

SWAN LAKE NEWS

Swan Lake Association, Inc. Newsletter

November, 2023

THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Mike Meikle

As I write this from my deer stand, it is 50 degrees, and it makes me think back about what a great summer at the lake we all have had. While it was dry at times and the lake's water level were low, it was tough to beat the weather overall. As many of you have commented to me, it's better to have the water level low than face high water levels and be under slow no wake conditions. We started with the pelicans on the lake in April, and shortly after that, we had the loons. It is always great to see the wildlife pass through on the way to their destination. Opening fishing weekend was slow for most, but the weather conditions were perfect. Walleyes seemed particularly hard to find, and while the stripers were around, the large ones were hard to find.

At the recent Swan Lake annual meeting, we discussed issues that concern all of us. The Department of Natural Resources continues to try and upgrade the boat landing ramp, but at this point, they have had no bids to complete the work needed. It is obvious that the project is underfunded, and at this time, our DNR contact has suggested we look at taking the money budgeted for that project and consider re-doing the parking surface area. While this needs to be done as well, we will still need temporary repairs to the boat landing.

We want all residents to be able to enjoy the lake, so we discussed again where we are regarding the ADA certified pier at the boat landing. Initially, it was estimated that the price of the ADA pier would be approximately \$35,000, and as we get farther along in the process, it is now estimated that the price will be closer to \$45,000. The SLA board has agreed to contribute \$10,000 to the ADA pier. Currently, the

DNR has no funding available for the pier so we are looking to see if there are any grants that might be available to assist with the cost of the project. We will also be looking at several fundraising options to make this happen. Anyone interested in donating towards the pier at the boat landing may send a check to the Swan Lake Association at PO Box 182 Portage, WI 53901. Please note on your check "fishing pier". All donations received will be used only for the pier and will be segregated from the SLA operating funds. While the SLA would purchase the pier, it would then be donated to the DNR who would then assume all liability and maintenance needed. More to come on that.

Many of you may have noticed the new life jacket rack while taking your boats out for the year. The rack is a loaner program through the DNR for those that forgot their life jackets, and they will return them when they finish boating for the day.

At the request of many concerned lake owners, the DNR was on the lake on Labor Day weekend to observe overall boat safety. While most people were obeying the boating regulations, the DNR did issue several citations for various offenses. The DNR can't be on the lake as often as they would like so they have asked for all of us to assist with calling offenses into the DNR or the Columbia County Sheriff. If possible, just give them a description of the boat, registration numbers, and what the boat is doing.

Finally, it has been asked by many to please reduce your outdoor lighting so that all can enjoy the serenity of the lake. Please look at reducing glare to make the lake as peaceful and relaxing as possible for all.

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR SLA, INC.

Swan Lake Association, Inc. dues are \$10.00 for the upcoming fiscal year, July through June. If you receive the newsletter via mail, the date on your mailing label will indicate the year in which dues have last been paid. If you receive the newsletter electronically, dues will be indicated in the body of the email. **All checks are payable to "Swan Lake Association, Inc." and may be mailed to:**

SLA, Inc., PO Box 182, Portage, WI 53901.

WATSON WATCH

by Jim Watson

Observations on Lake Quality: After decades of excess rain and snow, since the late 1980s, that flooded out and killed many trees around ponds, lakes, rivers, and wetlands, we've now had three years of drought, and this last summer was the worst. By mid-July, the vast wetlands surrounding Swan Lake and the upper watershed finally stopped flowing. Even these huge sponge-like acres were emptied of their last drop. We had to stop running up and down the river, knocking the weeds over as the lake level was dropping. That low water is what we typically saw in late summers back in the 1960s through the late 1970s. Back then, at many SLA meetings, we discussed building some kind of restriction in the Fox River outlet to keep some water in the lake. We often heard complaints that Pardeeville was holding back all the water in their lake. More recently during high water events, we hear people complain about Pardeeville dumping all the excess water to us. However, they are restricted by their permit to only vary lake levels 3" up or down, so in reality, this has little effect on Swan Lake.

Snow melt and April showers raised the water a few inches and then it dropped before the Memorial Day weekend, stranding some boats on their hoists. As soon as the water temp hit 70F, the water plants down river started growing like weeds. Shortly thereafter, the lake began to rise an inch a day, with no rain falling at all. With the hot sunny days, the seaweed full of gas bubbles from photosynthesis and decomposition, grew to the surface with stems 6-8 ft long. We started running our boat up and down the river daily, tipping the weeds over to open a path for water to flow. After a few days, a 4 ft opening in the weed mass let the water flow and the lake stayed at a good level until mid-July. Even then, the weeds were still in the river, but there just was not enough water coming into the lake to keep it from slowly dropping.

This is the second year in a row we have had the lake turn a pale green. Green algae blocks light, so the rooted plants don't grow very well like they do in the shallow river. This was also typical during the 1950s through the 1970s and into the early '80s before the Pardeeville sewer plant quit discharging

into the Fox River. There is still a lot of phosphorus stored in the silt on the bottom that gets circulated back onto the surface every spring and fall when it warms and cools and the water turns over top to bottom. This fresh fertilizer often triggers algae blooms in late spring and again in late fall.

Fishing Report: I rarely go fishing anymore, unless the kids or anyone else wants to go, but as usual, we had pretty good action catching bluegills in early summer. Other than that, the yellow bass (stripers) hit everything you toss in the water, but they are mostly small. I have only heard of a few larger white bass (also called stripers) being caught. Some large crappies were active in shallows or near sunken brush in early springtime and again in late fall. The best game fish action is with largemouth bass - the lake is full of them in all sizes. Just walking out on the pier, we see a half dozen to several dozen any time the water is clear enough to see the bottom. A few smallmouth bass are showing up again, too. The northern pike are few and far between, which has been the case in most of the lakes in our region since the late 1980s.

One reason for starting the Portage Area Musky Club (PAMC) was to take advantage of the huge rough fish populations in most southern Wisconsin lakes that large game fish can feed on. Musky raised in the old Portage sewer plant tanks were planted in many lakes from Madison to our area, and even shipped to other clubs to plant in lakes further away, including Lake Winnebago. Some of those fish migrated to Green Bay. Many of these musky-filled lakes have become popular destinations for fishermen from all over, including us locals. It's a chance at a popular large fish experience without the four-hour drive to the north country.

Over time, the DNR increased their Musky rearing capacity and took over stocking in our area. The PAMC kept our facility on standby, maintaining it for many years just in case the DNR stopped the popular program. The few remaining PAMC members finally gave up and now the facility is used by the city of Portage for firefighter training. Just as

Continued on Page 3

OUTDOOR LIGHTING FOR LAKE LIVING

By Paula Greco

Dark Sky Lighting is a great way to enjoy the outdoors after dark, keep your property secure and safe while respecting your neighbors on both sides of the lake. Old style lighting can be an annoyance to those same neighbors as it causes glare and light spill over onto other properties reducing the enjoyment of our beautiful lake for all of us. Marveling at the stars or moon on a calm dark night from shore or water is an amazing and beautiful experience that we all want to enjoy.



Dark sky lighting helps maintain a darker overall lake environment. So, the next time you change that bulb, or replace that aging light fixture or want to spruce the place up a bit, keep these tips in mind.

1. Only light areas when and where they need it. Use motion detection and timers for lighting rather than dusk to dawn lighting. Turn off party lights and yard lights when not in use. Some security experts say motion lights surprise intruders while always on lights provide easy lighting for surveillance. Motion activated lights can be brighter than full time lights, knowing that they will turn off when they time out.
2. Be considerate of neighbors. Use lighting fixtures that direct the lighting downward, not outward. This prevents annoying light spill-over to neighbors' properties and glaring lights across the lake.
3. Use warm colored lighting. Some LED light with their bluish tint causes harsh glare. Pick warm LED lights. Snow magnifies the glare effect in the winter as it reflects the light upward.
4. Reduce wattage of lights when practical. Sometimes less is more. Overly bright lighting causes our eyes to take longer to adjust.
5. Avoid up-lighting to protect the night sky. We all can see the sky glow from Cascade in the winter and Portage all year around. Let's not contribute more.

INTRODUCING NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Greetings. I'm John Drury, and I'm excited to be a new addition to the board of the Swan Lake Association. My wife Lisa and I were fortunate enough to recently find a home on the lake, the former Stauber property, on the South Shore. While I'm a new resident to the lake, our family has deep roots to the Portage area and a history and connection to the lake and its surrounding pristine wildlife areas. Lisa and I spend time at the lake and our residence in Windsor, with plans to make Swan Lake our permanent home. Lisa and I have 5 children who also share a passion and love of the area. I recently retired from Madison Gas and Electric with a career in business development which allowed me to utilize my networking and communication skills to connect and drive stakeholders to consensus on small and large projects. I'm an outdoors person with a commitment to land stewardship and with a passion for "projects". – *John Drury*

Hello friends, neighbors, boaters, and all Swan Lake enthusiasts. I'm Jerry Rice, one of the new Board

Members for the Association, and I'm looking forward to working on behalf of all those that enjoy this fantastic lake and its beautiful surroundings. My wife and I live on the North Shore in the Saddle Ridge community. We've been a part of the area for almost 15 years. Initially, we'd come up from the Brookfield, WI area where we had a full-time residence (although I was a commuter into Northern Illinois for work) for weekends. Well, as things go, weekends became weekends plus a day or so. Pretty soon, stays became longer. When COVID arrived, I was working remotely from our Saddle Ridge house, and ultimately, we sold our Brookfield home and became full time residents on the lake. Two years ago, I retired from my full-time career and now work part time consulting. The allure of Swan Lake has been a strong influencer in our lives, and I (we) want to do our part to maintain and improve the lake. If any members of the association have thoughts on projects or concerns, please reach out to me directly at jjrice56@gmail.com. Thanks for helping to make this Swan Lake community the delight that it is! – *Jerry Rice*

I predicted, the DNR quit stocking many of the lakes including Park Lake and Silver Lake, which was a huge disappointment to many locals. I thought they also stopped planting them in Swan Lake, but after looking at the stocking reports, they just quit doing it every year. They have been putting musky in Swan every 1 to 3 years, up through 2019, at least. Not near the numbers as in the past, but obviously some are being caught or all those fishermen casting and trolling with heavy tackle are just stubborn. A few of them are out almost every day, even after dark and well into December, until the lake freezes.

A Safety Reminder - Jet Skis and Personal Watercraft (PWC): In late August, on a busy Saturday, I noticed we have several personal watercrafts on the lake (not just visitors from the public landing) that the operators need driving lessons to learn the rules of navigation, including the specific rules pertaining to PWC. For example, unless at dead idle speed, PWC must stay 200 ft from the shore, 100 ft from piers, rafts, and all other watercrafts. Even another PWC who is out riding with you must stay 100 ft away from your PWC. PWC should not follow closely behind boats to jump waves, especially if a boat is pulling a water-skier or other towables. Always look over your shoulder before making sudden turns, etc.

This is also a good reminder for all boaters: keep

your distance from everybody else, look before turning, and if overtaking another boat, pass on the left (the same as you do on the highway). Yield to boats approaching on your right and stay to the right when meeting someone head on.

We still have too many boaters driving too close to rafts, piers, and shorelines. It took a few years, but most locals stay outside of the white/blue buoys where they are placed. But even then, once some pass the buoy, they swing back in too close to the next pier or the shoreline. Per Wisconsin state law, unless you are at slow-no-wake speed, you must stay 100 ft away from every pier, raft, and shore, not just where there is a buoy. We put these buoys in front of several piers in key locations to give a visual reference of what 100 ft looks like on the water, but we can't put one in front of every pier. The buoys cannot be more than 150 ft from shore, so they do no good in front of a pier that is over 50 ft long. Because more and more people want these buoys in front of piers that are over 50 ft long, I asked the DNR about placing official slow-no-wake hazard markers in the 100 ft zone. They do not want buoys all around the lake either but believe that more enforcement and citations will help increase awareness of the rules. The DNR will be spending more time on Swan Lake and ask us to get registration numbers, descriptions, pictures, or videos of violations and call the DNR tip line (1-800-TIP-WDNR) or Columbia County Sheriff (1-608-742-4166).

PORTAGE BOAT CLUB

By Mike Proebstle

Next year, the Portage Boat Club will be putting up one more retaining wall and replacing a large section of the driveway by the boat ramp. The Steak Fry dates are scheduled for Saturday, July 13th and Saturday, August 17th. If anyone is interested in attending the steak fry, they should contact me at 847-404-8949 one week prior to the event. The Pancake Breakfast is scheduled from 7:00AM to noon on Sunday, August 4th. Adults are \$7.00 and children under 11 are \$3.00. Tickets can be purchased at the door. We hope everyone has a great year in 2024!! If anyone is interested in becoming a member of the Portage Boat Club, they can receive an application by submitting a letter to:

Portage Boat Club
P.O. Box 5
Portage, WI 53901

CLASSIFIED AD



10ft johnboat with sturdy trailer, good tires. Can get into the thin water where ducks hang out. For sale \$600. Call Jim Watson if interested at 608-617-9819.

SLA BOD MEETING NEWS

By Kory McCarthy

The Annual Meeting of the Swan Lake Association, Inc. was held on September 13th, 2023, at the Portage Library. During that meeting, John Drury (S), Robert Barth (S), Jerry Rice (N), and Don Sabey (N) were elected or re-elected to the Board of Directors.

The Swan Lake Association Board of Directors met on November 1st, 2023, and elected officers for the coming year: President – Mike Meikle, Vice President – Don Sabey, Treasurer – Paula Greco, and Secretary – John Drury. The bylaws of SLA Inc. state a person may hold an office for only two consecutive years.

A special thank you Vicki Vogts and Michelle Olson for their many years spent serving on the SLA board including in officer positions.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

As I noted in the prior editions, the SLA Board of Directors is performing an initiative to confirm email addresses and preferred method of communication for all Swan Lake Association members. I received communication from almost 100 members with most electing to receive the newsletter electronically. Please let me offer a heartfelt THANK YOU to all that responded to my inquiry. If you did not respond to my initial requests, please text (608-234-2957) or email (mccarthy.kory@gmail.com) the following information:

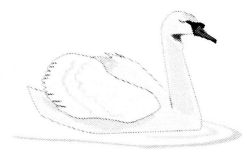
- Full Name
- Email Address
- Preferred Newsletter Communication Method: **Email or Mail**

As always, we appreciate your cooperation with this request and continued support of the mission of the Swan Lake Association.

THANK YOU FOR THE CONTRIBUTION

By Don Sabey

On behalf of the Swan Lake Association Board of Directors, we want to extend a heartfelt "THANK YOU" to Dr. S. Taylor of Portage, WI. and Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Walcott of Ithaca, NY. In September of this year, our association received a very generous donation from both families in remembrance of their special friend Warren Rebholtz. Many of you know Warren and Dorothy lived on 1st street overlooking Swan Lake. Both Warren and Dorothy were long time board members, officers of the Swan Lake Association, and Dorothy also served as editor of the Swan Lake Newsletter for as long as anyone can remember. Warren passed away peacefully in August laying in his bed overlooking Swan Lake and doing what he loved to do: watch the birds fly by. Thank you, Dr. Taylor, and C & J Walcott, for remembering your friend.



SWAN LAKE NEWS

Swan Lake Association, Inc. Newsletter

June, 2024

Annual Meeting of Members of Swan Lake Association, Inc.

The Annual Meeting of the members of Swan Lake Association, Inc. will be held: Wednesday, September 11th, 2024 - 5:00 pm
Portage Public Library, Bidwell Meeting Room, 253 W. Edgewater St., Portage Wisconsin

For the following purposes:

1. To read and approve the minutes of the last Annual Meeting;
2. To present reports of officers and committees;
3. To elect three directors of the Board of Directors – one with affiliation to the North and two with affiliation to the South. The terms of Jim Watson (N), Mike Meikle (S), and Kory McCarthy (S) are expiring. A nominating chairperson has been named to search for and present names of persons interested in running for the three positions open in 2024 for the Board of Directors. Anyone interested in one of these three-year terms, please contact Kory McCarthy at 608-234-2957.
4. To transact unfinished business and new business as may properly come before the meeting.

THOUGHTS FROM PRESIDENT

By Mike Meikle

It is the end of May, and the weather is looking great. The lake has been exceptionally clear this spring, and as the water warms up, it is nice seeing the fish coming into the shallow water, getting ready to spawn.

The Swan Lake Board would like to keep everyone up to date with what is going on at the lake, as well as ask for your help with what else you feel could be done to improve the quality of the lake.

We have called off our efforts at locating an ADA pier at the boat landing. The cost to install is just not something we can afford, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is currently not able to assist with any grants at this time. To date, there have been no quotes for the repairs needed for the boat landing. The DNR will continue with temporary repairs as needed, but in the end, the work will need to be done before the landing gets to the point that launching your boat will be a challenge. The DNR has also discussed repaving the parking lot. The proposed loaner life vest station has also not happened, but we continue to feel that the project is worthwhile and should be continued for the safety of all boaters on the lake who may have forgotten a life vest.

The Swan Lake board met recently to discuss what other areas we can assist with in making the lake more enjoyable for all. One of the areas currently being discussed with the DNR is the possibility of stocking Walleyes in the lake, as we have seen the fish totals drop off significantly in the past 4-5 years. The paragraph below is a summary from the DNR and helps explain why we are seeing a decrease in walleyes in the lake and why we feel that funding additional stocking would be beneficial.

The DNR has conducted fall electrofishing surveys every year at Swan Lake since 2016. In years when small fingerling walleyes are stocked in June, the fall survey tells us how well those walleyes survived their first summer. In years when they do not stock, they learn about walleye natural reproduction based on how many 6-9" fish are found. They also collect other gamefish during the fall survey such as pike, musky, largemouth, and smallmouth bass. We had a great walleye fishery in Swan Lake in 2018, with over three adult walleyes per acre which is excellent for a stocked fishery. However, there were some interruptions to the stocking schedule due to pond failures and the pandemic. For a lake like Swan those interruptions in stocking will be noticed when adults get fished out and there are not new fish to take their place for a few years. In 2020 and 2021 we also saw elevated fishing pressure during the pandemic when activities were restricted. Then we had no stocking in 2020 and no stocking in 2021 due to the production failure. In 2022, Swan Lake was stocked with 2,000 large fingerlings in October. This amounted to about five fish per acre which would be half of a normal fall fingerling quota of ten fish per acre. In 2023, the lake received its normal quota of small fingerlings, but the fall survey found lower than normal survival of walleye.

As always, please feel free to pass along any ideas you may have to help make the lake more enjoyable for all. Have a safe and fun summer everyone!

WATSON WATCH

by Jim Watson

For the few of us that enjoy all the seasons and the weather traditionally expected during those different parts of the calendar year, this last winter was one of, if not the worst.

It was late to come and early to leave, with only short bouts of every type of weather imagined. There was almost zero frost in the ground, ice on the lake for only a few weeks, and only 7 inches at the most. We had a nice 12" snowfall before the lake froze during 3 days of 30 below 0 wind chills. The ice was hard and clear over the entire lake and was dependably safe for all travel on foot, ATV, and snowmobiles. Kids had a few days of ice skating and some downhill sledding before intermittent thaws ruined the snow and ice surfaces. We did some fishing all over the lake with very little success. I rode the snowmobile 4 times to groom trails for crosscountry skis that were ruined by those same thaws, which closed the county snowmobile trails for all but a handful of days. Ice fishing was mostly comfortable, even without a pop-up tent for shelter. I often sat out on the open ice with shirtsleeves rolled up, getting sunburned.

I considered heading north for some real winter conditions. Checking online, I found that we would have to go farther to unfamiliar lands and waters, as conditions were not much better within a 4–5-hour drive.

Spring weather came to stay in February. April and May had temperatures like those of May and June. Some days in May were even warmer than typical June days. The 3-year drought and low water levels carried into this May, then we finally got the rains. The lake rose at the end of May until it was only 6" below the Slow No Wake mark. It has started to drop a little as of June 1st, and it needs to go down a few more inches, but not too much that we get boats hung up on their hoists. Our river boat is in the water, packed and ready to go if needed.

The water was tinted brown after the ice melted, as usual, but it cleared up in mid-May until the bottom was visible in depths over 12 feet. It was nice to see the numbers and variety of fish that swarmed into the shallows to enjoy the warmer waters. Of course, we know what happens when heavy rains wash the freshly applied fertilizer off the landscape.

As water temperatures rise above 70 degrees, we are anticipating the bluegills to start biting in the shallows soon. Meanwhile, carp and black buffalo fish are already a spectacle, darting just below the surface. It won't be long before they churn the waters in the frenzy of spawning. The archery hunt for them has commenced.

Above the water, bird activity has reached its peak as well. The imperative of feeding their young keeps eagles, osprey, hawks, and owls, not to mention a myriad of other birds and animals, busy and highly visible. It's a rarity to look out a window or step out the door without spotting juvenile foxes, rabbits, groundhogs, as well as swarms of squirrels and chipmunks. Scenes of crows chasing the Cooper's hawk or glimpses of the Barred Owls nesting within our neighborhood and along the lakeshore, are common sights.

SAFETY REMINDER OF PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

by Don Sabey

Safety remains a top priority for all of us enjoying Swan Lake, and our actions when operating a personal watercraft (PWC) should reflect this commitment. Jim Watson provided a comprehensive outline of PWC safety in last fall's newsletter. If you need a copy of these guidelines, especially regarding the operation of Jet Skis, I'm available to provide one - just contact Don Sabey at 608-742-1157.

While I am not an expert like Jim, I learned a valuable lesson about safety and responsibility on our lake. A few years ago, I saw a disturbing incident where a boat had stopped near my home to switch passengers on a tube. A Jet Ski took a dangerously sharp turn too close to the boat, startling everyone involved, and it could have led to serious injuries.

I regret not reporting it at the time. Even though I spoke to the boat's occupants, taking formal action by notifying the authorities would have been the responsible step. I encourage everyone to report any instances of reckless behavior, even if the offending party may be gone when the authorities arrive. If you see any reckless operation of watercraft, please contact the Columbia County Sheriff at 608-742-4166 or the DNR tipline at 800-847-9367.

We should all enjoy our lake safely, respecting others as we engage in various activities from fishing to wakeboarding. It's important for everyone to be familiar with and follow the lake's safety rules and ensure that anyone using our equipment does the same.

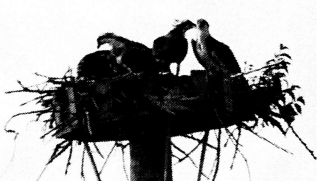
AN ODE TO KAYAKING

by Terri Amend

Embarking on a kayaking adventure at Swan Lake offers a serene and enjoyable escape on the water. Whether you are a novice, like me, or a seasoned kayaker, the gentle rhythm of paddling can provide a peaceful respite, allowing you to clear your mind and fully immerse yourself in the beauty of your surroundings. Gliding through the tranquil waters of the lake or along the Fox River can forge a deep connection with the abundant wildlife that Wisconsin has to offer.

One of kayaking's many rewards is the chance to come face-to-face with the magnificent wildlife that calls our corner of Wisconsin home – be it in the water, sky, or marshes. Observing herons and cranes skillfully fishing for their next meal or catching a glimpse of sun-kissed turtles basking peacefully on logs, can be truly mesmerizing. The unmistakable calls of ospreys and eagles soaring above prompt you to look skyward in hopes of witnessing their majestic flight as they swoop down to snatch their prey and ascend to a nearby perch for a well-deserved feast.

So, whether you're a first-time paddler or a seasoned enthusiast, gather your kayak, paddle, and gear, and embark on a tranquil exploration of the wonders that Swan Lake has to offer!



MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR SLA, INC.

At the spring SLA board meeting, a motion was made and passed to change the annual membership dates to coincide with our calendar year. If you have already paid your 2024 dues of \$10.00, then it will be valid until December 31st, 2024 (vs. the historical June 30th date). On the address label of your newsletter, you will find the year for which you are current. We hope this will clear up any confusion moving forward. 2025 membership fees will be due starting on January 1st, 2025, but you may pay that at any time, and it will be credited to the following year.

PORTAGE BOAT CLUB

By Mike Proebstle

The Steak Fry dates are scheduled for Saturday, July 13th and Saturday, August 17th. If anyone is interested in attending the steak fry, they should contact me at 847-404-8949 one week prior to the event. The Pancake Breakfast is scheduled from 7:00AM to noon on Sunday, August 4th. Adults are \$7.00 and children under 11 are \$3.00. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

We hope everyone has a great summer! If anyone is interested in becoming a member of the Portage Boat Club, they can receive an application by submitting a letter to:

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P.O. Box 5
Portage, WI 53901

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- Full Name
- Email Address
- Preferred Newsletter Communication Method: **Email** or **Mail**

As always, we appreciate your cooperation with this request and continued support of the mission of the Swan Lake Association.