Driftwood

The newsletter of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake Property Owners' Association, Inc.

Fall/Winter 2013

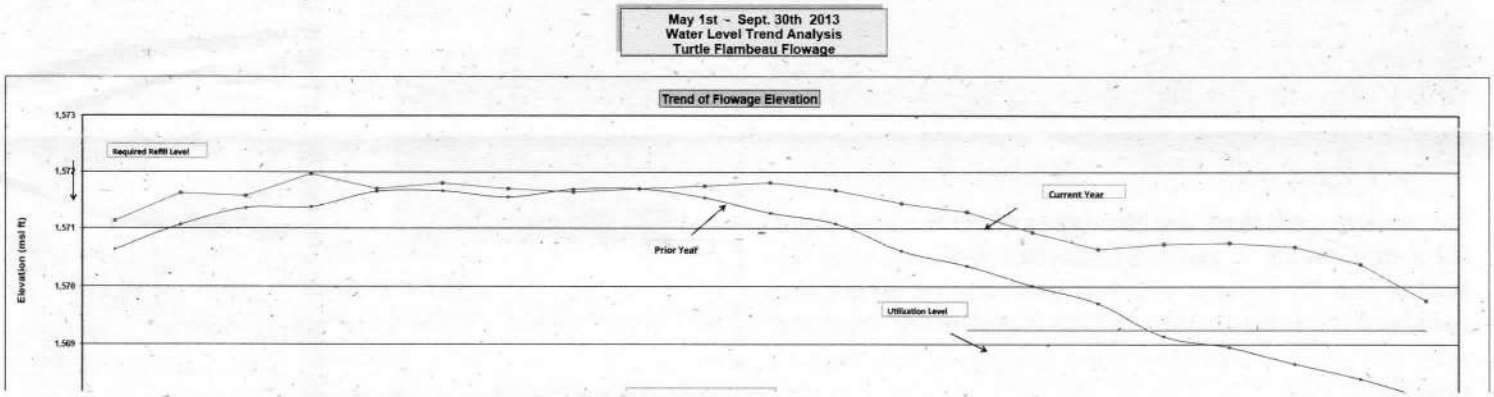
Enough to Float Your Boat: 2013 Water-Level Management Success

By Jim Bohmann

After six years of frustration due to unnecessarily low water levels on the TFF, our association members, as well as the general public, were able to utilize and enjoy this scenic waterway in the manner that was originally intended when the Memorandum of Understanding was agreed upon by Xcel Energy and the WDNR.

Obviously, there are numerous variables that impact the water level of the flowage during the course of a year, including the amount of summer precipitation, average temperatures, ground-water levels, etc. The most significant of these variables, however, are the water outflow decisions made by Xcel Energy throughout the season. Earlier this year, building on advice from and initiatives taken by the association's legal counsel, members of the association's board met with high-level representatives of the WDNR and Xcel to document our recurring water level problems and to develop an approach / philosophy to finally resolve them. Simply stated, the ensuing agreement centered around the practice of what might be called "conservative discharge management." What does this approach, or philosophy, mean? Instead of lowering water levels in anticipation of future rainfall (long-run forecasts are notoriously unreliable), we concluded that increased outflows should be undertaken only after rains have fallen. Such a prudent release of water (within the terms of the MOU) seemed to all parties the most reasonable approach to regulation of water levels on the flowage.

How did the actual 2013 open water level season unfold? It was a success. Xcel committed to conservative water management and targeted a flowage drawdown not to exceed 2.75 – 3.00 feet from full pool. For sure, we had above-average rainfall in the first part of summer, which can be rather challenging to manage given the structural constraints of our dam and dikes. In our judgment, Xcel did a professional job of managing significant rainfall while the flowage was at or near full pool. In addition, Xcel practiced conservative discharge management into the fall and complied with their drawdown level commitment. The increased level of engagement by the WDNR certainly made a meaningful contribution to this year's success. Their leadership was essential to the progress the parties made in working out and executing a new approach to managing water levels on the flowage.



The association will continue to work closely with the WDNR and Xcel on many issues, including these very important water-level matters. We trust that the successes of 2013 will mark the start of a pattern of conservative water management and of enhanced cooperation among all parties.

Editorial Page

President's Letter

By Terry Daulton

If you were to poll Northwoods land managers on the most contentious issues they face, I would guess that ATV trails would rank high on their list. ATV enthusiasts and opponents seem to hold especially strong views and to come out in numbers when new trails are proposed.

This past year, the association board took public stands on two issues, one substantive and one procedural, on a proposal to create an ATV trail to link Mercer with resorts on Popko Circle West near Lake of the Falls County Park. We have received strongly worded feedback on our positions from members on both sides of the fence. I want to take this opportunity to clarify board's positions and to share the reasoning behind them.

[As background, there are two types of ATV travel ways, (1) a trail, which is generally off road and is open to the public; and (2) a route, which is generally on established roads and is primarily used by local residents to access an ATV trail. ATV recreational riders generally prefer trails to road riding.]

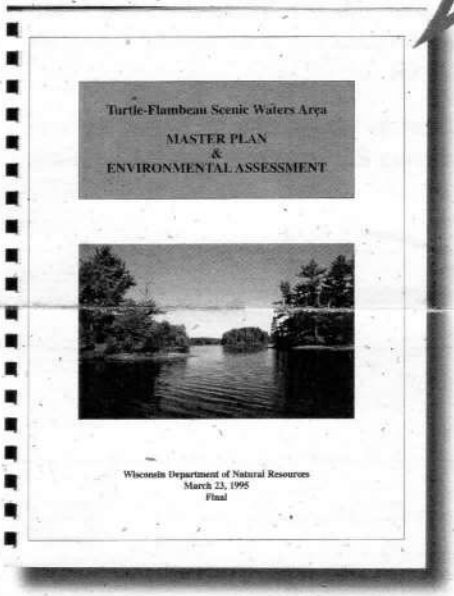
For the record, the association has opposed outright only those proposed ATV trails or routes that would fall within the borders of the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area (TFSWA). The first time this issue came up was in the fall of 2011. At that time we sent a letter to the Mercer Town Board and to the Iron County Forestry Committee opposing new ATV trail development inside the TFSWA. This spring the issue of new ATV trail/route development came up again. The association sent a letter to the Mercer Town Board on May 6, 2013, re-stating much of the December 2011 letter. In addition, we encouraged the Mercer Board to delay decision making until many of our seasonal members returned so their views could be heard. The association has also taken a position on the procedures by which trail authorization has been advanced and acted upon by the Mercer Town Board. In a letter dated June 3, 2013, the association expressed concerns about the Town Board meeting of May 16th when a plan for a trail and route was proposed and voted on with no time for public review and input. In that letter we asked to have a seat at the table when trails are being planned.

The association board has had many serious and in-depth conversations about these issues—especially the creation of new routes and trails within the TFSWA. The following paragraphs, outlining our overarching concerns, form the basis for our actions to date.

Support for the TFSWA Master Plan

"No new snowmobile or ATV trails are planned" p. 35

The TFSWA is managed under a Master Plan that



was developed with significant public input, including that of past association president, Marianne Brown, who was a member of the Master Plan committee. The main goal of the Master Plan is to "preserve the scenic qualities of the TFSWA; protect plant and wildlife communities, especially endangered and threatened species; provide interpretive and educational information; and accommodate compatible [my emphasis] recreational opportunities for the general public". Pursuant to that goal, the plan goes on to specify that management should seek to "protect, maintain and enhance the generally wild and undeveloped scenic beauty...." Recreational activities listed in the Plan include boating, camping, hunting, trapping, nature observation and snowmobiling. In its management section, the plan specifically states "no new snowmobile or ATV trails are planned". The association board firmly supports the goals and specific objectives of the Master Plan.

Environmental Concerns

We have three major environmental concerns. First, ATV's

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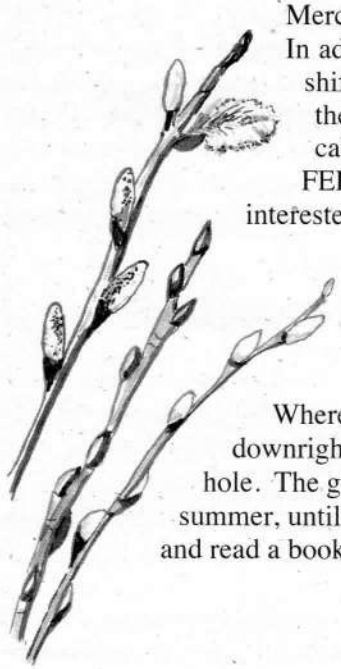
DIKE 10: A Thousand Year Process to Prepare for a Thousand Year Flood

By Mike Hittle

The last issue of Driftwood contained an article by Chris Paulik, Property Manager of the TFSWA, on the Dike 10 project—namely, about the need to extend the present dike some 2200 feet paralleling Flambeau Dam Road. That project would, in turn, require modification of the road to Sportsman's Landing at the point where the road will cross the extended dike. Though Chris predicted some delays, largely owing to the prolonged winter, she felt certain that the project would go ahead in the late summer of 2013 and be completed before winter; and she promised to notify interested parties in advance of any necessary closures of the landing.

On a drizzly Autumn morning, the road to Sportsman's Landing patiently awaits word from Madison.

No public notices went out, however, and no heavy equipment ground into action. Instead, the project seems to have gone into stealth mode, at least insofar as Iron County is concerned. The WDNR headquarters in Madison, which had determined last year that a variance from the Flowage Master Plan would suffice to allow this project to go ahead, has now concluded that the Master Plan must be amended. Precisely how the amendment process will play out has yet to be determined. There may or may not be a public hearing in Madison; for sure there will be a public comment period during which people can respond through mail or e-mail. Moreover, in keeping with its pledge to be more customer-friendly, the WDNR will provide local residents an opportunity to comment in person at a meeting (date unknown as of this time) in Mercer.



In addition to deciding that an amendment to the master plan was called for, the WDNR has also shifted control over the road-rebuilding project from Iron County to Madison. Apparently, both these actions are directly related to the fact that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission called for the dike extension. Indeed, the WDNR has assigned a full-time person to manage all FERC-related projects in the state—including this one. This centralizing of control has rendered interested local parties totally dependent on Madison for information. As of late September, for example, Chris Paulik, who had previously been involved in moving the project forward, had received no information from Madison on the current status of the Dike 10 project. Looking, as through a glass darkly, she could only speculate that construction work would likely be carried out next summer.

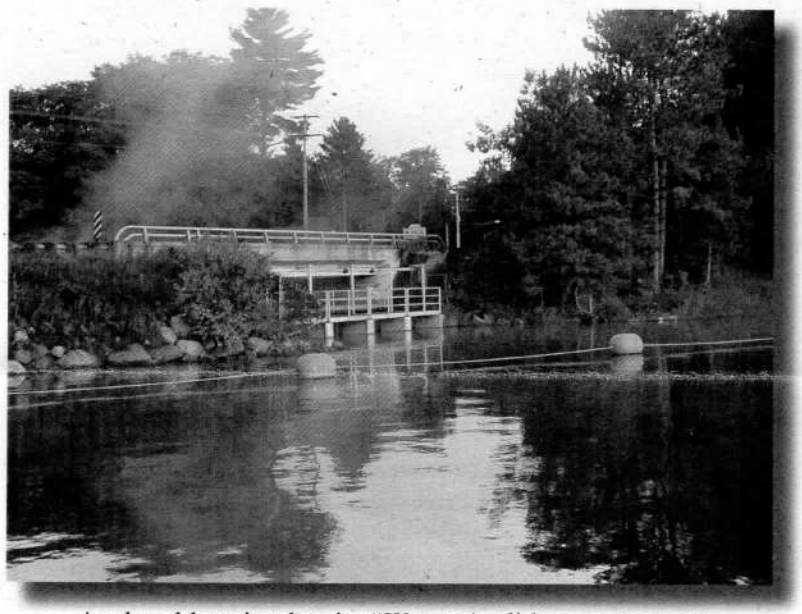
Where are we? The bad news is that this project, which seems relatively straightforward, if not downright obvious, to an outsider, has, for the moment at least, been sucked into a bureaucratic black hole. The good news is that the association volunteer, who kept his thumb in the original dike, winter and summer, until repairs and enhancements to it could be completed, will be able to sit by the fire this winter and read a book.

Introducing Public Interest Considerations to the Rest Lake Dam Flow Regime

By Bob Martini

The Manitowish River system is a real gem in northern Wisconsin. Local author John Bates beautifully sings its praises in his excellent book, River Life, where he describes both the natural and human histories of the river. Unfortunately, for over 70 years the Rest Lake flow regime, which controls the levels of water in the river below the dam, has maintained a Manitowish River that is quite the opposite of a natural system. The WDNR has been studying this system for 10 years in an attempt to improve the flows for all public purposes. I have been involved in that effort within DNR and now as a board member of the River Alliance of Wisconsin.

The River Alliance is committed to advocating for the river because we feel that is the best way to illustrate the need for a procedure that results in a "Public Interest Flow Regime." The state of Wisconsin does not utilize such a procedure even though many other states have been using one for decades with much success. A "Public Interest Flow Regime" identifies all the major uses of a river and then sets limiting flows and elevations that protect each use. For example, the spawning needs of a given fish species may depend on flows and depths in a certain month. Wetlands need to be flooded to a certain water elevation for several months each year. Riparian landowners may be flooded or dried up if flows or elevations are not timed to the correct seasons of use. To determine a "Public Interest Flow Regime," all the known uses are arrayed and limiting flows/elevations are selected and timed to ensure that public rights are protected while private rights are allowed. Although it is impossible to give everyone everything they want, this procedure results in the best compromise for all and provides the best factual basis for further challenges, if necessary, from interested parties.



As the old saying has it, *"We can't all live upstream."*

The WDNR has done a good job of describing the issues in its environmental assessment document pertaining to the Manitowish system. The next step is to issue a flow order that addresses all the issues. An order was drafted this summer and was set for public hearing in August, but the hearing was postponed when the Wisconsin Supreme Court handed down its decision on the Koshkonong case. That decision ruled that WDNR did not adequately consider economic impacts to lakefront property owners when issuing a flow/elevation order for lake Koshkonong on the Rock River in southern Wisconsin; and the court remanded the case for reconsideration of that evidence. The WDNR will review the case and decide what, if any, effect it has on the Manitowish River case over the winter months and release its order next year with hearings to be held when the "snowbirds" are back.

It is my opinion that the flow order should be a "Public Interest Flow Regime" that contains the following features to protect the public interest while assuring private uses of the water.

- A one foot drawdown instead of the existing 3.5 foot winter drawdown will ensure adequate water in storage for flooding wetlands, sturgeon spawning habitat protection, and proper filling of the lake system on time.
- An October 1 drawdown start date, instead of the current late November start, will reduce downstream high-flow damage in the fall.
- A 230 cfs min flow in spring will protect fish spawning with a 125cfs fallback minimum flow during drought years as determined by the USGS flow model instead of the current ad hoc method. This will insure flooding of the downstream

wetlands at the proper time for wetland habitat protection in spring.

- An "adaptive management" provision will insure regular review of the order to allow modifications that will improve efficiency over time and insure adequate enforcement of the legally binding order.

- The licensee should be responsible for flow monitoring costs necessary to enforce the order, not the WDNR.

This brief summary of the necessary components of a good "Public Interest Flow Regime" is not meant to be complete, but gives some important features that must be included to protect the system. The River Alliance will monitor the case and attempt to ensure the order protects the public interest. We have recently developed a "River Action Fund" that we will use to advocate for rivers statewide. Our board has authorized use of this fund to intervene if the Manitowish River flow order does not fully protect the public interest.

[Editors' Note: The seasonal variations in the rates of flow and levels of the Manitowish River have a measurable impact on the water levels in the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake. As a consequence, the debate over the flow regime at the Rest Lake dam is a matter of direct interest to members of our association and to all users of the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area.]

Cabin Fever Party Returns!

Due to popular demand, the association will once again host a

Cabin Fever Party

this winter.

It will take place at 5 p.m., Saturday, January 25, 2014, at the Mercer Community Center. Here's a chance for you to greet your neighbors and meet property owners from other areas of the flowage. Plan to bring a dish to share as well as a good flowage story or two. Mark it on your calendar today!

2014 Annual Meeting:

Mark Your Calendars!!!

The Annual Meeting of the TFFTL POA will be held on

June 21st, 2014.

Location to be announced. Currently the Mercer Community Center is not available, and we have reserved the smaller Haines Meeting room.

If we opt for a larger location, we will let you know closer to the date.

Purple Loosestrife Update

By Kit Bogenschneider

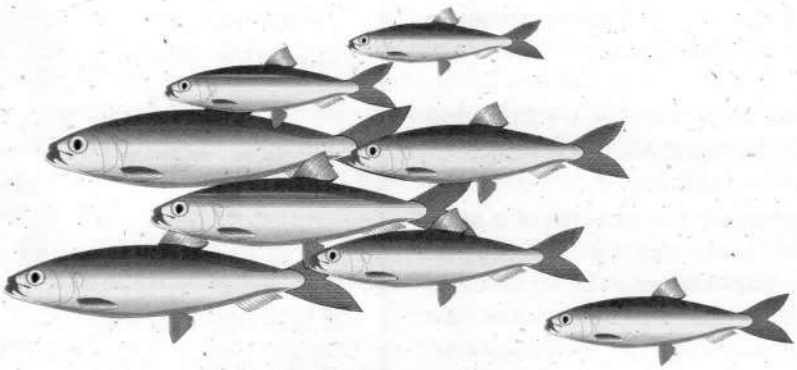
With a grant from Xcel Energy, and in partnership with the WDNR and the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department, association property owners are waging a fierce war against the beautiful but aggressive purple loosestrife. In the past low-water years, it has often felt like a losing battle because the exposed beaches and sandbars made perfect habitat for new colonies of these invasive plants.

This year 30 volunteers participated in our "search and destroy" mission. We were aided by the high water, which made it easier to get into the nooks and crannies around the flowage, and which kept sandbars and beaches under two or more feet of water. We were somewhat confused by the delayed bloom, as the plants are normally found by mid-July. This year they did not start blooming until August, so we pushed back our survey until August 1st. We saw much less purple loosestrife than in previous years. Whether that was because the plants were drowned, or because our survey was still too early, I don't know; but we can be sure this plant will be back again next year. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers. I hope even more of you will join the fight next summer!

Fish Mangement Plans Spawned

By Jeff Malison

On September 25th, the fish management group (committee? sub-committee?) of the TFFTL-Property Owners Association held its first meeting in quite a long time. In my humble opinion we had a good turnout and a great meeting! Group members attending were myself (chair), Jeff Wilson, Hank Carstens, Randy Schubert, Arnie Popp, and Christa Reinert. Also attending were local guides Jerry Hartigan and Jeff Robl, and fish biologist Lawrence Eslinger and fish technician Jason Folstad from the WDNR.



Well-Managed Fish

We were fortunate to have a guest speaker for this meeting: UW-Madison post-doc Jereme Gaeta. Jereme gave a GREAT presentation on various issues relating to his research, including the importance of coarse woody habitat in the littoral zone, impacts of water levels and drought on fisheries, and bass/walleye interactions. A huge "thank you" should be given to Jereme.

Jereme's talk, which spanned the entire two hours of the meeting, was interspersed with discussions on what activities could be conducted to benefit the TFFTL fishery. Specific points were as follows:

- We developed a goal statement for our group, which is to identify, prioritize and pursue management strategies and actions that benefit fish populations in accordance with the surveyed opinions of POA members, and other TFFTL user groups, and WDNR policies and expertise.

- Fish cribs were discussed. Prior to this meeting, it had been agreed that no additional fish cribs would be installed in the near future. Lawrence pointed out that over 400 cribs have been installed, and the value of adding additional cribs is questionable.

- Research indicates that expanding populations of largemouth bass, and perhaps smallmouth bass to a lesser extent, are acting to restrict walleye populations in many Wisconsin lakes. In the TFFTL, the largemouth bass population does not currently appear to be problematic. Nonetheless, Lawrence indicated that a change in bass regulations will be proposed. [New regulations would apply to both smallmouth and largemouth bass; current WDNR policy does not allow for separate regulations for bass species within the same waterbody. Ed.] If approved through the WDNR rule-making process, beginning in 2016 the new bass regulation for the TFFTL will be 3 fish per day with a protected slot of 14"-18". There was agreement that keeping and eating some bass from the TFFTL should be an activity promoted by our group.

- Woody habitat was discussed. Installing woody habitat in the pelagic ("deep water") zone (e.g., using existing downed trees) might not be permitted by WDNR due to navigational concerns should the trees come loose from their moorings and float. Moving existing downed trees into the littoral zone ("fish sticks") might be an activity useful for improving fish populations, but first we need to study and characterize the existing littoral zone of the TFFTL.

Managing fish in 1932.
Image courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society

Based on these discussions, the group tentatively decided to move forward with the following activities:

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Meet Matt Meade

By Mike Hittle

The Mercer Ranger Station and southern Iron County at last have a new conservation warden to fill the post left open by the retirement of Stuart Pfeiffer. Matthew (Matt) Meade, who assumed his new duties in June of 2013, was attracted to this position both for family reasons (he grew up in the Minocqua area) and for the natural attractions of the northern lakes region. Prior to coming to Mercer, he had been the sole conservation warden in Marinette County for eight years. Before that, Matt had spent three years in a split-time WDNR job, working as a ranger in the Northern Highlands State Forest and as a wildlife technician at the Black Earth Natural Area in Dane County. His career in natural resource conservation began with a stint in the United States Forest Service in Montana.

Warden Meade with newly acquired (NOT in Iron County) gun rack and lots and lots of moose stew.

When asked about the dimensions of his job, Matt was quick to point out that the responsibilities of conservation wardens had expanded incrementally, but steadily, from their original "hook and bullet" tasks: that is, catching and citing violators of fish and game laws. Today, in addition to that core function, wardens enforce ATV and snowmobile regulations; check on the legality of any filling of wetlands or modifications of shoreland; investigate timber thefts; and enforce laws pertaining to aquatic invasives. Wardens also serve as educators, helping out with hunter safety classes and teaching courses on such topics as turkey or bear hunting. Conservation wardens may also be called upon to assist other law enforcement personnel in times of special need.

Warden Meade feels that he benefited in his training as a warden from working alongside a Field Training Officer—a veteran warden assigned to mentor him. That experience helped him develop a measured approach to carrying out his duties in the field. First of all, he believes it important for wardens to treat people as they (the wardens) would want to be treated in the same circumstances. Second, he believes there are times when a little education, or a warning, or both, are appropriate actions for a warden to take, and there are times when citations are absolutely called for. In sorting out which is which, Matt makes a distinction between breaking the law (e.g., not having a full complement of life jackets on board) and violating or poaching (one fisherman with 10 walleyes). The former case does break the law and can be dangerous, for sure, but the latter despoils the resources that belong to all sportsmen. There is no question that Warden Meade's priorities fall squarely on the side of protecting the resources.

The new warden recognizes that it can sometimes be difficult to keep up with changing fish and game regulations, what with some initiatives coming from the WDNR and others from the state legislature. To make up-to-date information available to sportsmen, the WDNR has developed a couple of useful smart-phone apps: one enables fishermen to find out seasons and bag limits for all species for any lake they are on; another contains information on shooting times. All one needs is a GPS equipped cell phone and a nearby tower. Sometimes, however, it helps to ask a person. In this instance, I asked Matt if motor trolling is permitted on the Flowage. The answer is NO. The governor has delayed implementation of that regulation pending broader public input. If you have questions for Matt Meade, he can be reached at (715) 476-7845.

Warden Meade strongly recommends that people who witness violations contact the DNR tip line: 1-800-TIP-WDNR. Be prepared to give the person who takes your call as precise information as possible as to the location of the violation. That will enable the reporting system to get word to the appropriate warden in an expeditious fashion.

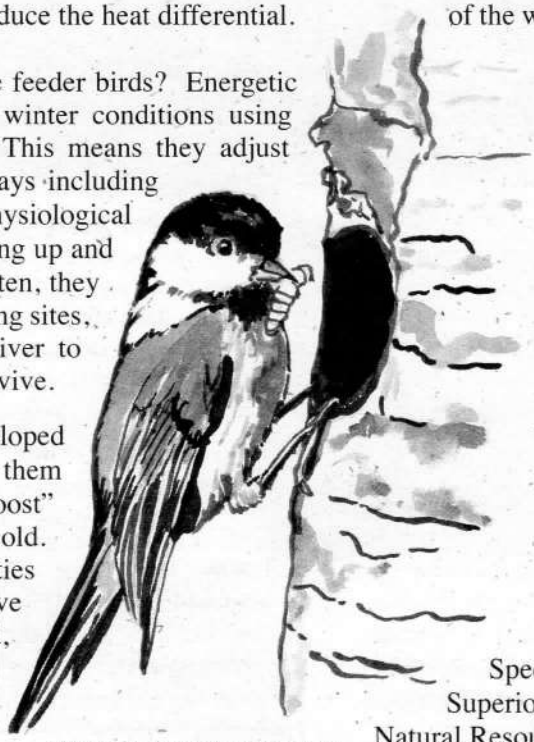
Surviving the Winter - Wildlife Strategies

Editors Note: Getting ready for winter can cause stress for northwoods residents, especially if wood piles aren't finished, boats are not put away for the winter, or home construction projects are yet to be buttoned up for the season. For northwoods wildlife, winter requires unique adaptations to help them survive the stressors of the season. The following article is an excerpt of a column printed in Ashland's Bottom Line monthly paper last winter. It is written by Diane Daulton, who works for the WDNR in Ashland as an invasive species program coordinator.

So what is adaptation? Animals (including humans) adapt to better survive a hostile environment. While we put on winter boots and use technology to stay warm, wildlife have ingenious adaptations like hibernation in black bears or camouflage. How well would a snowshoe hare fare if it didn't have white fur in winter (or brown in summer for that matter)?

Ever wonder how a goose with such apparently un-insulated feet can stand for hours on the ice in sub-zero temps? UW-Extension Wildlife expert David Drake explains, "Waterfowl are specially adapted to reduce heat transfer." To begin, in cold temperatures, the amount of heat lost from any body part is directly relational to the amount of heat present. Geese have evolved intertwined arterial and venous blood vessels in their legs that reduce the amount of heat going to the feet in the first place and that then warm the returning blood. The warm arterial blood and cool venous blood mix to reduce the heat differential.

- What about our favorite little feeder birds? Energetic little chick-a-dees adjust to winter conditions using "seasonal acclimatization". This means they adjust seasonally in a variety of ways including behavioral, physical, and physiological changes. In addition to fluffing up and tucking their feet up more often, they share communal cavity roosting sites, cache food supplies, and shiver to produce energy needed to survive.
- Ruffed grouse have developed behavior changes that help them stay warm. They "snow roost" during periods of extreme cold. They use the insulating properties of the snow as an effective barrier against severe cold, resting under the snow until the severe weather passes. Folks who snowshoe or cross-country ski in winter are often surprised when a grouse explodes unexpectedly out of the snow.

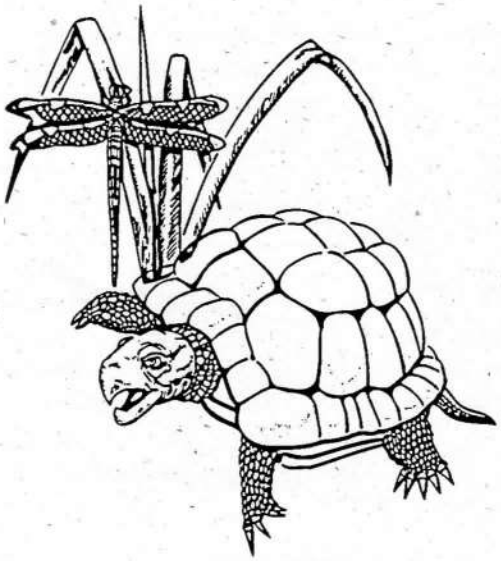


Illustrations by Terry Daulton

- Perhaps the most extreme example…in nearby wetlands and lake margins, tiny wood frogs exhibit some amazing adaptations to winter. They are among the first frogs to call in spring, often when winter snow still softens little margins of woods with patches of white. Unlike other frogs that bury in lake sediments, wood frogs are masters of cryogenics. Their bodies can survive freezing and thawing cycles many times throughout the winter/spring season, principally because they have an anti-freeze like substance in their blood. Kenneth Storey, a professor of biochemistry at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, studies the molecular mechanics that allow wood frogs to freeze and thaw. According to National Geographic News (Feb 2007), Storey states, "Special proteins in their blood, called nucleating proteins, cause the water in the blood to freeze first. This ice, in turn, sucks most of the water out of the frog's cells. At the same time the frog's liver starts making large amounts of glucose—a type of sugar—which packs into cells and props them up." The phenomenon is further explained when the frogs thaw, water slowly flows back into the cells, blood starts flowing, and the frog revives. In Storey's lab, ice thaws in about 20 minutes and a frog's heart begins to beat in about as much time. He stated, "Once the heart starts, it pumps the blood around the animal and the animal starts to revive, then it starts to gulp, then it starts to breathe, then it starts to hop away." Wood frogs are not the only critters that have adapted using anti-freeze proteins; others include spring peepers, tiny snow fleas, Antarctic fish, grasses, and bacteria and algae.

Diane Daulton is an Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach Specialist working in the Lake Superior region for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

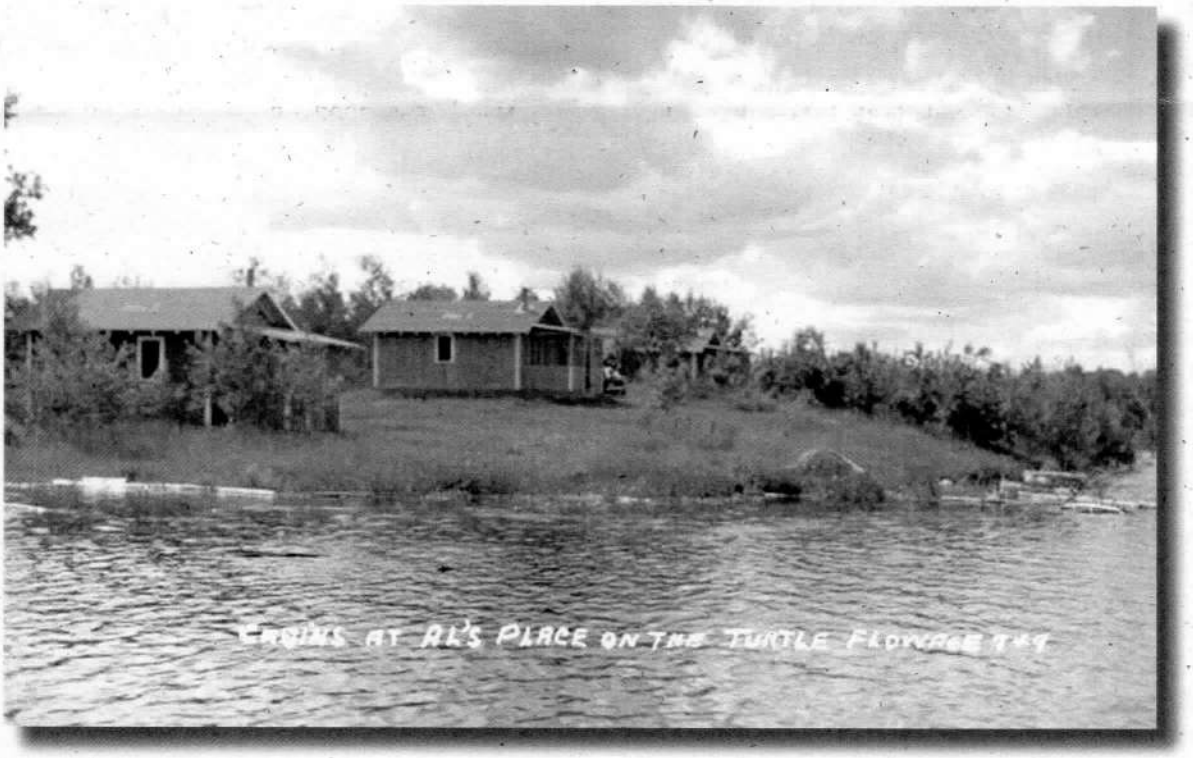
Fish Management *Cont'd. from page 6*



- Encourage and help fund a study using side-scanning sonar to characterize the littoral zone of the TFFTL. Currently, there are university research projects and private companies using side-scan technology to map and quantify fish habitat. Information such as this would provide beneficial data for fisheries management of the flowage (e.g. identifying areas that could benefit from future habitat-enhancing projects) while serving as a baseline to document short and long-term changes with respect to flowage habitat (such as the loss and/or gain of wood in the system).

- If the new bass regulation passes, the group would conduct activities to promote the keeping and eating of some bass.

The group also decided to hold another meeting in early 2014 to discuss the details of future activities.



Al Koshak's Resort in 1932. Not exactly among towering pines.
Image courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society

President's Letter, *Cont'd. from Page 2*

can have a significant role in the establishment and spread of invasive species. Their ability to move seeds and plant material on wheels and in mud has been documented. Our association currently conducts extensive work to prevent and eradicate invasive species. The expansion of ATV trails could endanger this work. Second, many of the tributary areas of the TFF contain extensive wetlands. ATV trails in these tributary areas could increase erosion and non-point source pollution and impact sensitive plant communities. In fact, the trail route we opposed included crossing an extensive wetland complex. Third, ATV trails can impact aesthetics through noise pollution and dust, especially as traffic on them is particularly active during warmer months when residents and visitors are outdoors or have windows open.

Member Opinions

Our 2009 member survey asked: "What are the main reasons you spend time at the flowage?" Out of 15 listed activities, the top three were fishing (108), peace and tranquility (96), scenic/natural environment (83). At the bottom of the list were: ATV use (11), Trapping (5) and personal watercraft use (3). ATV use was not a high priority for our members. Correspondingly, when we asked about issues of concern, ATV use was not a high concern, indicating that the current level of use was not a major problem. Respondents did place aquatic invasive species and water quality among their top five concerns.

Existing Recreation Opportunities

Iron County's Outdoor Recreation Plan states that "Iron County boasts Wisconsin's largest ATV system...with more than 250 miles of trails". The TFSWA provides an opportunity for visitors and residents seeking recreation compatible with low ATV use. With the large number of existing trail miles for ATV's in the county, we would suggest that the areas around the TFF are more appropriate to other forms of recreation, such as bike trails, ski trails, paddling trails, hunter walking trails, etc.

A Seat at the Table in Planning

Finally, should Iron County or the Town of Mercer consider specific trails in areas adjacent to the flowage, Trude Lake, or nearby tributary streams, our association would like to participate in the planning process for those trails. In that way we could insure that the interests of our members are considered and environmental and aesthetic impacts minimized.

At present, the Mercer Dusty Loons ATV club has worked with the Town of Mercer to create an ATV route on Popko Circle--pending permissions to construct a trail on private and county lands. This route allows local access to businesses and connects local residents on Popko Circle to the ATV trails in town. Our association has NOT taken a position against ATV trails on county or private land, or against the ATV route on Popko Circle. Should the currently proposed route fail for lack of the necessary permissions, any substitute proposal that would run through the TFSWA would require an amendment to the Master Plan, a process which would take at least two years and would require public hearings.

Some members of the association have suggested that the board acted improperly by taking a position without a poll of the general membership on this issue. Our by-laws state "Subject to directives of annual and special meetings and these By-laws, the Board of Directors shall have authority over the activities and assets of the association." The by-laws do allow for polling members through a referendum or holding a special meeting, and perhaps we should consider doing another member survey of interests in the near future to get the most up-to-date opinions. However, for the current issue, we felt that the existing polling data and the mission statement of the association clearly supported our actions.

There were also suggestions that our association was not supporting Mercer area businesses. The association mission is "To maintain, protect and enhance the quality of the lake and its surroundings for the collective interests of the members and the general public." We work cooperatively with the businesses on mutually shared goals like fish habitat, invasive species control, etc. but our mission is not the same as those of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage (Business) Association or the Chamber of Commerce.

I am sure that this is not the first controversial issue that the association board has addressed, not will it be the last. We have, in fact, lost a few members based on our position. I am hopeful, however, that with our continued work on the many projects that benefit businesses and landowners alike, our friends and neighbors will understand that each organization has its own mission and focus, and while we may occasionally be at odds, our greater shared goals still remain worthy of support.

Please continue to share your views with the board, whether you agree or disagree with our positions. Civil dialog is essential to democratic processes and to helping guide our board in developing programs and responding to issues.

The Unabridged Story of the Trude Lake Bridge

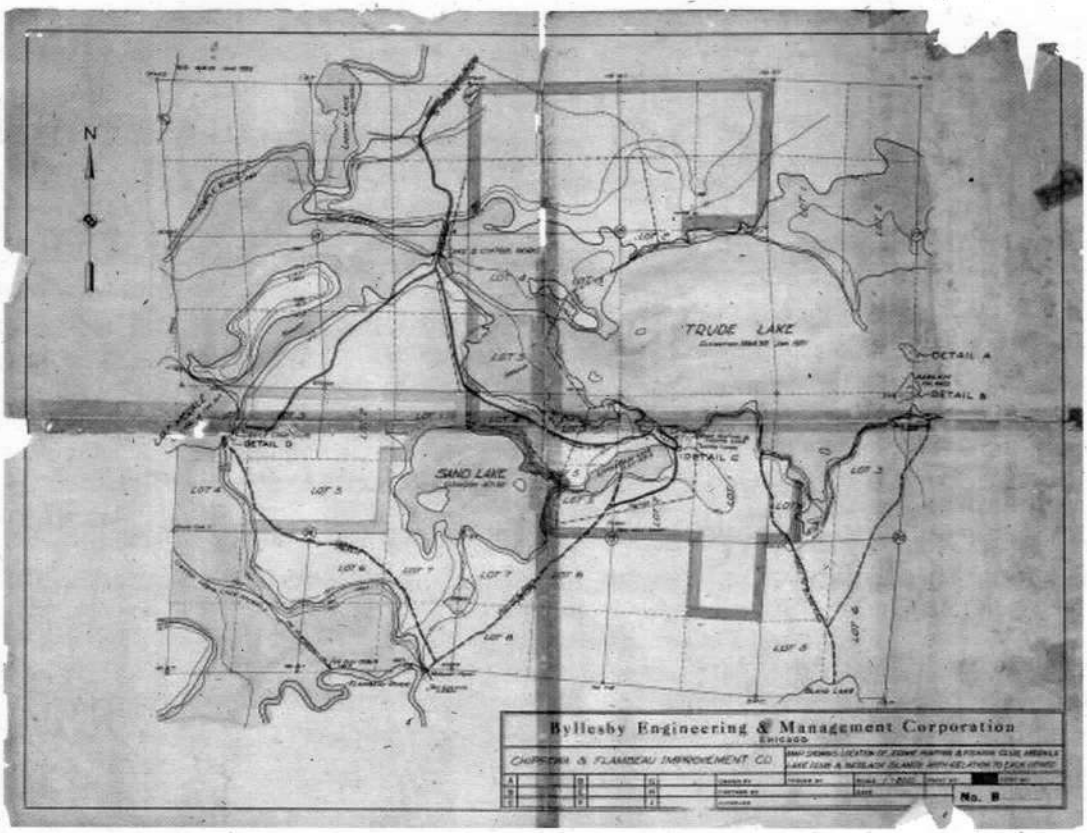
By Mike Hittle

Some readers of this newsletter may well think that the editors have no imagination, since we keep printing the same stories issue after issue. These readers may have a point, but it should be noted in the editors' defense that we do change data (on water levels) and dates (on government projects). Case in point: the Trude Lake Bridge. In our last episode of this saga, the Town Chairman, Mr. Kichak, was quoted as saying that he "hopes to get it in this year." That year would be 2013. But much water has flowed under the rusty culvert since then, and many axles have been tested by the roadway. There is still no bridge, but there is a New Target Date: the fall of 2014.

In unexpected economy move, Town of Mercer seeks authorization of zipline in place of Trude Lake bridge.

This date emerged from a meeting during this past summer of interested parties to the project: Chris Paulik, TFSWA Property Manager; Bonnie Banaszak of the Mercer Town Board; John · Simonsen, the WDNR road projects person; Jeff Malison from the TFFTLPOA; and a representative of C.W. Engineering, of Weston, Wisconsin, the construction manager for the job. At this meeting it emerged that almost all the pieces were in place for the project to go ahead: a newly hired engineering firm; the continued availability of state and local funding; and general agreement on the nature and scope of the project. One new issue did emerge: if more than one-tenth of an acre of wetland will be affected by the project, wetland mitigation rules will come into play. In that case a hearing, followed by 30 days for comments, will be called for. But that mitigation process should not be cause for any significant delay. As for the actual timing, the participants in the meeting felt that fall was the best time for actual construction. Spring poses problems with spawning fish, and summer has increased road traffic. Moreover, lower water levels in the fall will make construction easier. Hence the decision to go ahead in the autumn of 2014.

If all goes as planned, Driftwood will only have two more articles on the Trude Lake bridge: one to take note of the beginning of construction, and the other to celebrate the completion of the bridge.



Chippewa and Flambeau Improvement Company map of Trude Lake, 1925. The heavy lined boundary markers denote property - - on both the north and south sides of the lake -- owned by the Jerome Fishing and Hunting Club.

Image courtesy of the Wisconsin Historical Society

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Driftwood

The newsletter of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake Property Owners' Association, Inc.

— 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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If you would like to contact the Association electronically, please visit our website www.tfftl.org and search under "Board Members-DNR Contacts"