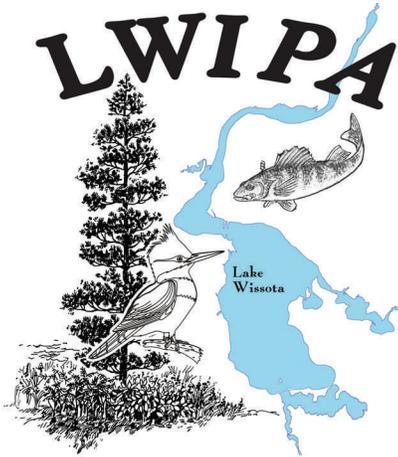


# Lakeside News

Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association

Winter/Spring 2010/2011



**Lake Wissota Improvement  
and Protection Association**  
PO Box 903  
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

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## The Summer It Rained by Tony Schuster

Remember when we complained about the lack of rain? It seemed like all of the rain went south or north of us. Because Lake Wissota is a reservoir on the Chippewa River, it stayed full. But the lack of rainfall seemed to make the algae blooms more intense and it sure took a toll on trees, bushes and lawns. So, most of us entered 2010 hoping for a bit more rain. Well, we got it, and maybe more than we had bargained for.

Sure, the lawns were greener, but some of those rainfalls were well beyond what we needed. On Wissota, heavy rainfall can mean more dramatic changes in lake level than we have come to expect. In fact, seven times this summer rains came that caused the lake to rise above its normal level. One of them, in late September, brought the lake up very quickly and higher than we have seen in years. Rainfall amounts in that storm in some parts of Western Wisconsin reached 8 inches, and 3-4 inches were common in much of the area upstream of Lake Wissota. Lake levels rose dramatically on many of the lakes in this area and Wissota was no exception. On Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> Wissota crested at 899 feet 4 inches above mean sea level, or one foot four inches above normal lake level. Flows that day hit 55, 200 cubic feet per second (cfs), ten times the average flow in the Chippewa River.

Just as in the previous storms, the high water on Wissota was followed by a drop below normal lake levels and then finally a return to where we expect the water to be. The rapid fluctuations have prompted questions from many lake users about the way the lake level changes. To answer those questions we need to understand how the Wissota dam was designed and how it operates.

First, Wissota is a hydroelectric facility. Most of the water that flows through the lake is used to generate electricity at the Wissota Hydro Plant. That is the large building about a half mile south of the Rod and Gun Club. There, 6 turbines are spun by the water as it flows down through the plant. Those turbines spin generators which produce electrical energy for Xcel Energy. The plant can handle as much as 9600 cfs, much more than the normal summer flows in the Chippewa River. But when it rains really hard, the flow can exceed the capacity of those turbines. In that case, the water level rises in the lake until gates in the spillway open to discharge the surplus water. The spillway is the area surrounded by the bright orange bouys much nearer to the Rod and Gun Club. There are 13 of these gates, but in most cases only a few of them open at a time. If the flows are higher, more gates open and they open more deeply to release more water. On Sept. 25<sup>th</sup>, all 13 of the gates were opened by the high water.

## LWIPA BOARD MEMBERS

Ann Gordon, President  
 Mary Jo Fleming, Vice-Pres.  
 Bob Allen, Treasurer  
 Bob Wierman, Secretary  
 Roger Kees  
 Bob Helgemo  
 Ralph Bellore  
 Fran Helgemo  
 Tony Schuster  
 Chuck Card  
 Kate Lindsay  
 Jim Schuh

## President's Corner by Ann Gordon

Greetings and Happy Holidays to all of you who enjoy Lake Wissota and are working to keep it a treasured resource for generations to come.

It has been quite a year on the Lake. As the lead article indicated, the lake reached levels not seen in recent years. Our dock was one of many that was dislodged during the storm. More exciting was the sight of my kayak, standing on its end on the bank. As I called my husband for assistance, I watched our boat float away! Ultimately, it was rescued by A & D Docks, who reported rescuing several jet skis, more boats and pontoons and the loss of the same up and down the Chippewa River. Certainly an adventure, though not of the kind most of us desire.

We know that many of you have been anxiously awaiting the arrival of the new Lake Wissota Map. I'm happy to announce that a limited supply of maps arrived in November. Copies are currently available at Gordy's True Value Lake Wissota or you can contact one of your Board members for a copy. When the remainder of the 10,000 copies of the maps have been received and collated, they will be available at additional locations to be announced. (If you'd like to help collate the maps, please call me and I can tell you when and where we will be bundling the maps together.)

This has been a busy year for the LWIPA and its Board. From June through August, many volunteers helped educate boaters at the Lafayette Boat Landing and many more helped monitor the Eurasian water milfoil sites. A successful Annual Picnic was held in June at the Rod and Gun Club. Read more about some of these activities in the newsletter.

We hope that all of you reading this newsletter are members of LWIPA. If not, please join today, using the form on the back page of this newsletter.

For those who would like to learn more about all the Wisconsin lakes, I encourage you to join the Wisconsin Lakes Association. This statewide organization works to protect and enhance the quality of Wisconsin's 15,000 inland lakes. The 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Lakes Conference will be held on April 12-14, 2011 in Green Bay. The theme of the conference is "Speaking for Lakes" and will offer presentations and workshops to give lake enthusiasts skills, tools and inspiration to protect and care for Wisconsin lakes. For more information see [www.wisconsinlakes.org](http://www.wisconsinlakes.org)

Happy Holidays to you all!

Tax-deductible donations to  
**LWIPA Endowment  
 Fund**

may be made through the  
**Community Foundation  
 of Chippewa County,**

PO Box 153,  
 Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

or online at

[www.comfdncc.org](http://www.comfdncc.org)

Thank You!

### *The Summer it Rained, con't from Page 1*

When I say they were opened by the high water, that is literally true. The Wissota gates were designed to respond to the weight of the water as the

lake rises and open automatically. As long as the water remains high, the water's weight keeps the gates open. Discharging all of that surplus water protects the dam and, of course, our shorelines as well. When incoming flows to Wissota drop off and the lake level begins to drop, the gates begin to close. However, the water level must drop below its normal level before the gates can close completely. Then the water flow into the lake can refill the lake to its normal level.

For those of us on the lake, these heavy rains produced noticeable changes in lake level, mostly because we are so used to the lake level fluctuating so little. Compared with changes on some lakes in the region, even this extreme rainfall produced rather modest changes in Wissota's level, but we should not be surprised if it happens again. The dam on Lake Wissota has been responding to spring floods and heavy rains in the same way since it was built in 1917. In 2010 those gates were exercised more often than normal. But then, this is Wisconsin where the weather is always good for a surprise or two.

# Volunteer Programs



## CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS PROGRAM

In 2006, LWIPA initiated the Clean Boats Clean Waters program on Lake Wissota. Volunteers at Lafayette, Rod & Gun, and the state park boat landings greeted boaters, informed them about invasive species and how to prevent their spread, and did a watercraft check as boats entered and left the landings.

In 2010, the program's fourth summer, Clean Boats Clean Waters volunteers spent 46 ½ hours at the Lafayette landing. Although boats are cleaner and boaters are more aware of practices that help protect our lakes, there are always new boaters who need to receive the message to inspect, clean, and drain watercraft and

dispose of bait correctly.

As Lake Wissota residents have learned, it's to our advantage to prevent new invasive species rather than to have to deal with their effects.

LWIPA would like to expand the CBCW crew in 2011. Our goal is to have volunteers at the landings on Saturdays from 11:00 until 3:00 from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Please consider joining the "blue shirt" crew on a weekend or two next summer.

LWIPA thanks the following 2010 volunteers:

- Mary Jo Fleming,
- Roger Kees,
- Nancy Schuster,
- Ann Gordon,
- Fran Helgemo



## AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM), an aquatic invasive plant discovered on Lake Wissota in 2005, can harm a lake environment by crowding

out native water plants that provide good habitat for fish and growing unsightly mats that trap blue-green algae. Eurasian watermilfoil breaks up easily into fragments that can create new colonies around the lake. The best way to manage the invasive is to find new plants and remove them before they mature into beds. LWIPA's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Neighborhood Watch was established in 2009 to monitor at-risk areas on Lake Wissota. Volunteers in small craft agree to adopt an area of the lake such as Pine Harbor or the Yellow River bar and patrol it twice a month in June and July. If they see a suspicious plant, they take a sample and note the location. Once EWM is confirmed, the spot is entered on a Global Positioning System (GPS'ed), and the plant is removed. Existing beds are mapped each September to monitor growth.

LWIPA volunteers logged 108 hours on the water in 2010. Although we did not see an accelerated growth in all existing beds, there are areas such as the Yellow River bar and between the Highway X Bridge and the Hideaway Resort where density is increasing. A new major infestation was found in a critical habitat bay

near the Stillson Bridge on the Little Lake. Several EWM plants were also identified and removed from Pine Harbor.

More lake residents are needed who are willing to learn to identify invasive species and patrol lake areas near their shores. Please join the following volunteers by contacting Mary Jo Fleming, Volunteer Coordinator, 715-723-0822 or bingnjo@charter.net.

A big thank you to this years volunteers:

- Bing and Mary Jo Fleming
- Roger Kees
- Chuck Card
- Emery and Betty Valek,
- Tony and Nancy Schuster
- Karen Possley
- Ed Hebert
- John and Linda Stockinger
- Jim Schuh
- LeAnn Nelson,
- Kate Lindsay,
- Sandi Harberts,
- Jim & Mary Erickson,
- Bill & Jan Kroll.

## Science corner

### OTTERS AND MINKS, YOUR NOT SO UNCOMMON NEIGHBORS BY KATE LINDSAY

Now that the docks are out of the water and the boats are safely stored, most of us no longer make the trek down to the shore as frequently. Yet, this coming season, offers great opportunities to decipher just who else calls our lake banks home. And, among those critters might be otters and mink. What follows is a brief summary of the habits of these two mammals, their diets, their scat, and their den sites. You may discover some neighbors you didn't



ing across the ice and into fishing holes. Next to the sea otter, the river otter is the most aquatic of the weasel family, spending more of their time in the water than on land. They can weigh 15-30# and be 3-4½', including the tail.

The otter diet consists solely of meat, largely of fish, but also frogs, crayfish, and turtles. Frequently their scat is not well formed, being largely watery, and may only be a pile of fish scales. It is seldom tubular, most often appears scattered.

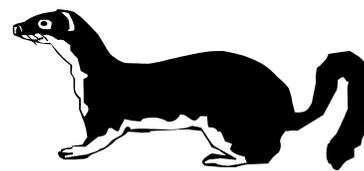
The otter cannot dig its own den, but prefers holes in the bank of the river or other bodies of water. Usually they have 8-12' of tunnel, with 2-3 entrances that are 7-10" in diameter. Look for the scat around the entrance area as a sure sign the otter is residing there,

Otters are not as rare as one might believe and have been reported in Pine Harbor in the winter slid-

at least temporarily. Otters need access to the water so in winter they may move away from lake shores and move to stream and river banks.

Mink, also a member of the weasel family, can comfortably share its habitat with man and will live in many types of wetland areas as it is equally at home in the water or on land. A weasel is a confirmed carnivore and will eat anything meat; fish, frogs, crayfish, diving as deep as 18' in search of food. They also eat rodents, waterfowl and eggs, worms and insects. Though only weighing 1½ -3½ # a mink can and will often kill and consume animals much larger than themselves, including muskrats.

Mink are active throughout the year, though mainly at night. They stay in their dens when not traveling or hunting but often do not use the same den site for more than a few days, unless rearing young. The den site might be a muskrat lodge, or a bank burrow. Unlike the otter, they are able to dig their own den in soft soil, tunneling down 1-3', and 8-12' long. The den may have two to three 4-6" openings, often under tree roots. Mink are solitary animals except in the breeding season, which is during late February to late April.



Mink scat is usually black and twisted, often containing small rodent hairs. Sometimes it looks "folded over" and accumulates in piles near the den site. All weasels have an anal musk gland that discharges a liquid that is as malodorous as a skunk though they can

## NATURE MAPPING

If you are one of the lake area residents who loves to observe wildlife and enjoys keeping track of your sightings, you have a great resource to help you, and your observations can be of benefit to the state database.

NatureMapping is a biodiversity survey program that allows everyday people, school groups, and professionals to enter their wildlife observations into a statewide database and map those observations spatially through an online interface. The observations can be used for tracking the movement of species, their overall health and populations, and are being used for natural resource management, scientific studies and environmental education and have been included in the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan. By collecting and recording wildlife observations, NatureMappers become more aware of their surroundings, deepen their sense of place, and strengthen their connection to the natural world.

And, it is easy to learn and do! Go online to [wisnatmap.org](http://wisnatmap.org), then click on the left hand column "How Do I Nature Map", On the next screen go to Option #2- online training videos. (Option #1 is currently unavailable) Follow the online training videos and in about 20 minutes you'll be recording your own sightings, enhancing your appreciation of your natural world and helping gather data for a broader application.

## LANDSCAPING UNDER OAKS AND PINES BY MARY JO FLEMING

During the two lakescaping workshops presented by LWIPA earlier this year, one question that participants raised was “Is it possible to find plants that will grow well in the dry, sandy, shady soil found under the oaks and pines on many of our lake shore banks?” And the answer is a resounding “Yes!” They are species that naturally grow in the Chippewa Valley’s dry oak and pine savannas

Turf grass, the ground cover we have been conditioned to view as beautiful and highly desirable originally was the ground cover on land grazed by sheep! Without the sheep, it requires high maintenance, fertilizing several times a year (which can produce undesirable nutrient runoff to the lake), mowing regularly, removing fallen needles and leaves, irrigating, and occasionally dethatching. It is definitely a “high maintenance ground cover.” And, often not effective in the dry, sandy, shaded locations so common to Lake Wissota.

Planting low-growing native plants, on the other hand, can make these areas of your yard maintenance-free once they become established. These are plants which have evolved to thrive in exactly the conditions which are so poor for turf. The following plants grow well when planted a foot apart under dry, partially shaded conditions:

COMMON NAME	LATIN NAME	FLOWER COLOR	BLOOM TIME
Big leaf aster	<i>Aster macrophyllus</i>	Blue flowers,	Aug-Oct.
Calico aster	<i>Aster later</i>	White flowers	July-Oct.
Pennsylvania sedge	<i>Carex pennsylvanica</i>	Grass-like, 6”	
Dwarf bush honeysuckle	<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	Yellow flowers,	July-Aug.



*Big Leafed Aster*

Although these plants should be the dominant species, others can be added to the mix. For color, add harebells, violets, wild geranium, and wild columbine. Plants with white flowers include foamflowers, woodland strawberries, and Canada anemones. For interesting foliage, use bunch berries and interrupted or bracken ferns. See [www.lwipa.net](http://www.lwipa.net) for a more complete plant list (*Plant Lists for Buffers*) as well as nurseries that specialize in native plants or local nurseries who will order them.

To establish native beds, 1) remove any grass, 2) plant without tilling or amending the soil, 3) add several inches of mulch, and 4) water when needed the first season. Using plant plugs is an economical way to replace sparse turf grass with attractive native ground cover. Plants will grow up through the natural mulch of leaves and needles in the spring, spread within several years to fill in the site, and stay low enough to preserve lake views.

*Otter and Mink, con't from page 4*

not spray and the odor cannot travel as far. “Mink” comes from the Swedish word meaning “the stinking animal of Finland.”

Both mink and otters make “slides”, either in snow or on hillsides. However, a mink slide is short, and only about 3-5” wide, while an otter slide is much longer and 6-10” wide. Otters use slides much more frequently than mink, often seen sliding as a “community fun activity.”

Both of these animals have distinct tracking styles that vary from each other greatly in size, stride, and trail width, so consult one of the many good tracking guides to assist in identifying the tracks you will see this winter in the snow. Good luck and happy sleuthing.



*Weasel*



*Otter*

## LAKE WISSOTA KIOSK PROJECT BY ANNIE MAZAROL

This being my final year in high school, I'm very determined to achieve my Girl Scout Gold Award before graduation. To achieve the Gold Award (equivalent to The Eagle Scout Award), one must come up with their own community service project that will help the public.

With the help of Ann Gordon, Jim Schuh, Bob Wierman, and Ralph Bellore, I have come up with the idea of updating Lake Wissota's seven kiosks located throughout the lake. There is one at each boat landing and others located at some bars and restaurants.

The kiosks are in need of new plexi-glass, updated information, and other materials for weatherizing. With the new kiosks being more weatherized, I hope for them to last much longer. The current plexi-glass has become dirty and foggy making it very difficult to read through.

My father and I have come up with a rough budget estimate for this project and we also thought of other ideas that may add nice features to the kiosks if I raise enough money. I am very lucky that Leinenkugels has agreed to help fund much of this project, but I'm looking for all the help I can get!

Thanks to the LWIPA and my father, I have very good schedule planned out for completing this project. And this being the highest award one may receive in Girl Scouts, I'm glad it's incorporating something I love, Lake Wissota



## Take the Plunge

Lake Wissota is a key lake in West Central Wisconsin. Many of our neighboring bodies of water have experienced much publicized problems with water quality, high bacteria levels, algae bloom toxin. There is an ongoing need to maintain vigilance to protect and improve our water quality on Lake Wissota. levels.

As residents and users, we need to be active advocates for our lake. One way to do this is to become a member of Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association.

Ways to become involved:

- Project partner— become one of the volunteers in the Clean Boats, Clean Water Project. Or, volunteer to adopt a section of water near you to monitor for the Aquatic Species Neighborhood Watch. Or help on another project that interests you.
- Committee member— help serve on a committee for publicity, membership, grants, etc.
- Serve on the LWIPA Board— terms are for three years and are staggered.

Lake Wissota is a marvelous place to live, recreate, enjoy and cherish. Memories are built here. It is up to us, those who care about the lake to maintain, protect, and effectively manage this marvelous resource for the future.

To become more involved, join LWIPA today, fill out areas of interest on the membership form on the facing page, or contact one of the board members for more information.

## What is in the Lake Wissota Kiosks?

1. **A map of Lake Wissota—the map assists first time users to the complexities of the lake**
2. **Current walleye fishing limits**
3. **Other DNR announcements pertaining to the lake and region.**

## Where are the kiosks located?

There is a kiosk at each of the seven boat landings on the lake as well as one at the Poo's Bar and ?

## LAKE WISSOTA IMPROVEMENT AND PROTECTION ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP

The Board of Directors of the Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association invite you to help us build our organization into an effective voice for Lake Wissota. We are an important advocate for the lake community, and we intend to continue to grow in our ability to represent our members' concerns, values, and needs. If we are to succeed, WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Our current projects and future growth need your input and financial support.

Our organization provides:

- ◆ Information on legislation and zoning changes that affect the lake and lakeshore
- ◆ Advice on low-maintenance plants that can help stabilize the shoreland and lake bank
- ◆ Strategies for dealing with aquatic plant benefits, problems, and management
- ◆ Lake use and safety programs
- ◆ Recommendations for encouraging wildlife
- ◆ Networking opportunities with others who might help solve lake property problems

- ◆ Representation on governmental committees that impact the lake
- ◆ Resources and events that can increase awareness and foster participation in our lake community

**Membership** in LWIPA is open to any individual, family, business or organization that subscribes to the purposes of the Association. Your dues will be used to support our continuing educational and environmental projects. Membership dues are \$20 per household and are now being accepted for 2011. Please complete the form in this newsletter and include with your check. In addition to the benefits listed above, you will receive periodic newsletters including information on quarterly and annual meetings, invitations to volunteer for committees, and notices of events.

### Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association 2011 Membership Application

**Yes! I want to help improve and protect Lake Wissota and become a member of LWIPA**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**2011  
memberships  
now being accepted**

**YES, PLEASE SEND NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER NOTICES BY EMAIL**

I'm especially interested in the following topics (Check those that apply:)

Aquatic Plants

Boating Safety

Zoning

Fishing

Shoreland Protection

Fund Raising

Water Quality

Recreational Use

Invasive Species

Other (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*Membership year is April 1 to March 31*

Enclose your check payable to **Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association** for \$20 and mail to:

Lake Wissota Improvement and Protection Association  
PO Box 903  
Chippewa Falls WI 54729