



# The Power of Storytelling Harnessing the Right Elements to Help Change the Public Narrative

By Jen Rubin, Executive Producer, Love Wisconsin

*We know the science, the devastating data about our waters, and have our own experiences of the impact of weather changes. The damage to fish habitat, the increase of toxin-producing algae blooms, and erosion around coasts from a lack of ice cover. For many of us, the damage and loss coupled with the urgency of what needs to change is so obvious that it can be hard to communicate with people who are not similarly aware. We think if only they read X. If only they could hear Y person talking about Z. We share our newsletter, post that article on social media, update the website with updated resources. But, how can we tell if all of this is working? Are we going about it the wrong way? What if the people we want to influence don't read our reports or watch our long videos? Let's try another approach.*

**W**e all have those powerful childhood memories we like to share. You know the ones. The first time you went fishing and cried when you were told the fish couldn't come home as a pet. The perfect summer afternoon with your best friends on the backwaters and sloughs of the Mississippi River. These anecdotes get into our muscle memory of who we are and what we value.

I have led storytelling workshops in libraries, classrooms, prisons, and community organizations. I have produced over 100 stories for Love Wisconsin, a statewide digital storytelling project of Wisconsin Humanities. And while I

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Leading a storytelling workshop, Jen Rubin and Takeyla Benton are pictured here with a creatively designed poster by Sherrill Knezal from meaningfulmarks.net.

Provided by Jen Rubin

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Provided by Jen Rubin



Jen Rubin leads a storytelling workshop at the Wisconsin Water Library at UW-Madison.

am clear eyed about what storytelling can and cannot do, I fully believe that an authentically shared, well-crafted story can be a powerful tool that introduces or changes a public narrative.

Personal stories have a universal appeal. None of our life experiences exist in isolation. I think a key to telling a story that can make a

difference is adding enough history and data to contextualize it— but not so much that you smother it.

There are basic principles of story structure that make stories a special way of communicating. The first element is choosing your story’s foundation. Each one of us is made up of a million moments... a million stories. Some of them are big moments. That time the Kickapoo River overflowed its banks and flooded your family’s farm. But our stories are also cumulative. Our everyday stories add up to something bigger. A memory is a moment in time, it is the seed of a story. It might be dramatic, it might be poignant, but it is not the story. It can be interesting on its own, but when a memory is connected to something universal, to a shared human emotion, then it becomes a

story that strangers might remember. You need to sift through your life experiences and choose what might matter to others.

Once you settle on the memory or the anecdote, determine what you are trying to accomplish with a story. A story can really only have one point; you can’t ask it to accomplish too much. You want to build around a detail-rich memory. And you want to know what is the emotional content... the beating heart of the story. One of the things we have in common is that we appreciate an opportunity to think about our own lives. Our experiences and the facts of our lives might be quite different, but we have all felt the same things. This is why it is important to think about the emotional core of a story. Listening to someone tell a story that connects in some way to our own story will resonate and stay with us.

Here are some questions to ask when you want to tell an impactful story:

### How do you introduce yourself for this story?

Connect us to what we need to know to be on your side and to understand why you are choosing to tell this particular story.



Stanley Schock

### What is the story about?

Climate change and what you think about it; that is a topic. What is the story? In one of our Love Wisconsin stories, April Stone, a black ash basket weaver showed the impact the loss of black ash trees would have on an ecosystem and on her cultural traditions through the story of her craft.

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*When we feel passionate and urgent about an issue, it can be hard not to try to convince people by pointing out the facts and the mountains of data.*



### Ignite Your Inner Storyteller

Learn and practice your own storytelling during the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention in Stevens Point this coming spring. Two full days of sessions will be dedicated to the art of storytelling and other communication strategies and tools. In addition, check out these pre- and post-Convention workshops.

#### Storytelling-related Workshops:

- Crafting Your Water Stories (Storyteller Jen Rubin)*
- Responding to Nature Through Writing (Author John Bates)*
- Making Your Voice Heard: Creating Connection through Song (Singer/Songwriter Ken Lonquist)*

See the full agenda with workshop and session descriptions at [wisconsinwaterweek.org](http://wisconsinwaterweek.org).





# Water Stories from Love Wisconsin

Love Wisconsin started in 2014 and intentionally built its audience through social media to create a regionally and politically diverse audience and build community through shared stories. People ‘follow’ us on Facebook and our stories show up in their feeds. We produce long-form narrative stories and accompany each story with high-quality photos.

A few years ago Love Wisconsin did a story series featuring people working to improve the health of waterways in their communities. This work can be complicated to talk about. But these are not technical stories. Our stories are always human first—story first. Then, we add in the history and the data to contextualize the story.

We want to amplify the good through storytelling. We tell these stories to show the people in our communities that are taking their personal experiences and technical skills and working to make positive change on the issues that are both dear to them and of critical importance to our planet. These are regular people motivated by the same impulses we all have.

Andi Stempniak



▲ Buzz Sorge from Osseo was a limnologist at the Wisconsin DNR. He has a lot to say about lake management and how to improve watershed health. But the emotional core of his story is that he is just a guy who grew up fishing on clear water with his dad and wants his grandchildren to have the same experiences he had growing up.

► Paul DeMain is a water protector on Lac Courte Oreille Reservation. He is very knowledgeable about how the quality of water impacts the wild rice there. The personal stakes raised in this story are rooted

Julian Emerson



in his knowledge and culture, and the fact that water is sacred in his Native community, which led him to be called to be a water protector and speak for things that don’t have a voice.

Jade Iseri-Ramos



◀ Wilneisha Smith from Milwaukee works at ReFlow and educates the community about why reducing the amount of

rainwater flowing into the sewer system during heavy rainstorms is important. The universal thread of this story is the connection to family practices, what she learned from her great-grandmother who dechlorinated tap water for the health of her beloved plants.

Karen Brennon



► MaryJo Gingras is the Ashland County Conservationist. She is very knowledgeable about soil erosion and water quality and the impact of draining wetlands to build roads and develop homes. The personal and community stakes of her story

are interconnected as she shows through the details of the devastating impact of the 2018 flooding in her community, including pumping more than 100 gallons of water from her childrens’ bedrooms.

# Programmatic Excellence

## Meet Some Lake Stewardship Award Winners

Capacity  
Corner  
Nov.  
2024

By Sara Windjue, Leadership and Capacity Development Specialist, Extension Lakes



Five aspects of Programmatic Capacity include:

- ◆ Leadership,
- ◆ Completion of demonstration projects,
- ◆ Growing expertise,
- ◆ Access to funding, and
- ◆ Access to community power.

You will see how the following examples showcase these five aspects.

*Two individuals who have been integral to the Black Oak Lake Preservation Foundation are Walt Bates and the late John Annin. Of the pair, Dean Premo states, "I cannot overstate my admiration for John Annin and Walt Bates as individuals who epitomize what lake stewardship should be. Descriptors that come to mind include enthusiastic, dedicated, inquisitive, professional, patient, and kind."*

Black Oak Creative



Enjoying rowing on Black Oak Lake

### Black Oak Lake Preservation Foundation (BOLPF)

Black Oak Lake is a 564-acre lake in Vilas County that is home to a unique strain of lake trout and a remarkable place for residents, visitors, and wildlife. Winner of the 2022 WI Lake Stewardship Award for Programmatic Excellence for Lake Health, BOLPF has helped their watershed withstand recreational and development pressures.

- ◆ Through the Clean Boats, Clean Waters (CBCW) program, the people of Black Oak Lake monitor boat traffic at the landing between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. every day from opening day of fishing season in May until mid-October. Since 2017, Black Oak Lake Preservation Foundation has consistently dedicated over 2,000 hours to CBCW efforts, contacting over 3,000 people each year! In addition to monitoring their landing, trained volunteers are assigned to sections of the shoreline every two weeks to inspect for aquatic invasive species.
- ◆ Participating in the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network for over 20 years, BOLPF has kept meticulous records of water temperature, dissolved oxygen, clarity, conductivity, as well as phosphorus, nitrogen, and chlorophyll levels on their website (<https://blackoaklake.com/>).

- ◆ BOLPF has updated their lake management plan six times to stay current with the changing needs of the lake. Over the years, the Foundation has worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to survey the fishery and assist in the lake trout propagation program. This has allowed the DNR to maintain a healthy lake trout population and to spread these fish to other suitable waters in the area.

*(Continued on page 5)*





## Floyd Schmidt, Chute Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District #1

Chute Pond is a 440-acre lake in Oconto County, formed by the construction of Chute Pond Dam on the Oconto River in 1937, and the home of 2023 winner Floyd Schmidt. Although increasing programmatic capacity for your lake organization works best as a shared responsibility, oftentimes an individual like Floyd can spur a ripple effect of improvements.

- ◆ Floyd’s work with the District began in 2012 when he became treasurer and assisted with an aquatic plant survey on the pond. He very quickly learned the ropes of aquatic plant management including becoming quite good at plant identification. With Floyd leading the charge and working closely with the Oconto County Land Conservation Office and the DNR, Chute Pond has installed over 20 Healthy Lakes & Rivers best practices, including fish sticks, rain gardens, native plantings, diversions, and infiltration practices.
- ◆ Chute Pond is also active in Wisconsin’s Clean Boats, Clean Waters watercraft inspection program, as well as water quality sampling with the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network.
- ◆ Under Floyd’s guidance, the district has received numerous grants from Oconto County and the DNR, supporting additional projects such as lake management planning, Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed control, and education and outreach efforts. As an active member of the Oconto County Lakes and Waterways Association, Floyd was part of the group that convinced the county board to set aside \$230,000 for a Healthy Lakes cost share program. Because of this designated funding, multiple other lakes in Oconto County have installed Healthy Lakes & Rivers practices.

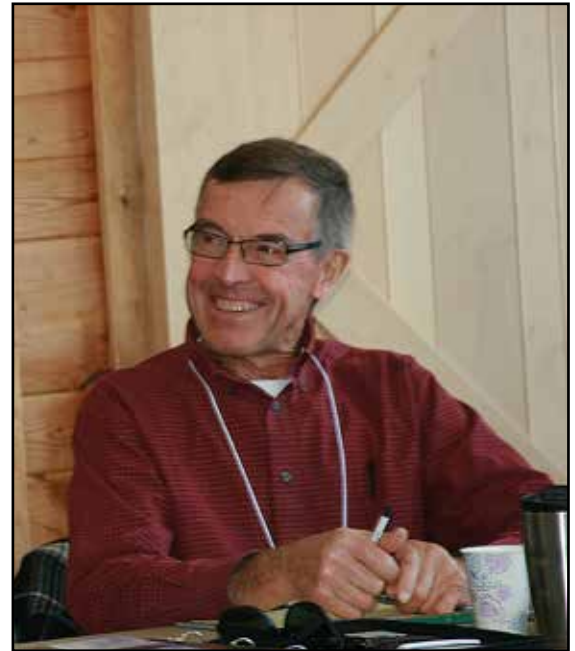
## Big Doctor Lake Association (BDLA)

Big Doctor Lake is a shallow 220-acre lake in Burnett County, and the association received this prestigious award in 2024. BDLA was founded as a way for the 26 property owners

(who are all members) to get to know each other and share lake information. In addition to providing educational resources to lake residents and neighbors, BDLA coordinates a Clean Boats, Clean Waters program, helps install Healthy Lakes & Rivers projects, and collects data with the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network.

- ◆ Water quality and recreational use have been hampered by harmful algal blooms, and the Siren municipal wastewater plant is a known contributor to the lake’s nutrients. In response, BDLA partnered with DNR, Burnett County Land Services, UW-Stout Discovery Center, and the Village of Siren to better understand and develop remedies for this issue using several studies. These partners compiled an array of data into a meaningful lake management plan and developed a phosphorus budget for the lake.
- ◆ These efforts led the lake association and its partners to apply for a DNR surface water grant to help share the cost of a large-scale alum treatment to control phosphorus released from lake sediments. Additionally, Siren installed an alum-drip system to lower the phosphorus in the effluent from the wastewater

*(Continued on page 7)*



*Floyd Schmidt enjoys a discussion at the Aldo Leopold Foundation as part of the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute.*

***It is not easy to find lake management success stories that represent well-organized protection of healthy waters. We too often wait until something goes wrong and then applaud those who labor to repair the damage.***



*Aerial shot of Big Doctor Lake*

Connor Niznick

# Lake Tides Update

By Eric Olson, Director and Lakes Specialist, Extension Lakes

If you would like to switch your mailed paper copy of this *Lake Tides* newsletter to an online version with color photos, scan this QR code and fill out the short form, or contact us at 715-346-2116 or [lakes@uwsp.edu](mailto:lakes@uwsp.edu).



We received some good feedback from our cover article in the last issue discussing the financial challenges facing *Lake Tides*. Many of you reached out to let us know that an email notification of the online version would be fine for your situation. Several folks shared that the paper copy is very important to them; we are happy to oblige. We truly appreciate your support for this educational publication.

We received a number of donations this fall to our endowment fund at the UWSP Foundation aimed to support *Lake Tides* over the long-term

and this too is welcomed and appreciated. Donations to the Foundation are tax deductible and we are using an endowment approach to

try and create a truly long-term framework for continuing *Lake Tides*. If you would like to support this effort, check out our newsletter page at [uwsp.edu/uwexlakes](http://uwsp.edu/uwexlakes) for details.

## Coming in 2025

We are planning to roll out a bi-monthly e-news service in 2025, *Lake Ripples*, that will allow us to bring you important, timely, and engaging updates related to Wisconsin's lakes. If you are signed up to receive *Lake Tides* online, you will get the very first issue of *Lake Ripples*. If you don't get *Lake Tides* online, you can still sign up for *Lake Ripples* by going to [uwsp.edu/uwexlakes](http://uwsp.edu/uwexlakes) and clicking *Newsletter*; there is a "subscribe now - it's FREE!" button that takes you to a quick sign-up form for both.

The more in-depth *Lake Tides* publication, whether you receive it in paper or electronically, should be arriving in your mailboxes around Memorial Day (issue 1), mid-September (issue 2), and early December (issue 3) of 2025. 🌊

## Who is the *Lake Tides* audience?

Our audience is people who are interested in Wisconsin's lakes – for many reasons. You do not have to live on a lake to enjoy and use this publication. We want to share our passion with you and hope you will, in turn, share with someone else. Thank you for being part of our lake-loving community and for all you do to protect and preserve our lakes for future generations!

## Group Landowner Survey

SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR:

### SURVEY ON GROUP LAND OWNERSHIP

Eligibility Criteria:

- Group (3+ people) ownership or management of land
- Part of land set aside for conservation\*
- Located in the U.S. or its territories

Note: Land does not need to be formally conserved with a government or nonprofit to participate.

\*Multiple land uses welcome, including agriculture, housing, recreation, hunting, forestry, etc.

Questions?  
[h hunt@wisc.edu](mailto:h hunt@wisc.edu)  
or call/text  
(608) 515-8474



<https://go.wisc.edu/WL514W>



Do you own or manage land with a group of people (3+), with at least part of that land kept natural or conserved? If so, Hilary Habeck Hunt, PhD Candidate at UW-Madison, would love to hear from you.

Hilary is researching shared land ownership in Wisconsin to understand how people govern, manage, and organize ownership on their properties. Group ownership of conservation land is not well researched in the U.S., and Wisconsin's landscape provides an excellent laboratory for exploring this understudied type of conservation ownership.

Your survey responses will help Hilary and other conservation researchers frame recommendations around best practices for shared conservation land ownership, with the goal of enabling conservation for the long run. 🌊

## What are the stakes in this story?

Let us know why you care about this story. What will be gained or lost for you? Not the world, but for you. We want to know why you are invested in the outcome before we are invested. The stakes can be small (I want to catch X kind of fish) or they can be large (my parents' house is in danger of being washed away.) First and foremost, we want to know why this matters to you.

## Is there a universal thread?

A memorable story has a universal thread, something people can connect with. The listener doesn't need to have shared experiences, but they do want to have shared emotions. A sense of loss, joyful abandon, jealousy, fear of making a mistake – these are all relatable.

## How is the story resolved?

What we want to see in a story is that you, the storyteller, have learned something, or maybe made a change, even if microscopic. Love Wisconsin featured Gerry Nasi, who had a great story about surfing on Lake Superior. But the backdrop of the story is that after a decade of fracking, he realized he wanted to

make amends for that work, and now lives a mostly carbon-neutral life off the grid on Lake Superior.

Speaking the truth of your experience has value. If people are in a room listening to you, they want to hear you talk about it authentically – not a lecture – not a speech. Seeing yourself in someone else's story is meaningful, and that takes some craft to make happen. Storytelling can be a path to connection, but it takes some work to make that visible. Social media environments are particular places for storytelling, requiring a more visual and briefer hook, but allowing for some of the rich connection of hearing a well-told story.

When we feel passionate and urgent about an issue, it can be hard not to try to convince people by pointing out the facts and the mountains of data. There is so much noise right now and it is hard for anything to get any traction, but it is a lot easier for us to hear a story. There is a relational connection that sticks with us when we find a piece of ourselves in someone else's story. 💧



*There is a relational connection that sticks with us when we find a piece of ourselves in someone else's story.*



## *(Programmatic Excellence, continued)*

treatment plant. With the understanding that shoreland property owners are also responsible for controlling phosphorus runoff into the lake, BDLA and the Burnett County Land Services Department have used DNR's Healthy Lakes & Rivers grants to install simple practices to improve the lake. Nearly half of the lake's shoreland property owners have participated in the program to complete shoreline buffers, rain gardens, and fish habitat projects.

💧 BDLA also partnered with the county to monitor for aquatic invasive species, especially curly-leaf pondweed. They wisely decided to monitor with a wait-and-see approach rather than jumping into a full-scale chemical treatment, knowing

that this particular plant can vary in yearly growth and impact.

💧 Encouraging the involvement of youth to protect and preserve the lake, BDLA is partnering with students to conduct drone imagery of the changes in emergent aquatic plant growth around the lake.

We hope you have enjoyed getting to know some of these Lake Stewardship Award winners in the Programmatic Excellence for Lake Health category. You can view short videos of their accomplishments on the Extension Lakes YouTube page at [youtube.com/uwexlakes](https://www.youtube.com/uwexlakes) (search for the "Lake Stewardship Award Winners" playlist). Learn more about the Wisconsin Lake Stewardship Awards at [wisconsinwaterweek.org](https://www.wisconsinwaterweek.org). 💧





# Forty+ Years of AIS Research Study Offers Key Takeaways from Long-Term Research on Aquatic Invasive Species

By Adam Hinterthuer and Madelyn Anderson, Center for Limnology, UW-Madison

*A report on more than forty years of research on Wisconsin lakes is highlighting some of the lessons scientists have learned about aquatic invasive species.*

For example, far more ecosystems are playing host to non-native species than were previously thought. However, the authors write, those species aren't necessarily detrimental to their new habitat and, in some cases, the negative "impacts of invasive species control [efforts] may be greater than the impacts of the invasive species" themselves.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't be concerned about different species moving into new ecosystems, says Jake Vander Zanden, director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center for Limnology and lead author on the report. "There are many examples where an invasive species has remarkable ecosystem impacts. They can result in fisheries decline, water quality decrease, and more which negatively impacts humans and the environment," he says. But ecological destruction is far from a foregone conclusion in invasive species stories.

In the article, published in the journal *BioScience*, Vander Zanden and his team highlight nine lessons learned through four decades of data collection, research, and experiments conducted by the North Temperate Lakes Long-Term Ecological Research (NTL-LTER) program. Housed at the Center

for Limnology, the NTL-LTER is one of 27 long-term research sites funded by the National Science Foundation.

Research grants are typically funded for three years, Vander Zanden explains, "But that would never allow you to detect these types of changes. It's only through long-term research that we can get insights into these big questions like where invasive species are, how they are changing our ecosystems and how it all connects to things like climate change."

One such insight is that the presence of non-native aquatic species in Wisconsin lakes is more widespread than scientists and resource managers initially thought. The NTL-LTER has helped inform Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources maps and datasets on six target species – Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, spiny water fleas, rusty crayfish, Chinese mystery snail and the banded mystery snail – since the 1990s.

Combining long-term monitoring records on its 11 core study lakes with field-based research and community-based science on dozens of other water bodies, researchers revealed that existing estimates of about 8% of Wisconsin lakes containing one or more of the six species was way off. In fact, the number is closer to 39%.

Additionally, certain populations have been in waters much longer than initially thought. For example, spiny water fleas were detected in Lake Mendota in 2009, but scientists combing through sediment cores and old NTL-LTER samples discovered that the disruptive invasive species had been present in the lake at least a decade sooner, with populations only erupting due to favorable changes in climate that summer. These findings suggest that, much of the time, invasive species are simply present in an ecosystem without triggering negative impacts.

*These findings suggest that, much of the time, invasive species are simply present in an ecosystem without triggering negative impacts.*



## Want to Learn More About AIS?

Check out 10 excellent talks in the aquatic invasive species room on Friday, March 28, at the Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention in Stevens Point! There will also be AIS-focused workshops available on Wednesday, March 26 and an *Exotic Pet Surrender Event* on Friday afternoon.

See full agenda with descriptions at [wisconsinwaterweek.org](http://wisconsinwaterweek.org).



What's more, says Jake Walsh, a postdoctoral associate in the University of Minnesota's Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology, when invasive species do result in negative impacts, those impacts are often tied to existing problems.

"Lake Mendota was especially primed for large, costly effects from spiny water flea," says Walsh, who is a co-author of the paper. "[They] worsened water quality problems that were already present and tied to excess nutrients in the lake."

Seeing this fuller picture was only possible through long-term research, Walsh adds. "As long as we have LTER, invasions are experiments that can teach us about how ecosystems work and how we can best manage them," he says. "[NTL-LTER] has given us a deep understanding of the water quality issues facing Lake Mendota and a 'road map' to follow for offsetting spiny water flea's impact."

Long-term science doesn't just help scientists piece together the history of environmental change, Vander Zanden adds. With it, researchers can also highlight looming questions and design studies to answer them. From using environmental DNA, to exploring long-term invasive species removal benefits, more discoveries are on the horizon. And it's not just the science that benefits from this long-term, interdisciplinary approach. NTL-LTER doesn't just produce good data, Vander Zanden says, it produces people passionate about carrying on the long-term legacy.

Undergraduate field technicians who spent their summers sampling the same sites over and over have gone on to become professors overseeing their own research projects and managing their own students. NTL-LTER data scientists and staff dedicate huge chunks of time to making their datasets publicly available and accessible to other researchers in the freshwater sciences. It's a spirit of

### From the article "Nine Lessons about AIS from the NTL-LTER Program"

1. Invasive species are more widespread than has been previously documented.
2. Invasive species are usually at low abundance.
3. Environmental triggers may cause low density populations of invasive species to irrupt.
4. Invasive species impacts can occasionally be enormous and far reaching.
5. Invasive species can affect microbes.
6. Impoundments act as invasive species hotspots and stepping stones.
7. Ecosystem vulnerability to invasion can be estimated.
8. Invasive species removal can produce ecosystem shifts and long-term benefits.
9. Impacts of invasive species control may be greater than the impacts of invasive species.

Read the full, published article here:

<https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/article/74/8/509/7739655?login=true>

collaboration and exploration that Vander Zanden hopes can extend to other fields.

"I wonder if some of these patterns that we see from long-term data could be relevant to somebody who studies soil, or grassland flowers, or marine biology," he says. "If invasive species are already there and more widespread than we think they are, things like human activity and climate change could soon be triggering more population shifts." 💧

*NTL-LTER doesn't just produce good data, it produces people passionate about carrying on the long-term legacy.*

~ Dr. Vander Zanden

## Help Fund AIS Research in Wisconsin



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!



**Add a donation of \$2 or more when you're registering your boat.**

OR

1. Log into your 'Go Wild' account (or create one) at [gowild.wi.gov](http://gowild.wi.gov)
2. Click on 'Purchase Products'
3. Click on 'Misc/Other' tab
4. Select 'Aquatic Invasive Species Donation'
5. Enter a donation of \$2 or more
6. Click on 'Add to Cart'
7. Confirm payment type and click 'Checkout'
8. Click on 'Make Payment'



# Snapshot Day Yields New Data on Aquatic Invasive Species Thanks to Volunteer Efforts

By: Emily Heald, Rivers Educator, UW-Madison Division of Extension

Douglas County



*This Douglas County crew celebrates a successful day of connecting with other water lovers.*

*Chris Acy, Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance, enjoyed helping community members identify and search for invasive species on Snapshot Day 2024.*

**O**n August 10, 2024, water enthusiasts from every corner of Wisconsin gathered for a one-day, statewide aquatic invasive species (AIS) scavenger hunt as part of the 11th annual AIS Snapshot Day. This dynamic event is centrally coordinated by UW-Madison Division of Extension in partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Extension

Lakes, and many county and nonprofit organizations across the state. Volunteers of all ages met at various local meeting points across the state to get hands-on training in identifying AIS such as Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, and freshwater golden clams before embarking on field searches at pre-selected locations. Snapshot Day, which began with a focus on rivers and streams, has broadened its scope to encompass lakes and wetlands. This year's event saw 159 participants gather across 25 meeting locations, who then monitored 115 sites at 82 different waterbodies in Wisconsin. AIS were detected at 64% of these monitoring sites, highlighting the ongoing need for continued monitoring.

The data collected from Snapshot Day is uploaded to the statewide water quality database, SWIMS, aiding in tracking the spread of invasive species and creating effective management strategies. As one participant put it, "The event was a great way to connect with local residents and look at local spots in a whole new way!"

We extend a massive thank you to all the volunteers, partner organizations, and site leaders who made this year's event a success. Don't forget to follow Snapshot Day on Facebook for the latest event updates and other AIS news: <https://www.facebook.com/uwaisprogram> 🌊

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**Snapshot Day 2025**  
**Saturday, August 9**



*Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance*



# WELCOME ABOARD!



**(Evan) Paul Zdroik** joined Extension Lakes in September 2024 as the Database User Support Specialist, overseeing our internal databases and supporting CLMN and CBCW data reporters. From central Wisconsin, Paul graduated UW-La Crosse with a BS in Geography. Prior to joining the team Paul worked as a software developer where his main tasks were SQL Database management, API development, Windows form building, web building and maintenance. In his free time, Paul enjoys being active outdoors, tinkering in his garage, coaching youth sports, or just hanging outside with his family.

[ezdroik@uwsp.edu](mailto:ezdroik@uwsp.edu)

**Sarah Wood** joined the Lakes and Rivers Section of the Wisconsin DNR as an Aquatic Plant Management (APM) Permit Assistant/APM Records Manager and Team Assistant LTE. She is responsible for processing APM permits and treatment records, and being a point of contact for APM-related permit questions from the public. In addition, she helps provide APM program support. A recent graduate of UW-Oshkosh, Sarah developed a passion for limnology, and spent much of her time studying algae and cyanobacteria. She loves creating things: knitting, crochet, drawing, and painting, and walking, running, or biking along the shores of the Fox River and Lake Winnebago.



[Sarah.Wood@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sarah.Wood@wisconsin.gov)



**Ben Schleppenbach** is the new Northwest Lakes Biologist for the Wisconsin DNR, coming to us from Cook County, Minnesota, where he worked as a fish biologist. Ben also worked with Wisconsin DNR fisheries research for several years and has a lot of technical experience, as well as broader watershed management and lake science expertise. Ben has a BS in Natural Resources-Fisheries from UW-Stevens Point and an MS in Water Resources Science from University of Minnesota-Duluth. In his free time, Ben enjoys fishing and spending time outdoors with his wife Leah.

[Benjamin.Schleppenbach@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Benjamin.Schleppenbach@wisconsin.gov)





# The Power of Words

 **2025 Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention**

## Working for Our Waters

the **POWER**  
of **WORDS**  
**Working for Our Waters**

*In every culture we use language to communicate. Words are powerful. They can be welcoming, or they can be exclusionary. They can build up or they can tear down. Words can change lives. As we look forward to the 2025 Lakes and Rivers*

*Convention, the theme “Power of Words” seems appropriate.*

[wisconsinwaterweek.org](http://wisconsinwaterweek.org)

**R**egistration is now open for the annual Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention! Whether you are joining us in person or attending virtually, there is something for everyone.

Check out our line-up at [wisconsinwaterweek.org](http://wisconsinwaterweek.org) and join us in March!

### In-person Pre- and Post-Convention Workshops

Register early for one or more of these interactive, in-depth, and engaging workshops! Descriptions and speakers are available on the website (space is limited).\*

#### Wednesday, March 26, 9:00 AM-Noon

- Crafting Your Water Stories
- Building a Diversified Fundraising Plan and Crafting Stories that Drive Support

*\*agenda subject to change*

**REGISTER NOW!**

**March 26-28, 2025**

Wisconsin  
Lakes & Rivers Convention

### Upcoming Deadlines

#### **January 31:**

Last day of Early-bird pricing

#### **March 1:**

- Lightning Talk Proposals
- Poster Presentation Proposals
- Photo Contest Entries

### Reserve Your Room Now

Rooms have sold out quickly in the past, so we encourage you to book your room early at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Stevens Point. Just go to [wisconsinwaterweek.org](http://wisconsinwaterweek.org), and click on “Lakes and Rivers Convention,” then click on “Lodging” for instructions.

- Building a Successful Healthy Lakes & Rivers Program
- New Lake District Commissioner Training
- Let’s Get Together: How to Make Your Meetings More Effective, Engaging, and Fun
- Climate Adaptation for Wisconsin Lakes
- Aquatic Plant Ecology and Identification

#### Wednesday, March 26, 1:00-4:00 PM

- Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN) Refresher Training
- Responding to Nature Through Writing
- Deep Dive: Aquatic Invasive Species in Trade
- Lake District Treasurer Workshop
- Introduction to Lake Algae and Cyanobacteria
- Troublemaker Taxonomy: Identification Tips for Inconspicuous Invertebrates
- Aquatic Plant Management Rule Change Workshop
- Lake Organization Leaders and Effective Meetings: Robert’s Rules of Order and More

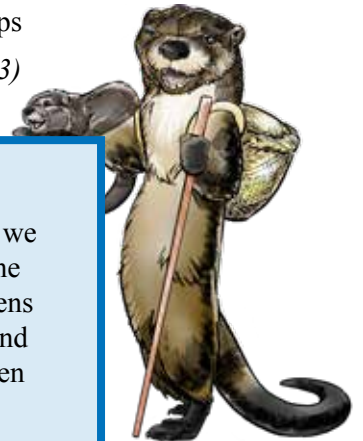
#### Friday, March 28, 2:15-4:00 PM

- Enhanced Wakes on Wisconsin Lakes: Education and Regulation at the Town Level
- An Invitation to Wonder: Waubesa Wetlands (film viewing)
- Making Your Voice Heard: Creating Connection through Song
- Connecting on Conservation: Tools to Build Relationships

*(Continued on page 13)*



Chris Whalen



Chris Whalen

## Welcome Keynote

Thursday, March 27, 9:00-10:30 AM

### Dr. Kelsey Leonard

Dr. Kelsey Leonard is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Environment at the University of Waterloo, where her research focuses on Indigenous water justice and its climatic, territorial, and governance underpinnings. Dr. Leonard seeks to establish Indigenous traditions of water conservation as the foundation for international water policymaking. She has been instrumental in safeguarding the interests of Indigenous Nations for environmental planning and builds Indigenous science and knowledge into new solutions for water governance. Her recent scholarship explores legal personhood for water. This is an emerging concept that cities and nations are exploring as an approach to offer heightened protections to rivers and lakes.

## Confluence Keynote

Friday, March 28, 12:00-1:15 PM

### Chris Heeter

Chris Heeter's "Wild Life" serves as the canvas for her speaking and team building programs. She freely admits that much of what she's learned about humanity comes from dogs and rivers—from her team of 16 sled dogs, who she helped breed, raise, and train, to her decades of guiding whitewater canoe trips. Combined, they create the perfect back-drop for easy to apply, lasting, and life-changing tools for individuals, teams, leaders, and organizations. This is sure to be a memorable sendoff, and we hope it will inspire you to go back to your communities recharged and reinvigorated! 💧

Provided by Chris Heeter



# Let's Make Healthy Lakes & Rivers Together!

*The Healthy Lakes & Rivers initiative is a statewide effort providing outreach, technical assistance, and funding for five simple and inexpensive best practices that are appropriate for most lakeshore properties. Pitch your Healthy Lakes & Rivers feature story to Amy Kowalski ([amy.kowalski@uwsp.edu](mailto:amy.kowalski@uwsp.edu)).*

## Are you a Partner Organization?

If you belong to a lake or river organization, municipality, or tribal government, you can help make Healthy Lakes & Rivers together in your community! The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) can assist with this effort by offering Healthy Lakes & Rivers grants. Any eligible applicant can apply for these grants. While the DNR cannot provide Healthy Lakes & Rivers funding directly to individual shoreland property owners, the groups mentioned above can apply for up to \$25,000 on behalf of multiple property owners (\$1,000 per best practice).

## Partner Organization Resources

The Healthy Lakes & Rivers team has been gathering lessons to help you build a successful program in your area. Just go to the website and click on the "Get Started" button under "I'm a Partner Organization."

## New Grant Application & Deadline

Healthy Lakes & Rivers grant applications are now accepted year-round! No pre-application is required, but first-time applicants must provide photos and design plans for approval to their regional DNR biologist prior to implementation. One application may be submitted per fiscal year. In addition to the revised rolling deadline, a new Healthy Lakes & Rivers grant application was developed to streamline and simplify the process. A video tutorial for the new application can be found on the website under the *Grants* section. Interested applicants should work with their regional DNR biologist and the Healthy Lakes & Rivers Environmental Grants Specialist to create a strong application. To get started and find your regional DNR contacts, visit the website at [healthylakeswi.com](http://healthylakeswi.com). 💧



[healthylakeswi.com](http://healthylakeswi.com)



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# Keeping Lakes in the Family

## Sharing the Magic Through Stories

Compiled by Lynn Markham, Center for Land Use Education, UW-Stevens Point  
Descriptions used or adapted from reviews on amazon.com

Literacy opens doors to imagination, fostering curiosity and understanding, especially in children. Books about nature, in particular, serve as gateways to the wonders of the environment, allowing young readers to explore ecosystems, animals, and the beauty of the natural world. Through vivid storytelling and engaging illustrations, the following books about birds and their homes help to nurture a love for nature, inspiring children to observe, appreciate, and protect the planet. By cultivating literacy and a deep connection to nature, we empower the next generation to become informed stewards of the Earth.

### The Birdwatchers

Written and illustrated by Simon James  
Ages 4-8

A grandfather shares with his grandchild the quiet wonder of birdwatching - and a wry talent for telling a tall tale. This very fun story captures the magic of nature and spending time with those you love.

### Ruby's Birds

Written by Mya Thompson  
Illustrated by Claudia Dávila  
Ages 3-7

“Sometimes an ordinary walk can become something - magical!” ~ Mya Thompson  
This delightful story engages readers to seek and find birds hiding on nearly every page, including where to find all of the birds in real life! This book also shows that birds can be found in our city neighborhoods, too.

### A Tree is Home

Written by Pamela Hickman  
Illustrated by Zafouko Yamamoto  
Ages 5-8

A mature oak tree provides a home for different animals. From its branches to its roots, six animals share the tree as a home. Readers follow along as the tree and the animals – a raccoon, opossum, acorn weevil, gray squirrel, blue jay, and chipmunk – change and adapt through all four seasons. This book helps explore the interconnectedness of living things with your young reader and share your appreciation for nature.

### Forest Magic

Written and illustrated by Sarah Grindler  
Ages 4-8

What do you notice when you walk in the forest? Different types of trees, plants, and mushrooms? Maybe you hear a squirrel chattering or birds singing. Can you feel all the different kinds of moss? And look there! Hidden animal homes and interesting bugs. This beautifully illustrated non-fiction guide incorporates all five senses and encourages imaginative play.

### North Woods Girl

Written by Aimee Bissonette  
Illustrated by Claudia McGehee  
Ages 3-7

This book is narrated by a young girl who enjoys the Northwoods as much as her grandmother. They breathe deep the piney scents, observing the woodland critters like squirrels, rabbits, deer, geese, goldeneyes, and mergansers. Every season brings something new to see and do, like listening to frogs by the pond in the spring. The two enjoy together the treasures of their natural surroundings.

### The Busy Tree

Written by Jennifer Ward  
Illustrated by Lisa Falkenstern  
Ages 2+

This book introduces kids (and adults!) to the amazing animals that live in trees, and the activities that unfold from its roots to the top of its branches. The rhyming text and beautiful oil painted illustrations capture the essence of life inside this busy tree. 💧



Words hold immense power, shaping our thoughts, emotions, and connections to the world around us.



# Congrats to Crew 15

## Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute

By Sara Windjue, Leadership and Capacity Development Specialist, Extension Lakes

Every two years, a group of individuals graduates from the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute. This fall, we celebrate Crew 15, a diverse group of 30 individuals who came together as strangers last May and left the graduation ceremony in October as a family of lake stewards, bound together by shared experiences and a commitment to take what they've learned and put it to use to protect our lakes.

This crew of Lake Leaders, representing more than 16 counties, came from county land and water conservation teams, private consultation firms, planning commissions, regional lake organizations, resource conservation and development councils, lake associations, lake districts, and sanitary districts, as well as state agencies. Their different perspectives and levels of expertise on a variety of topics made for rich discussions and ultimately, stronger outcomes.

The crew started their Lake Leader journey learning about communication styles, working with different personalities, and solving problems in a team environment. They continued their journey by participating in lake studies, specifically aquatic ecology and lake ecosystem dynamics. The final meeting was focused on understanding the Public Trust Doctrine and how to engage in state and local government processes.

The Lake Leaders Institute is coordinated by the Extension Lakes Program at UW-Stevens Point in partnership with Wisconsin Lakes and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. For more information, visit [uwsp.edu/uwexplakes](http://uwsp.edu/uwexplakes) and click on "Lake Leaders." The next Crew will commence in 2026. The nomination process will open in fall 2025. 💧

*A diverse group of individuals came together as strangers and left the graduation ceremony as a family of lake stewards.*

*Provided by Sara Windjue*



*Kneeling front (l to r): Dave Quady, Sand Lake Association, Adam Handel, Delavan Lake Sanitary District, Jen Jefferson, WI DNR, Emily Nelson, Northwest Regional Planning Commission, Anna DeMers, Tamarack Wetland Services LLC, Joe Kirst, Eau Claire Watershed Assoc., Joe Pyzyk, Big Bass Lake Protection & Rehabilitation (P&R) District, and Sara Windjue, Extension Lakes.*

*Standing (l to r): Michelle Nault, WI DNR, Trish Bantle, Pigeon Lake Assoc., Mike Plante, Bear Lake Assoc., Inc., Taylor Haag, Green Lake Assoc., Barb Pinekenstein, Eagle Spring Lake Management District, Deb Omernik, Tree Lake Assoc., Maryann Ricker, Rainbo Lodge, Fred Silloway, Waupaca Chain O'Lakes Rehabilitation District, Cindy Parker, Grindstone Lake Foundation, Inc., Cheryl Schultz, Great Bass Lake Improvement Assoc., Jim O'Neil, Inland Lakes P&R Dist #1, Peter Baker, Lake Ivanhoe Property Owners Assoc., Mike Engleson, Wisconsin Lakes, and Deputy Secretary Steven Little, WI DNR.*

*Standing back row (l to r): Caitlin McAlevey, Clean Lakes Alliance, Justin Poinssatte, SE WI Regional Planning Commission, Richard Logan, Vilas County Board, Eric Eade, Lost Lake P&R Dist, Andrew Senderhauf, Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council, Gwen Schaefer, White Potato Lake District, Scott Otterson (Crew 8), Dave Meyer, Spider Chain of Lakes Assoc., Arthur Watkinson, WI DNR, Jim Kavemier, Tomahawk Lake Assoc., Eric Olson, Extension Lakes, and Dean Karl Martin, UW-Madison Division of Extension.*

*Not pictured: Peter Jensen, Eagle Spring Lake Management District and Michele Skinner, Lake Altoona R&P District*

CALENDAR

**Check out our Online Calendar**

Stay up-to-date with lake and river events across the state, region, and beyond with our online calendar. Don't see your event listed? Let us know by clicking "Add an Event" at the top of the page and fill out the short form!

uwsp.edu/uwexplakes



## Lake Tides -- AAN7576

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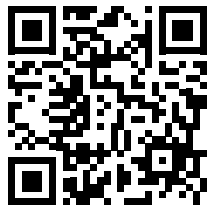
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Extension Lakes  
College of Natural Resources  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

### Save Water, Paper, Money!

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#### A publication of the Wisconsin Lakes & Rivers Partnership

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## Reflections

*When the press of humans and our panicked frailty  
are just too much to bear  
and it feels as though nothing could break through  
the chatter and commotion we cause,  
there are portals quietly waiting for us to enter.*

*They take many forms, these openings,  
these passages that take us beyond our usual  
understandings.*

*Portals are not free of charge  
they ask us, first, to see, to notice them.  
Then to shed our protective layers  
and enter in, willing to be moved...  
be that to tears or to action, to awe or  
perhaps to stillness.*

— Chris Heeter  
excerpt from "Portals"  
*Wild Poems*  
<https://thewildinstitute.com/portals/>

