

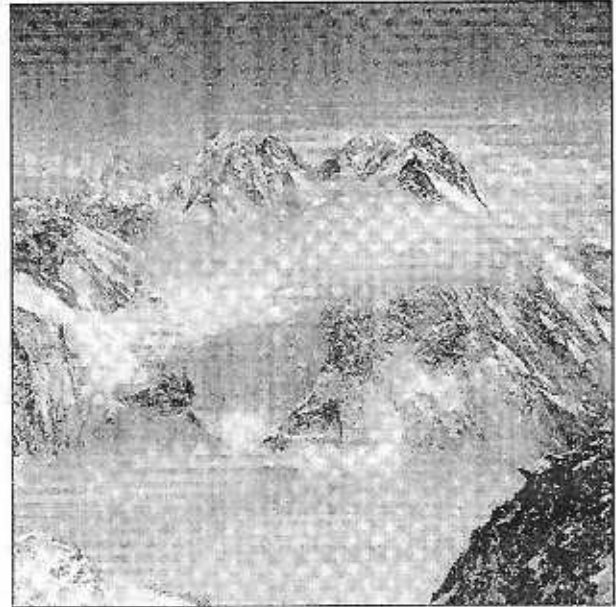
Brief History and Description of SWAN LAKE

by Jim Watson, Jr.

At 406 acres, almost 2 ½ miles long and, nearly ½ mile wide, over 80 feet deep with most of the mid-lake regions over 50 feet deep, Swan Lake lies within glacial moraine deposits, high above an ancient river valley. The bedrock rims of the ancient, rocky, V shaped valley can be seen ½ mile south and 2 miles north of the lake. The river at the bottom of this valley flowed into the pre-glacial Wisconsin River near Portage and on to the west, through the Baraboo Mountains, Devils Lake and on south to the Gulf of Mexico.

Ten thousand years ago, mile thick ice bulldozed across this area and, when it melted, left thick layers of sand, silt, clay, rock and gravel, filling in the deep valleys. Giant blocks of ice buried in this debris left holes in the land that became our lakes. River drainages changed and now the small Fox River flows through Swan Lake. The Fox originates south of Dalton, flows through Park and Spring Lakes in Pardeeville to Swan, on to Portage where it no longer enters the Wisconsin but, instead turns northeast to flow to Green Bay on Lake Michigan.

After the glaciers, various cultural groups of Native Americans visited or lived in the area. They left behind many stone, bone and pottery artifacts that have been found on high ground areas along the north shore and even in the lake itself. Also, left behind, but mostly obliterated or obscured, are burial and ceremonial mounds. Mounds on the golf course, north shore and near the log cabin on the southeast shore are no longer visible. There were



many burial mounds in a grove of trees that stood out in the middle of the long point on the north side. Called Skunk Island, because the grove looked like an island in the open meadow, many bones and artifacts were spread about when the mounds were bulldozed to fill the surrounding marsh and shoreline for building sites. Long mounds can still be seen in the grove of trees behind the Saddle Ridge Marina.

The appearance of the landscape around the lake has changed a great deal in the last 50-100 years. Before Europeans settled here the Native Americans often burned off the land periodically to suppress woody brush and trees creating a park-like landscape of prairie grasses and wildflowers with open groves and scattered oaks. Even the early farmers grazing cattle and the first builders of cottages as well as the old trains starting fires maintained the same landscape. The Portage Country Club golf course is somewhat reminiscent of that landscape although the grass is much shorter. Without the regular spring burn offs, the oak groves have turned into thick forest. Shrubs and trees grow thick even in some wetland areas that were once open.

The shoreline has also changed. Once rimmed with deep stands of reeds and wild rice where officers from the Old Ft. Winnebago hunted ducks, changes in water levels due to man's activities (deepened channel of the Fox River, the Portage levee blocking regular floodwater from the Wisconsin River etc.) and introduction of carp and other foreign species have changed the aquatic

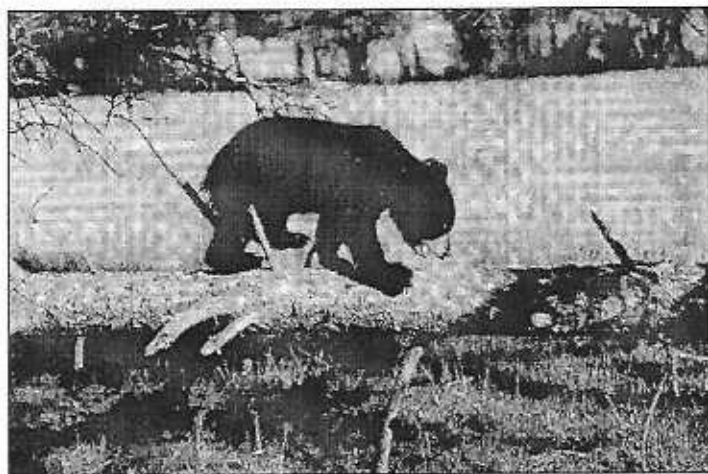
vegetation. The soft marshy shoreline, exposed to wind and waves, eroded rapidly in the first half of the 1900s. Some areas have receded 75 to 100 or more feet! The rock riprap you see along residential shores is there for a reason.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s a few farms bordered the lake with few cabins and cottages. There once was a dance hall on top of the bluff where Saddle Ridge condos are now. For winter fun there was an iced toboggan chute down that steep hill onto the frozen lake. Some Portage businessmen built themselves a clubhouse which became a sailing club, popular picnic, camping area and eventually golfing became popular, so it is now the Portage Country Club's clubhouse. Cottages were moved or built nearby. In the early years, many lake and club visitors rode the train back and forth from Portage on north side railroad tracks that went from Portage on to Cambria and places to the east. During the 1920s more groups of cottages were built around the lake and during the 1960's until now these were being converted or replaced with year round homes. Other homes have also been built. Swimming, fishing and, sailing were always an attraction. Now we also have motor boating and water ski sports.

Being part of the Fox/Winnebago waterway, and with connections at times to the Wisconsin River system, Swan Lake has a huge variety of fish species. The most popular for the fishermen would be the abundant bluegill, crappie, perch, largemouth bass, yellow and white bass, walleye, northern pike, catfish, and the small population of stocked musky which have proven to grow to trophy size on the abundant forage. The gizzard shad and carp are unwelcome newcomers to the area along with many native rough fish species such as buffalo suckers, quillback suckercarp, white suckers, longnose gar, dogfish, yellow and black bullhead. Many small fish species we all just call minnows but some are actually darters, dace, troutperch, etc. We even have a few sturgeons in this lake.

Originally the fishery was mostly bass and bluegills with a few northern pike. Walleye do very well in this lake but cannot reproduce here due to soft claylike bottom so are stocked by the DNR. The Portage Musky Club along with the DNR established a limited population of these large gamefish in Swan Lake as well as some other southern Wisconsin waters in the 1980s. Common carp were imported from Asia by way of Europe in the 1800s and have become a huge problem most places.

Special visitors to our lake include bald eagles and osprey who come here most days to catch fish. Spring and fall migration times bring loons, various ducks, grebes, egrets, occasionally pelicans and swans. Wolves and bear wander by the lake area from time to time. With the extensive wetlands and forests surrounding Swan Lake we enjoy an abundance of wildlife.



SWAN LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC. – 45 YEARS OLD!

In the summer of 2010 the Swan Lake Association, Inc. celebrated 45 years of protecting Swan Lake by being involved in multiple issues concerning the quality of the lake and the prudent use of it by residents and all who enjoy its inviting waters. Since the following history was printed in the April 1999 SLA Newsletter, the Association has continued to implement the stated goals and has also achieved other important milestones.

In 2003 and 2004 the SLA and Columbia County put in place a system to implement a "Slow-No-Wake" order for boats during high water by establishing a high water mark to be used as the basis for activating the order and taking it off. The SLA had signs made that are posted at entries to Swan Lake informing residents and users of the lake about the order/implementation of the County ordinance.

For a number of years former Saddle Ridge resident, Howard Rasmussen, promoted blue birds by erecting numerous blue bird houses in the Saddle Ridge area and on the Portage Country Club as 150 yard markers. He also generously gave houses away as door prizes at many SLA Annual Meetings and provided blue bird information for publication in the SLA newsletter.

The Association continues to support any endeavors that protect wetlands in the area such as the DNR purchase of the Lauterbach property on the west end of the lake and continuing downstream on the Fox River that became part of the Swan Lake Wildlife Area.

Sensible shoreline lighting has been another endeavor, informing lakeshore residents of practices that preserve the beauty of the night on waterfronts. Light pollution by "dusk to dawn" lights has been discouraged and alternatives suggested through brochures the SLA has received from the University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension. Anyone wanting information contact Dorothy Rebholz.

The SLA Board spent the past year working on revisions to certain Articles in the Bylaws adopted in 1998. Assistance was received from Attorney, David Carlson regarding the proper wording of the proposed changes and to make sure the revisions did not conflict with what is required to maintain the Association's tax exempt status as a 501 (c) (3) organization. These revisions were approved at the July Annual Meeting. The Association completes tax filing requirements (now electronic) for small exempt organizations each year with the IRS.

Currently, the SLA Board is working with the DNR to erect one or two osprey platforms around the lake for the enjoyment of the residents. *Members or residents with any questions, concerns or comments are asked to contact any Board member – names, addresses and phone numbers are on the back page of this newsletter.*

HISTORY OF THE SWAN LAKE ASSOCIATION

Compiled by Dorothy Rebholz and printed in April 1999 SLA Newsletter

The organizational meeting of the Swan Lake Association was held on Wednesday evening, July 21, 1965 at 7:30 pm at the Portage Country Club with Mr. William Rhyme presiding. Mr. George Nagle moved "we band together and form a Swan Lake Association." Seconded by Harold E. Rebholz; motion carried.

The following were elected to the Board of Directors: Glenn Blackburn, President; Ellsworth Jones, Vice President; Barbara Taylor, Secretary/Treasurer; Jeanette Lennon, David Eulberg, Dan O'Connor and Robert Kaschinske, Directors.

The minutes of that meeting indicate a major concern was the contamination of the lake from septic systems with the possibility of having each cottage put fluorescein dye in their systems to see if there was seepage into the lake. Also discussed were the algae bloom, the number of carp in the lake and the detergent problem.

Over 100 people attended the meeting. It was agreed that each landowner would be assessed \$1.00 to cover immediate expenses and periodic mailings during the winter.

Throughout the years, concerns addressed by the Association included water quality, fishing, wetland protection, boating regulations/safety, and monitoring Pardeeville sewage treatment and Park Lake.

Water Quality – In the 60's and 70's, the SLA conducted periodic dye tests to check if septic systems were polluting

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the lake. In 1979 a DNR water quality analysis was conducted by taking water samples at 10 sites around the lake with the results reflecting there was no problem regarding fecal pollution. Water quality tests have been conducted annually for a number of years by volunteers and are analyzed by the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point and the Wisconsin DNR.

Fishing – The SLA has monitored fish stocking and sampling provided by the DNR and members have worked with DNR officials to provide approved fish habitat (fish cribs) as an on-going activity. Money has been donated to the Portage Area Musky Club for their fish stocking activities, including stocking fish in Swan Lake.

Wetland Protection – In the late 1970's and the 1980's, the SLA became involved protecting wetland and shorelines by providing input into various applications made to the DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers by Swan Lake property owners, proposing activities which would have altered and adversely affected these areas. The preservation of contiguous wetland and the integrity of the shoreline continue to be a focus of the Association.

Boating regulations and safety – As early as 1972, the July 29th Annual Meeting minutes (written by Florence Jones, Sec'y/Treas.) express concern regarding "violations that include speeding, skiers too close to other boats, swimmers and piers, winter fishermen leaving debris causing hazards to snowmobilers and summer boaters asked not to dump containers in the lake." These same concerns continue today. The SLA board has recommended to lake users a boat traffic pattern on the west end of the lake to promote safe boating in that area. A map indicating the suggested traffic pattern is periodically published in newsletters.

Monitoring Pardeeville Sewage Treatment and Park Lake – Swan Lake is unique because, as part of the Fox River, it is one of the few natural flow-through type lakes left in Wisconsin—especially southern Wisconsin. An important focus for the Swan Lake Association in the mid 1970's and early 1980's was sewage treatment for the city of Pardeeville. The system at the time released effluent into the Fox River which flowed directly into Swan Lake. Because of the increase in nutrients, water quality deteriorated and algae and weed growth increased. In 1977-78,

SLA records indicate input given by members at a hearing with a committee formed to give continuous vigilance to this problem affecting Swan Lake. In 1984, the new wastewater treatment plant in Pardeeville was operational, greatly improving the water quality in Swan Lake in subsequent years. Also, monitoring of pertinent issues at Pardeeville's Park Lake has continued through the years with various SLA members attending meetings to give and receive input into matters that could eventually affect Swan Lake.

Non-Profit/Tax Exempt Status and moving into the 21st century – At the Annual Meeting on July 13, 1994, the SLA voted to pursue the process of becoming a tax-exempt organization. Dues were increased from \$5 to \$10 to allow the Association to be recognized by the State of Wisconsin, making it eligible for State aid, grants, etc. Articles of Incorporation were filed in 1996 and the Board began the actual application process in 1997. Exemption from federal income tax as a 510(c)(3) organization was achieved in January, 1999 with an application filed with the Wisconsin Dept. of Revenue for Wisconsin Sales and Use Tax Certificate of Exempt status.

In the future, as Swan Lake Association, Inc. moves into the 21st century, goals include becoming involved as a non-profit organization in the preservation of valuable land/habitat in the area. This may involve working with property owners to preserve land vital to maintaining the quality of Swan Lake and providing long-term property tax relief through conservation easements.

An important focus of Swan Lake Association, Inc. continues to be to provide educational information to members and non-members through periodic newsletters and meetings. This information typically relates to general safety of water-related activities, such as boating, water skiing and/or environmental issues. This is often done by providing a forum to representatives of environmental and governmental organizations at annual meetings. On September 11, 1997, the Board decided to send newsletters to all property owners and to all pier tenants of the Saddle Ridge Marina and the Portage Country Club pier facility who are not currently members of the Association in order to provide them with the important information relating to Swan Lake and the purposes and goals of Swan Lake Association, Inc.

DUES/MEMBERSHIP for SLA, Inc.

Swan Lake Association, Inc. dues are \$10 for the fiscal year, July through June. The date on your mailing label indicates the year in which dues have last been paid. Checks, payable to "Swan Lake Association, Inc.," may be mailed to: SLA, Inc., P.O. Box 182, Portage, WI 53901. This newsletter is also being sent to all property owners in the Swan Lake area and to people who rent boat slips at Saddle Ridge and the Portage Country Club who are currently non-members. There are two classes of membership: 1. Individual, consisting of either an individual or entity; and 2. Joint, consisting of a husband and wife, family, or joint owners of a single parcel or real estate. Each individual or joint membership shall have one vote. Members shall designate affiliation with either the north or south side of Swan Lake.

OUTDOORS with JIM WATSON, JR.

Fall Fishing - It's the best time to catch the "big one" that keeps getting away from me!! During mid-August into September, as the surface water cools, more minnows and bait fish move into shallow water and the bigger fish follow them to feed up before the long winter. Usually, by mid-October, the surface gets cool enough to "roll over" the lake mixes and it takes a week or so to straighten out and for the fish to recover from this low oxygen condition. Then they really get hungry in November!

Most fishermen are hunting this time of the year and miss out on some of the best time on the water. Use big, slow baits or the biggest minnows or suckers you can find - even walleyes will take giant suckers intended for musky. (That might be the only way to get those 10-15 lb. walleye that are in the lake!)

Lately, many northerns (up to 38") have been caught and released. Also, several legal musky (up to 47") and large mouth bass are hitting on musky jerk baits. Some large bluegill and fair sized perch are also hitting. A few have learned how to catch big channel catfish with dead bait. I like to go after them in winter myself, looking forward to ice shack time!



Randy Rhode displays
elk rack.

"BIGGER THAN A BREADBOX!"...

Randy Rhode acquired a huge set of elk horns about ten years ago from Ken Werner whose parents owned the bar in which they were displayed for many years. Randy submitted the following article he found about the ancient antlers which appeared in the Pardeeville-Wyocena Times, dated September 30, 1948. The enormous size of these antlers (compared to antlers current-day elk hunters acquire) makes one wonder how long ago these huge creatures inhabited the area.

PARDEEVILLE-WYOCENA TIMES

A Progressive Newspaper Devoted to the Community in Which It Exists. Established November 21, 1888.

VOLUME 69

PARDEEVILLE, WISCONSIN, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1948

NUMBER 41

Ancient Antlers Subject of Much Local Interest

Huge Set of Elk Horns Found in Swan Lake

Joe Rich, who was born and raised on a farm near the west end of Swan Lake about five miles west of Pardee, went fishing on Sunday afternoon of this week and Monday he brought to town a huge pair of elk antlers which he dug and pulled from the bottom of the lake in some three feet of water.

At first attracted by what he thought might be a piece of root, visible on the bottom, he finally decided to make sure and wound up by getting into the cold water to dig out what is a remarkable find, the largest pair of elk horns any of our hunters have ever seen. One of the antlers was broken at the top end while being taken from the lake bed, but the other is a perfect specimen, about three and one-half feet long, with ten points and approximately three inches thick at the base. A portion of the skull came up with the antlers and it is apparent that the entire skeleton is buried in the sand bottom.

A few years ago a smaller set was found in a bay some half-mile east of where the specimens were found Sunday, and Jesse

Breneman found another set while digging marl from the lake about 15 years ago.

No one can be found who has ever heard of elk being seen in this area, and the finding of these specimens has created a lot of interest as to how they came to be in the lake bottom.

The antlers are now on display at Rose & Whitey's tavern, while a smaller pair found some years ago are kept in the collection of guns and other curios in the lumber office of J. W. Jamieson in Pardee. Although very brittle, the antlers are in a fine state of preservation, but bleached to the color of burned bone.

"NEWS AND VIEWS"...

*A letter was recently sent from the Swan Lake Association to Pat Kaiser, encouraging the DNR to purchase the 429 acre Lauterbach property which is for sale on the west end of Swan Lake.

*In 1996, the SLA filed the Nonstock Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State of Wisconsin, making the Association an official, registered Wisconsin corporation under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes. The SLA will apply for Federal Tax Exempt Status with the Internal Revenue Service this fall after seeking professional advice.