mercer Town Hall, the Post Office and Snow's IGA. This concerned me because I rarely go to town. Opal agreed that this was a concern and that she hoped in the near future to develop a Web site for the Town of Mercer where such important information can be easily accessible. This area is rich in so many ways, I worry we could destroy it by bringing in more noise. There are other areas not so rich in water resources where these activities are more appropriate.

Sincerely,
Diane O'Krongly

Adopt-A-Crib Program Takes Off!

On Saturday, May 1, 2004, the Association kicked-off its Adopt-A-Crib fund raising program at the Springstead boat landing. Opening day fishermen were offered golf cart rides between the boat ramp and parking spots. We also provided coffee & cookies, information about exotic species, and Association memberships. This effort was well received by Springstead landing users, who donated over $250 to the crib program, and also resulted in five to six new "special" members in the Association.



Opening day fund raising efforts were followed up by a letter to Association members asking for donations earmarked for the crib program. Donations of $40 or more (material cost for one crib) were designated a "Sponsor" of the program. To date, we have raised approximately $3300 for the program!

Weather permitting, the weekend of January 15 & 16, 2005, has been set for crib building at Fisherman's Landing. If you can help, please call Arlen Wanta (715 583-4523), Jeff Roth (715 476-7847), or send an email to: **TFTLkAssoc@aol.com.**

At its fall meeting, the Board approved the purchase of an older pontoon boat, which will be used to move cribs from their build site to their permanent home in deeper water. The pontoon should let us move two cribs at once. Currently, two DNR boats, four to six people, and lots of manual effort are needed to move a single crib. The pontoon boat will also be available for other lake associations to rent for their crib programs.

Purple Loosestrife Survey 2004

By Wally Dodge

Again this year, members of the association graciously gave their time to survey the flowage and Trude Lake for outbreaks of purple loosestrife. In July, members who had expressed an interest were contacted by phone, assigned an area to survey, and were sent information on how to conduct the survey and report findings.

The routes were surveyed during the last week of July and the first week of August when loosestrife is in bloom. Results were reported to the WDNR or to Wally and Sally Dodge, current survey coordinators. This year's survey again showed the importance of our efforts as several outbreaks of loosestrife were found including a few new areas. A number of plants were found near and northeast of Bonies Mound. Some loosestrife was also found near Lake of the Falls and Sturgeon Bay. All sites were treated by the DNR. Bruce Bacon, DNR wildlife biologist, stated "In the total number of plants this was not the worst year, however the number of sites with loosestrife increased and this is not good. It will take more years of diligent surveillance to get rid of loosestrife on the TFF. Finding those single new plants in new locations is the key to success."

This survey is a very valuable service that we provide for both the property owners and lake users. Because it is labor intensive, it could not be done without the support of the membership. We would like to thank the following volunteers for their time and energies: Arlen and Grace Wanta, Kalvin and Joyce Patzer, Paul and Eileen Gottwald, James and Valerie Leever, Thomas Mowbray, Diane and Jeff O'Krongly, Judy and Dave Pierce, Geoffrey Bacci, Bill Bayer, Frank and Elizabeth Kilgore, M.J. Sloane and Chad McGrath, George and Ann Wagner, Al and Debbi Woodbury, Rodner and Maryann Brown.

If you are interested in being a part of this important work next year, please contact an association director or Wally and Sally Dodge at 583-4480.

We are working with the DNR to develop a long-term plan for the crib program, and hope to continue building cribs as long as funding and suitable placement sites allow. If you haven't made a contribution and want to, or if you want to make an additional contribution, please send a check marked "cribs" to the Association post office box.

For the latest information and updates on crib building activity next January, please watch either of these 2 web sites:

1. www.lake-link.com Click on Fishing Reports, then find the thread for the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage.

2. www.fishinfo.com Click on Fishing Reports-Wisconsin, then click on the Mercer and TFF section.

Listening For The Kingfisher

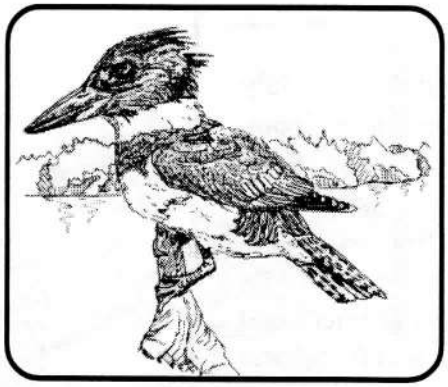
By Terry Daulton

We have a "listening bench" at our cabin on the flowage. It is positioned for perfect sunset watching. Most late afternoons this fall I enjoyed the fading heat of the day from its sheltered seat. Our listening bench is a hybrid inspired by two famous nature writers, Sigurd Olson and Aldo Leopold. Leopold invented a perfectly contoured outdoor bench now widely known as a "Leopold Bench". Olson named his remote northwoods retreat Listening Point, as it was a place he went to listen and learn. So we melded these concepts together hoping to find both inspiration and relaxing outdoor comfort from the shores of our bay.

This fall the most dramatic "listening" I did from our bench was to the rattling scolds of a family of kingfishers who foraged in the bay as sunset approached. We had been watching the kingfisher family all season – from early nesting when they dug their burrow in a sandy bank on Horseshoe, through fledging of the chicks in August. By fall they were a noisy active family dominating the bay.

Kingfishers are easy to identify. They are medium sized (12-14") with heavy heads and long bills. Their striking blue gray plumage sets them off as they perch in trees along a river or lakeshore. In flight they seem to scoop up and down and when hunting they hover over the water before plunging dramatically after a minnow or frog. If you boat into a kingfisher territory, you will certainly hear their clattering call.

Kingfishers dig burrows for nests. Look



for any sandy bank along the flowage and you may see three to four inch holes leading straight into the sand. Their burrows can be three to six feet into the bank and end in a small chamber where they lay five to eight eggs. Sometimes burrows are used year after year with new eggs laid on the fish bones and scales build up from feeding nestlings the year before. Both adults dig the burrow using their bills to loosen the sand and their feet to push soil from the tunnel. Kingfishers eat ten or so three to four inch minnows per day, so we had no fears that our family was depleting fish in the bay. In fact they added interest by revealing bait fish haunts and adding above water entertainment.

On October 12, I headed to the listening bench to watch what promised to be a spectacular sunset. I sat for several minutes with a growing sense that something was different. Then I realized that the silence was unbroken. My reverie of sun and sky no longer included a cranky call, sudden splash of bird hitting water, or comical airborne antic. I consulted my bird guide and found that kingfishers migrate far enough south to insure open water year-round. Their normal winter range only extends as far north as southern Wisconsin, although occasional birds might be seen in the fast running waters below dams farther north. I briefly pondered the practicality of setting up a listening bench on a snow bank below the Flambeau dam to see if any of my kingfishers dared brave an Iron County winter. But I quickly dismissed that idea as unrealistic. In the end I am sure that I will retreat from our listening bench like a migratory bird, waiting out the cold winter months by the fire and dreaming of warm sunsets and the calls of the kingfisher.

New Fish Species Found in the Turtle Flambeau Flowage

by Jeff Roth, WDNR

A new fish species has been discovered in the Flambeau Flowage during this past summer (2004) by a number of anglers who observed and caught several of them. The fish has been identified as a spotfin shiner.

To the average angler this species would probably go unnoticed and simply be considered a "shiner". In fact, it is a shiner by species classification as opposed to the fathead minnow and mud minnow which are a more commonly used bait fish species. The spotfin shiner looks like a cross between a common and golden shiner in body shape but is somewhat "slate" colored with the outline of the scales appearing in "diamond" shapes.

The spotfin's distribution is mostly in the southern 2/3 of the state, being found commonly in the Mississippi River drainage. It is a prolific breeder, spawning several times throughout the summer making it a possible candidate for the bait industry. However, the hardiness of the species to survive well in the bucket

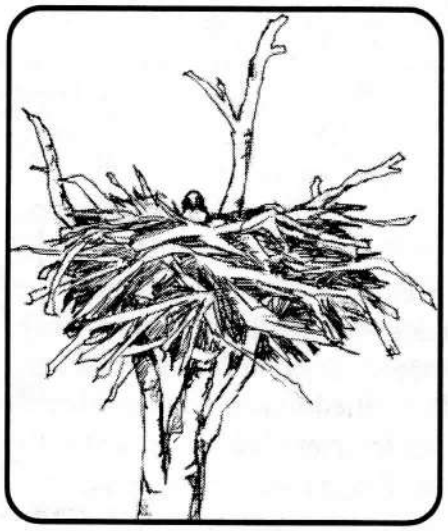
Osprey On The TFF – The Puzzle Continues

By Bruce Bacon, WDNR

We had another mixed year of success and failure for flowage osprey. The nests that produced young did well with two young in each of five nests. However, four nests that had adults and probably eggs in May failed to produce young. The total of nine active nests on the flowage is still way down from the highs of 22 nest attempts per year in the late 1980's.

What is causing osprey declines? For three years, we have been working to find that answer. Our method is to track chick survival using remote cameras at Iron County nests. This year we placed cameras at two nests (Trude West & Murray's Landing). Prey deliveries in all three years approached one fish every two to three hours. This number is higher than some other studies where osprey fledged two and three young/nest, so our osprey appear to bring enough fish to the nests. However we need to look at the size of fish brought. It is possible that flowage osprey feed on smaller fish and thus require more frequent deliveries. We would also like to look at the data in terms of nestling age. As chicks grow their food requirements greatly increase. Looking at our 2004 tapes with these factors in mind may shed additional light on chick survival.

We have regularly banded osprey (mostly nestlings) on the TFF since 1984. Beginning in 1988, nestlings were also

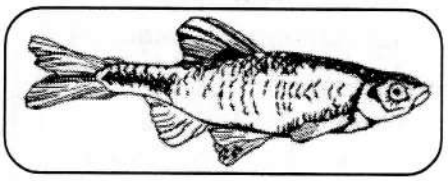


color-marked. What is worrisome is that we have not relocated any of these nestlings as adults. We know that many young have fledged and flown south in the fall. We have received some band returns from Central and South America (unfortunately from birds that were killed). Why have no young birds returned? One theory is that our young may be malnourished when they leave in the fall and may not survive migration. A second theory is that the young birds may not survive the two-five year extended stay in Central and South America that occurs before they return as breeding adults. It is even possible that some of our young birds return and breed in other parts of Wisconsin or even other states. Because there are few people looking for banded osprey it is unlikely we would receive reports from outside our region. We do know that three of Iron County's adult breeding osprey were hatched and color banded at Michigan U. P. nests. Thanks, Michigan!

In recent years, the DNR has had less money and time to survey areas for new osprey (and bald eagle) nests, so we rely more on reports from the public about new nests. In areas like the TFF where bald eagles have steadily increased, eagles are likely chasing nesting osprey off the flowage. These osprey may still fish on the TFF but build their nests away from the eagles' harassment. If you know of any osprey nests close to but not on the flowage, please contact the Mercer Ranger Station (476-7843). We survey most of the artificial platforms every May, but have no way of knowing where new natural nests are built.

Why worry about TFF osprey? They are not listed as a threatened or endangered species. In recent years, new nests in western and southern Wisconsin are balancing losses in Vilas, Oneida, and Iron Counties. Osprey are certainly here to stay in Wisconsin, but it may be important to find out why their numbers appear to be decreasing in some areas. Our long research and management history on the TFF makes it an excellent site to study long term population trends.

or on the hook is questionable. During the spawning period of May to September, the males are especially



aggressive in protecting nest areas and have been observed biting and pulling other fish away from their nest site. This is likely the time when anglers might experience catching this minnow on hook and line.

How the spotfin shiner got into the Flambeau Flowage is uncertain. It may have been here for some time and just went unnoticed, or it may have been recently introduced by an angler who purchased bait elsewhere in the state. In either case, this species is not anticipated to be harmful for the flowage fishery and in most likelihood will merely add to the diversity of the forage base. The Flambeau Flowage can now boast its unique species diversity with a total of 27 distinct fish species.

Tales from the Old Flambeau

By Richard Czewszewski

The following is the last installment of Richard Czewszewski's recollections of early flowage days. He begins in 1965 when he is looking for land to buy near Springstead Landing.

As I recall, I followed up on Keith Scheinenbeck's suggestion to contact a lawyer in Park Falls regarding a lot on the flowage. I found

him at a diner, pencil behind his ear nursing his coffee and talking with a waitress. I introduced myself and told him of my interest in "Leo's (Scheinebeck) place". The flowage property was going to be auctioned off next month (October 1965), opening bid no less than $25,000. The property consists of eighty acres of mature growth trees, 6,800 feet of water frontage and several small islands. Twenty percent cash the day of the sale with balance due in seven days. There was a definite pause in the conversation; it was obvious I was in way over my head. I thanked him for his time and the coffee and I left. Read on, all is not lost!

In February 1966 I got a call from Mr. Len Stafford who had heard of my interest in flowage property and was in a position to sell some waterfront lots being developed on Leo Schienebeck's old place. We agreed to meet and I left home on February 18th. It was a cold day, but that didn't bother me because I had my lucky sweater on. The drive was slow and cold. I checked to make sure I had the heater set on high and when I stopped for gas in Portage the attendant called out "I hope you have your long john's on." I didn't realize what he was trying to tell me until I got to the motel in Minocqua and the fellow at the desk said that it was 30 below zero. "Don't worry," he said, "Plug your heater into the outlet outside your room door." The look on my face and the long pause before I said "what heater" prompted him to ask "You got a motor heater I hope?" Well to make a long story short we parked my car in his garage and covered the motor with a couple of blankets.

The next morning a voice called out "Hot coffee, and you will need it as it is still 30 below". After breakfast I was off to meet Len Stafford in Lac du Flambeau. Mercedes Stafford met me at the door (Len had been called away) and showed me a layout of lots. Because I had already been to "Leo's place" Mrs. Stafford felt I could find the property and might feel more comfortable looking around on my own.

Did I mention the snow was over my shoe tops, it was still 30 below, I was tramping around 80 acres of woods, 6,880 feet of frontage and don't forget I left the car running so it wouldn't freeze up on me. I was far from comfortable. But I made my decision to buy lot 12, and thought of driving across the frozen flowage to share my news with my old friend Casey who lived on the flowage up Trude Lake way. It occurred to me that crossing the flowage flats on the ice would save a 35-mile drive, with just a mile or so of ice between Scheinebeck's ramp and Fisherman's Landing. What would you do? Not knowing what was going to freeze first my nose or toes, I headed for Casey's. I do know that I'll never make that drive again!

Membership Directory

There has been a suggestion that we develop a membership directory for the association to help us communicate and network more effectively. The directory could include such information as name, address, telephone, or email. We are wondering what you think about this idea. Please let us know by contacting the association PO box or emailing director Dave Pierce at dpierce386@earthlink.net.

Central Flowage Loons Studied 2004

Mercer calls itself the "loon capital" but by rights the TFF is the true loon mecca of northern Wisconsin. In past years, loon research has tracked nesting and chick production on over 30 pair of birds from the far reaches of Otter Creek to Murrays Landing and Lake of the Falls. This year a three square mile section of the flowage was studied as part of an ongoing WDNR study on loon populations and mercury. Within this area (see map) ten pair of loons were identified and monitored. There were 11 nest attempts documented (six failures), with nine chicks hatched and eight surviving to fledging. Chicks and adults were captured and banded with color leg bands. Blood samples were also taken to assess mercury levels. While the flowage is not expected to be a high mercury lake for loons, data from this year's samples has not yet been tabulated. The overall study goals are to establish a population estimate for loons in our region and assess the impacts of shoreline development, disturbance, and mercury on loons. Results from this work may help the federal government and power companies set appropriate emission levels for mercury as well as giving insights into the future of loons in our area.

Shoreline Education Publications Available

Contact the University of Wisconsin County Extension Agents or WDNR Regional Lake Coordinators for information, or to obtain copies of the following publications.

Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality. Dindorf, Carolyn J.; Henderson, Carol L.; and Rozumalski, Fred J. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. $19.95. Available from the Minnesota Booktore, 117 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55155. (800)657-3757.

Life on the Edge...Owning Waterfront Property. Dresen, Michael C. and Korth, Robert M. $3.00 (plus $1.50 shipping and handling). Available from UWEX-Lakes Partnership. College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI 54481 or call (715)346-2116.

Landing News

The boat ramps at Fisherman's and Sportsman's Landings have been replaced and are now installed at the correct slope. Fisherman's Landing ramp opened for use on October 1 and the new Sportsman's Landing opened on October 20.

A number of additional boat landing improvements are coming next summer. Fisherman's Landing and Murray's Landing are scheduled to have toilet buildings installed. Fisherman's Landing is also scheduled to get a new kiosk as well as additional parking lot and road improvements. An entry sign will be installed at the new Sportsman's Landing.

Planning is also underway for boarding docks at Fisherman's and Sportsman's Landings. A timetable for docks is dependent on when funding is allocated.

Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 631 - Mercer, WI 54547

Editor – Terry Daulton

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--- Mission Statement ---

The purpose of the Association is to maintain, protect, and enhance the quality of the lake and its surroundings for the collective interest of members and the general public.

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