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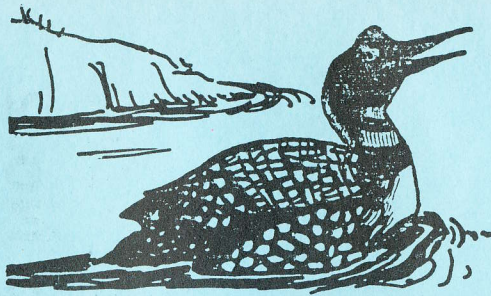
*A Newsletter for People
Interested in Wisconsin's
Inland Lakes*



*Lake
Tides*

**APRIL 1980
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IN THE WAKE OF A LOON

In the last two issues of Lake Tides we discussed the issue of voting by property owners who reside outside the lake district. Assembly Bill 1124 introduced by Rep. Cal Potter and his colleagues, passed the Assembly by a vote of 91 to 5 and was concurred in by the Senate.

Under the bill, a referendum will be held at the general election in November. The bill did not pass soon enough to make the April ballot. There was also some uncertainty as to whether the April election met the requirements of the Constitution.

Unless vetoed by the Governor, all Wisconsin residents who vote next fall will be asked the following question on their ballot:

Shall state law be amended to permit persons —
who own property in a public inland lake protection
and rehabilitation district and who are U.S. citi-
zens and 18 years of age or older to vote at meetings
of the district?

At the present time, Chapter 33 clearly permits residents and property owners to vote on projects. Virtually all districts have adopted by-laws permitting full participation by property owners on all matters. However, the State Constitution requires a referendum before the right to vote is enlarged. No referendum was held on Chapter 33 when it was enacted in 1974.

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We do not expect any difficulties regarding past decisions of the districts. There will be some uncertainty at annual meetings this summer. We will offer recommendations for handling that uncertainty at the workshops for commissioners in June (see page 9).

Sincerely,

George Gibson
George Gibson
Lake Management Specialists

Lowell Klessig
Lowell Klessig
Lake Management Specialists

ECO NOTES

This issue of "Eco Notes" is a contribution from Rick Newton, Staff Biologist at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Northland College, Ashland, Wisconsin.

The Vanishing Loon?

Recently many people have been quite concerned over the diminishing numbers of loons in the northeastern and mid-western states. As a result of this concern, the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College began Wisconsin Project Loon Watch to study the distribution and nesting success of the common loon. A major amount of data is supplied by volunteer cooperators that report loon activities in their area.

The one thing these people have in common is a keen interest in the common loon and its future. Most of these people either live on a lake or visit it often, enabling them to keep track of the loons throughout the season. In many cases, they report dates of arrival and departure, as well as nesting success. We have supplemented our cooperators' reports with the notes of early naturalists such as Arthur Cleveland Bent (1919); he, and others reported loons nesting on lakes as far south as northern Illinois.

Over the last two years, we have only been able to document nesting loons in 20 of the northern counties in Wisconsin and two counties in central Wisconsin. This shows a reduction of 2/3 of the state as breeding range within the last 75 years.

During the course of the project, we have identified some of the causes of this reduction. The most obvious of these is one of

the most perplexing: the loss of habitat due to shoreline development on many of the lakes throughout the state. This eliminates most of the prime nesting sites.

The loon is a water bird. It is built to swim and dive. Once airborne, it is a strong flyer, but since it is so adept in water, it can hardly walk. This makes it necessary for the bird to nest very close to water. Nesting on floating mats or emergent vegetation along the shore enables them to enter the water at the slightest sign of danger. The adults spend over 95% of their time incubating the eggs. If forced to leave the nest, the eggs will chill. If the adults are kept away for very long, the development of the young chick will cease.

To compound this problem, the birds return to our northern lakes early in the spring as soon as the ice breaks up. They immediately begin nesting activities. This means that they are mid-way in their incubation period when most of the cottage owners and resorters return to the lake country around Memorial Day weekend. In a growing number of cases, these northern divers find that they are too close to a summer cottage or a boat ramp or other human activity zone that keeps them off the nest. Fishermen, hikers, motorboaters, and canoeists that use the shoreline or water areas near the shore find themselves approached by an angry loon that is trying to defend its nest. This display, "the penguin dance," is very impressive and tempts even the most cautious onlooker to stay and watch this fantastic ritual. But remember, while you watch, the eggs are chilling. Leave the area immediately so the parent can return to its nest.

The birds' nests are also threatened by small predators like Herring Gulls and raccoons. These opportunistic feeders prey on loon eggs if given the chance.

There is hope, however! In areas where people have decided to help, there have been dramatic improvements within a year or two. In most cases, all it takes is to minimize use of a bay or cove where the loons are nesting during May and early June. Later, loons must be given a wide berth so they won't be separated from their young. On lakes with high use or where the shoreline has been extensively developed, it may be necessary to establish a sanctuary that is posted to restrict human activity during the nesting season.

If we are to ensure a future for this unique bird that has been so much a part of the lake country and a part of anyone who has experienced their laughing music, we need your help. We need people to report the activities of the birds in their area and to encourage others to respect this bird and give it room. If you're interested in contributing in any way to the effort to save the loon in Wisconsin, contact:

Rick Newton
Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute
Northland College
Ashland, WI 54806
(715) 682-4531 EXT. 218

LAKE DISTRICT INFORMATION PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

COLD WATER SURVIVAL

Your response to the Eco Notes on Cold Water Survival and Hypothermia have been encouraging and I am now investigating the possibility of conducting local information programs for interested districts, lake associations, service groups and other organizations or individuals. If you think such a program would benefit your group, please contact me.

DRINKING WATER PROTECTION

The information program on residential well water quality (including a screening test of your household drinking water) will be offered again this summer. As usual, time and equipment will limit the number of programs we can conduct and lake districts or communities will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like to have a program for your community, please let me know.

Inquiries for further information or to request either program should be directed to:

George Gibson
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Environmental Resources Unit
1815 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 262-1369

NEW LAKE STUDIES

The following lake districts are initiating feasibility studies which have begun or will begin in the fall of this year.

Big Muskego Lake, Waukesha County

Campbellsport Lake, Fond du Lac County

Easton Lake, Adams County

Lake George, Pierce County

Lake Iroquois, Waushara County

Lake Jacqueline, Portage County

Lake Oseola, Trempealeau County

Parfrey Millpond--Richland Center, Richland County

Silver Lake, Manitowoc County

ACID RAIN IN WISCONSIN: STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

Statewide Acid Rain Conference

In conjunction with Earth Day '80 activities, we are co-sponsoring a conference on "Acid Rain in Wisconsin" with the Sierra Club. The conference will be held on April 19th at the Wisconsin Center, University of Wisconsin Campus--Madison. The agenda follows:

8:20 a.m. Registration and Coffee
9:20 WELCOME
9:30 Conference Objectives
9:45 Sources, Transport and Deposition
10:15 Impacts on Nutrient Status of Plants and Soils
10:45 BREAK
11:00 Impacts on Lakes and Fish
11:30 Long-Term Impacts on Ecosystems
12:00 P.M. LUNCH
12:30 Luncheon Address
Senator Gaylord Nelson
1:15 Federal Initiatives on Acid Rain
1:45 Technological Options
2:15 Regulatory Options
2:50 Energy versus Environment: A Panel
4:00 ADJOURN

To register, send \$8.00 to:

Acid Rain Conference
Registration Department
The Wisconsin Center
702 Langdon Street
Madison, WI 53706

LAKES IN THE '80s--REGIONAL CONFERENCES

If you miss the Madison session on April 19th, you can still learn more about the acid rain dilemma at this year's regional Lake Management Conferences. We will be incorporating much of the material developed at the Madison Conference in the five regional sessions (especially Superior and Minocqua). Other important organizational and management topics will also be covered.

Detailed brochures will be mailed later, but for the moment, you might want to mark your calendar for one of the following dates. All programs will run from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

1980 Wisconsin Lake Management Conferences

June 12th	Eau Claire, Holiday Inn
June 13th	Superior, Rothwell Student Center, Univ. of Wisconsin
June 18th	Minocqua, Holiday Inn on Hwy 51
June 19th	Green Lake, Green Lake Convention Center
June 20th	Waukesha, Waukesha County Exposition Center