

# RALALA LAKES ASSOCIATION

## MESSAGE FROM BOB EDDY, RALALA ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

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TO BE MORE INFORMED



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Typically, my summer message recaps RALALA's major projects and accomplishments for the year's lake season and focuses on projects and programs for the remainder of the year. I have explained the results of the annual Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) survey and outlined any necessary treatment plans and expenses. However, this year's surveys were delayed due to weather conditions. The surveying began on Roosevelt and Lawrence Lakes on June 30 and could not be concluded until July 9th.



The 2024 results have just been received and are alarming. The RALALA Board is in the process of examining costs and treatment options and a thorough review of the information including:

- Conference calls with the survey team
- Discussions with the treatment provider (independent of the survey team, as required)
- Contact with, and treatment permitting approval from the DNR
- Consultation with other Lake Associations in the area

Here is a summary of what we know:

- No Eurasian watermilfoil (EMW) was identified on Lawrence Lake, indicating the 2023 treatment appears to have been successful.
- Unfortunately, the north basin of Roosevelt Lake has 4 previously unidentified areas, consisting of about 7 plants, that are newly identified.
- The south basin of Roosevelt Lake has a significant increase in identified EWM compared to 2023. 193 plants have been identified.
- All lakes in the area have seen significant increases in EWM in the 2024 surveys. Several Lake Associations have reported 3 to 4 times more invasive plants identified this year than last.
- **2023 treatment area was 14.96 acres.**
- **2024 proposed treatment area is 39.82 acres.**
- **2024 RALALA budget for AIS treatment is \$23,000.**
- **2024 estimate for AIS treatment is approximately \$60,000.**

- Surveys for Smokey Hollow and Leavitt Lakes will be completed in September. No EWM has been found in those lakes in the past.

When asked the cause of this significant increase in volume of EWM, the survey and treatment providers concurred:

- 2023 had a very hot spring with minimum rainfall, perfect growing conditions for EWM. The hot weather allowed all water plants significant initial growth spurts. The lack of rain and runoff increased water clarity, allowing sunlight to penetrate to deeper depths, helping plants thrive. Above average water temperatures also enhanced plant growth.
- 2023/2024 winter had very little snow, above average temperatures and minimized ice coverage. Many plants continued to grow, in a limited way, through the winter months. The surveyor commented he saw green, growing EWM under the ice on a number of lakes early this year.

*PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED ON P.17*

# BUILDING AWARENESS • ENCOURAGING ACTION

## FOLLOW UP ON EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL IDENTIFICATION

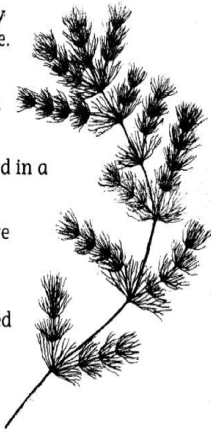
—by Bob Lee

Subsequent to my article in the 2024 Spring newsletter (found on the RALALA website [ralalalakes.org](http://ralalalakes.org)) about how to spot and identify Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM), several people have sent messages through the website's "Contact Us" page reporting they have spotted what they thought was EWM growing in the vicinity of their lakeshore or dock. I followed up on each of these leads by visiting the site and independently identifying what was growing there. In all but one case the reports were accurate identifications of EWM. The exception was actually a spotting of curly leaf pondweed, another invasive species, and

### Coontail

Coontail is a free-floating aquatic plant without roots. It may be completely submersed or partially floating on the surface.

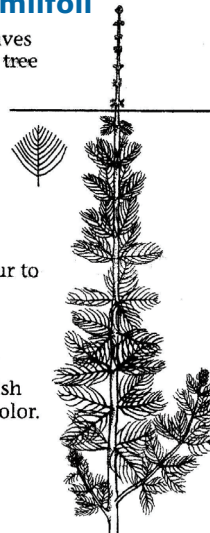
- The leaves are stiff and arranged in whorls.
- Each leaf is divided in a forked pattern.
- Leaf divisions have teeth along one margin.
- Leaves are crowded toward the tip of the stem creating the "coontail" appearance.



the person reporting knew it wasn't EWM, but correctly realized that this was not a native plant growing at the end of their dock. In each case I provided Freshwater Scientific with GPS coordinates so that the area could be thoroughly examined by the professional surveyor. I think this member reporting will further enhance the probability of spotting all infestations and increase the effectiveness of our survey and treatment program. **I want to thank those of you who have made reports, and urge the rest of you to stay alert and message us through the website if you spot anything suspicious.**

### Northern Watermilfoil

- Rigid feather-like leaves forming a christmas tree shape. The lower leaflets are usually quite long.
- Leaves usually stiff when out of water.
- Leaves arranged in whorls (circles) of four to six around stem.
- Usually seven to ten leaflet pairs per leaf.
- Stem is usually whitish or whitish green in color.



An excellent source to help everyone accurately recognize AIS is:

### AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

#### Identification Guide for Minnesota

#### Aquatic & Wetland Plants, Invertebrates, Fish

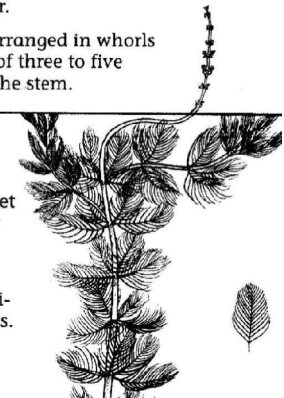
Published by the University of Minnesota

<https://maisrc.umn.edu/guidebook>

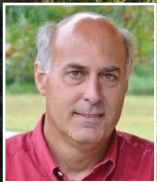
Available in PDF to download or click to order hardcopy from U of M Bookstore

### The Intruder—Eurasian Watermilfoil

- Delicate feather-like leaves. Leaflets are mostly the same length.
- Leaves are usually limp when out of the water.
- Leaves arranged in whorls (circles) of three to five around the stem.
- Usually twelve to twenty-one leaflet pairs per leaf.
- Long spaghetti-like stems.



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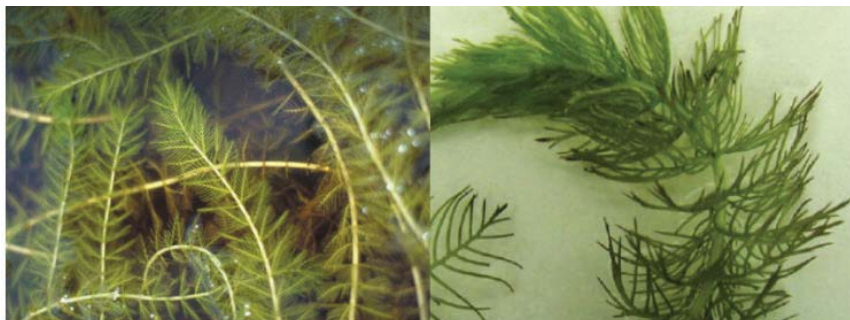
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# BUILDING AWARENESS • ENCOURAGING ACTION

## SUMMARY OF EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL TREATMENT PROCESS



We have had confirmed Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) in Roosevelt Lake since 2016 and in Lawrence Lake since 2023. RALALA has been actively monitoring and contracting treatment of it since it first was discovered. The following is a brief outline of the steps involved.

- 1. Request Process** (typically submitted in March/April of each year)
  - The Lake Association, working with treatment providers and the DNR, submits a request to treat EWM. Part of this process requires the notification of lake shore owners.
- 2. Survey Phase** (typically conducted in late June/July)
  - A detailed survey of the lake is conducted by a company that specializes in looking for and identifying EWM and other kinds of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Once the survey is complete, they will provide a geocoded list and map of all identified plant groupings and individual plants. This information will be communicated along with a future target treatment date (subject to change based on weather and lake conditions).
  - The DNR reviews the surveyed areas and approves the treatment plan, or asks for modifications based on their guidelines.
- 3. Treatment Phase** (typically conducted in late July or early August)
  - The Minnesota DNR has stringent controls on the use of any chemicals in the lake and any treatment must be approved by the DNR.
  - The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture registered aquatic herbicides are used. The product used is granular and is dropped directly onto the identified plants. Nothing is sprayed. We spend a bit more each year to use a treatment called ProcellaCOR, according to the EPA it is "practically nontoxic to humans and animals". It also has limited impact on other desirable plants in the lake ecosystem.
  - The treatment provider (different than the survey provider, based on DNR requirements) uses the survey map to review and treat the DNR approved area. The DNR does not allow the treatment provider to treat individual plants, they need to be in a group.

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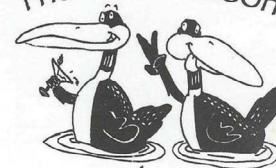
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# 75% / 75%

Research has shown that if 75% of property owners around the lakes preserve 75% of their land in its natural state, lake water quality can be preserved. Our natural shorelines in Minnesota are disappearing at an alarming rate. We can all decide to make a significant difference by restoring and maintaining 25 to 50 feet buffer strips of native vegetation along our lakeshores.



## PROTECTING OUR LAKES BY CREATING BUFFER STRIPS ON SHORE

*RALALA Planted and Maintained Buffer Strip at the Public Dock*

**Paul S. Jacobsen, University of Minnesota Extension Service Master Naturalist, provides answers to frequently asked questions:**

**We've just moved to an area lake, and we want to do our part to protect it. What can we do?** There are many things we can do to protect our beautiful lakes, but one of the easiest and most important things is to have a buffer strip along your **lakeshore**.

**So what's a buffer strip?** It's an area along the lakeshore covered with perennial vegetation such

as grasses, trees, and shrubs that act as a natural filter for runoff containing sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other contaminants harmful to the lake. As Minnesotans, we love our lakes, but we're currently loving them to death. **About half of Minnesota's natural shorelines have been lost to development.** For lakeshore residents, it's normal to want to "clean up" our shorelines and make them look neat and groomed. But it's not good for keeping our waters clean for swimming and fishing. **Mowed lawns allow seven to nine times more pollutants to enter a lake than a naturally vegetated property.**

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# PROTECTING OUR LAKES BY CREATING BUFFER STRIPS

There are many pollutants that flow off mowed shorelines, and one of the worst is phosphorus (which is present in most natural soils around here). Just 1 pound of phosphorus can produce 500 pounds of algae! State agencies estimate that the average mowed lawn produces 0.2 pounds of phosphorus per summer compared to 0.03 pounds for a native vegetated shoreline. For a mowed lawn, that means 85 more pounds of algae, each year, than a lakeshore with natural, undisturbed vegetation.

**So, how do I create a buffer strip?** The easiest option is to **quit mowing 50%-75% of your lawn as far up from the lake as possible — ideally, at least 25 feet.** As they say, “no mow, let it grow.” If there are native seeds present, the native grasses and vegetation will often sprout on their own when you stop mowing. If you want a more planned and dramatic buffer strip, you can plant native flowers, plants and shrubs where you used to have a mowed lawn.

When we moved to our lake property decades ago, rainwater from the lawn raced down the hill into the lake, eroding the shoreline along the way — and likely dumping a lot of phosphorus into the lake. After paying for some restoration work, we created a buffer strip. Now, even in a torrential downpour, virtually none of the rainwater makes it to the lake. Instead, the buffer strip stops the water flow, forcing it to absorb into the soil and be taken up by a thick vegetative strip of grasses, bushes and wildflowers. Not only has it been good for the lake, but I also have less to mow, and we get to enjoy blooming flowers like rudbeckia, coreopsis, and gaillardia.

**What are the advantages of a buffer strip?** In addition to **less work, buffer strips provide food for pollinators and cover for wildlife,** but not nuisance animals like Canada geese because they are fearful of predators hiding in tall grasses. In addition to **trapping nutrients that feed algae,** you also get **natural erosion control** with native plants. Many native grasses and flowers have roots several feet long, while typical turf grass roots are only a few inches deep. In the water, **plants like cattails, bulrushes and water lilies absorb some of the energy from waves before they hit the shore** — which is especially important with today’s wake boats designed to create large waves.

The **benefits are also financial.** It can cost thousands of dollars trying to fix degraded shorelines. Rip-rap and boulders are the most common option. Although rip-rap can armor a shoreline, it provides no filtering of nutrients or habitat for wildlife. Instead of rip-rap, try letting a natural shoreline go or, if it isn’t vegetated now, plant some native vegetation that will help control the erosion and possibly save you money in the future. **Property values decline when there is degradation of the water quality of the lake.**

## Where do I start?

**The easiest first step is to call your local Soil & Water District or look them up online:**

Crow Wing County: [cwswwcd.org](http://cwswwcd.org) 218-828-6197

Cass: [casscountymn.gov](http://casscountymn.gov) 218-547-7399

They can make an onsite visit to help you plan how to “lakescape” your property and discuss any permits needed. Also, there may be cost-sharing, sometimes paying 50% or more of your costs.

If you’re a do-it-yourselfer, look at information online from the Minnesota DNR and the University of Minnesota Extension Service, or find a copy of the DNR’s book called “Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality,” available on loan at the Outing and Emily libraries, which takes a deep dive into protecting our lakeshores. But before you do any dirt moving or construction, be sure to check with your local government for any permits for your work.

An great source of plant information is the online **DNR Plant Encyclopedia**

[https://webapps15.dnr.state.mn.us/restore\\_your\\_shore/?type=reset](https://webapps15.dnr.state.mn.us/restore_your_shore/?type=reset)

Touch your county on the map and make selections to filter your search. A list of plants, habitat, sun exposure, plant height, spacing, flower color and bloom time will be provided.



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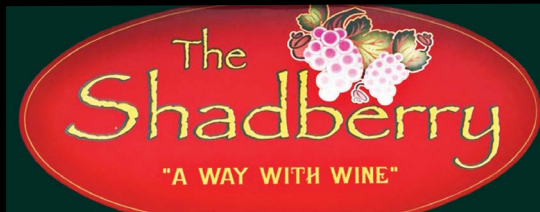
## CROW WING SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### ANNUAL TREE, SHRUB AND PLANT SALE

Every year the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (CWSWCD) conducts a sale. Customers pre-order trees, shrubs and plants on line. The sale begins in January until supplies run out, with plant pick-up in May. After a successful 2024 sale they shared the following information.

- In 2024 area residents planted 26,750 trees and shrubs and 2,520 plants.
- Since 1999, customers have planted over 924,877 trees and we are nearing our goal One Million Trees for Crow Wing County.
- For every 25 White Spruce planted 78 pounds of carbon are sequestered and 1,413 gallons of water intercepted.
- For every 25 Red Maple planted 157 pounds of carbon are sequestered and 1,155 gallons of water intercepted.

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## DNR Lake Level Monitoring Program Now Includes Roosevelt & Lawrence Lakes

Lake Level Minnesota, the program in which volunteers and cooperative organizations collect and report the water levels of approximately 1,000 lakes throughout the state, now includes Roosevelt and Lawrence Lakes. Volunteer observers help the DNR create permanent and credible public water level records.

Each spring the DNR Ecological and Water Resources staff reset and survey the installed lake gauges, which look like giant rulers in the water. The elevation of each gauge is determined by the DNR so readings and water levels can be compared from year to year. Weekly, volunteers read the gauges and monthly report their observations to the DNR.

Collected data of lake levels are important to document and are used in developing computer simulations to estimate flood levels, to help establish building regulations and to inform the DNR and local shoreline permitting process, because alterations are restricted below the ordinary high water (OHW) levels. Watershed managers and planners use the information to prepare local water management plans, and lakeshore property owners benefit by better understanding the impacts of lake level fluctuations on their own properties.

We are all very aware of the adverse effects that water level fluctuations caused by drought, extreme rain events, flooding, and beaver activity create. The newly installed gauges should help us better manage the impacts of fluctuating lake levels on shorelines and lakeshore properties.

View data by individual lake at:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/lake.html?id=11004302>

Photos of the gauge located at the boat launch site on Roosevelt Lake indicate water levels before (above) and after (below) significant rain events.



Photos by Sheila Langer



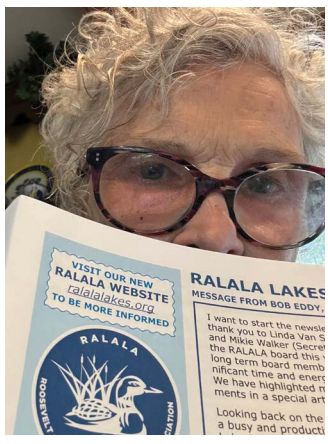
**BE A RESPONSIBLE BOATER**

Photo by Sheila Langer

This wake left by a passing skier on North Roosevelt, separated an adult loon from her juvenile chick and nearly hit it. Be a responsible boater. Never chase loons or run motorboats or personal watercraft over areas where loons have been seen. Loons and loon chicks have died from being hit by boats and propellers. Report any unusual loon activity or harassment of loons. Harassing wildlife is illegal in MN. **Documentation by photo or video is often most helpful.**

**SPOTLIGHT ON KIM DAVID**

**RALALA** gives a huge THANK YOU to Board Member, Kim David, who donates hundreds of hours of her time! Kim designs all our print materials: newsletters, posters, sandwich boards, stationery, and fliers and ushers them through the printing process. She has designed and coordinated the production of all the amazing RALALA signage you see at the Outing Dock buffer zone, the boat landings, the entrance to Woods Bay, to name a few. She does not charge RALALA for her time, saving us thousands of dollars as well as finding the most economical way of printing, working with a local printer when possible. Kim, retired now, has had many years of experience working as the designer for Macalester College and was responsible for designing all of their print materials with the exception of their Alumni Magazine.



We are very lucky to benefit from Kim David's talent and expertise and her willingness to take on any project for us. **THANK YOU!**



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## CORRECTLY DISPOSE OF BAIT

**DISPOSE** of unwanted bait, including minnows, leeches, and worms, in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into a waterbody or release aquatic animals from one waterbody to another. If you want to keep your bait, drain your bait container away from the waterway and you must refill the bait container with bottled or tap water.

These regulations have been created to protect the waters of Minnesota from aquatic invasive species including Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus or VHSV. It is a highly contagious and pathogenic fish virus emerging in the Great Lakes region of the United States and Canada. Fortunately VHSV has not been detected in any of Minnesota's lakes. However, it is present in Lake Superior and some Wisconsin inland lakes.

It affects many different species of fish, including game fish, minnows and rough fish.

At a low level of infection, fish might not display any symptoms. As the infection becomes greater, fish will display widespread hemorrhages (bleeding) throughout body surface (eye, skin and fins) and within the internal organs (swim bladder, intestine, kidney). Because of the bleeding, gills and liver might appear pale. Sick fish often will be listless, swim in circles and are frequently observed at the surface of the water.



**If you see a fish kill, do not collect samples.**

**Call the State Duty Office (651-649-5451 or 1-800-422-0798) to report the waterbody, date, fish species, and number of dead or dying fish.**



## DON'T LET IT LOOSE.



### TOSS IT

Drain water from bait container on shore, away from water. Dispose of minnows in the compost or trash.

Releasing live bait threatens our environment. Minnows and bait water can harbor fish diseases and aquatic invasive species.



### ...OR KEEP IT

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## STARRY STONEWORT CONFIRMED IN TWO ADDITIONAL LAKES

In May the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) confirmed the presence of the invasive algae starry stonewort at Middle Cullen Lake public access near Nisswa in Crow Wing County. A follow up survey is being conducted to determine the extent of the stonewort distribution in the lake.

The DNR had earlier confirmed the presence of the invasive algae interspersed with native plants on and around a boat ramp in Pokegama Lake near Grand Rapids in Itasca County.

The DNR has updated signage at the public accesses on both lakes and is working with the counties to provide decontamination and expanded watercraft inspections.

Starry stonewort is usually identified by the star-shaped white bulbils for which it is named. These bulbils typically don't become visible until late summer but were noticeable this spring. The early visibility of bulbils might be due to unusually warm winter temperatures and below-average snowfall this past winter.

Starry stonewort is now confirmed in 31 water bodies in Minnesota. It was first confirmed in 2015. It has never been eradicated from any U.S. lake or river, but treatment or careful removal can help reduce the risk of spread. It often forms large mats that negatively impact the lake ecosystem and recreation.



Starry stonewort is most likely spread when fragments have not been properly cleaned from trailered boats, personal watercraft, docks, boat lifts, anchors, or other water related equipment. It is the responsibility of all of us that enjoy our beautiful lakes to be vigilant.

- **Clean watercraft, trailers and gear**
- **Drain all water, including live wells, and leave drain plugs out during transport**
- **Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash**
- **Never release bait, plants or aquarium pets into Minnesota waters**
- **Dry docks, lifts and rafts for 21 days before moving them from one water body to another**



## DNR SPRING FISHERIES SURVEY ON ROOSEVELT LAKE

May 3, 2024, a day with 30 mph winds, RALALA Vice President, Gary Langer, accompanied three Brained DNR Fisheries' staff to check seven muskie nets that had been placed on Roosevelt Lake as part of the annual survey of the fishery. Their nets trapped a 44 inch male muskie, a large snapping turtle and a huge 31 3/4 inch wall-eye, as well as a variety of other fish.

DNR survey nets were also placed the second week of July at several locations.



## CONGRATULATIONS LAKE STEWARDS, BOB AND SANDI EDDY



Bob started coming to Roosevelt Lake as a young boy, visiting his grandparents who had purchased a cabin in the 1940s. He and Sandi have owned a Roosevelt Lake home for 30 years and in 2013 bought their current home. Like many lakeshore property owners who have purchased existing cabins and homes, the lake-

front portion of their property was developed like a suburban landscape. Many of the native trees, shrubs and plants were removed and replaced with sidewalks, driveways and manicured lawns extending to the lake. Bob and Sandi realized this aesthetic is detrimental to the water quality of the lake and made plans to restore their property to a more natural state. Fortunately, a large portion of their property away from the lakeshore was not disturbed and they enjoy it in its natural state. They nurture a wide variety of native trees and shrubs with beautiful fern beds tucked under the canopy. They have completed their lakeside "retro fit" restoration in stages over the last few years.

The summer of 2014 brought many torrential rains and significant runoff problems to light. After one heavy rain, a race track of runoff roared from the back of their lot down the cart path and into the lake leaving cavernous ruts and holes.

Managing the flow of water needed drastic improvement. During a subsequent heavy downpour, Bob videotaped what was occurring—where the runoff came from, where it went and what effect it had. In many cases he and Sandi were quite surprised.



They contacted a local contractor and planned dry wells and rain gardens to manage the water flow. Most of the runoff from the back of their lot is now captured by four dry wells (see the construction of one in the photo). The gardens planted around these wells capture and soak up the rain from the paved driveway. Other wells are planted with a variety of trees creating a beautiful haven in their yard.

They worked with Prairie Restorations, Inc. for guidance about plant selection for the rain gardens and in July 2020 planted them. They watered the plants religiously and were rewarded with vigorous growth. Spring of 2021 Bob used the *Picture This*



*App* to identify the re-emerging plants and aid in weeding. Their cart path was redesigned to include a large dry well at the base of the hill which captures most of the water. Angular, sharp edged granite chunks were used for the surface of the path which better disrupts any flow of runoff in contrast to smooth, rounded, river rock that actually aids the water movement. In 2021 Bob and Sandi added a substantial plot of native flowers and grasses on the slope to the lake surrounding their fire pit which is setback from the shoreline to prevent ash and carbon from contaminating the lake. The deep rooted plants stabilize the hill, slow the flow of runoff and filter contaminants, benefiting the lake.



In 2023 they completed another important lake sustaining phase of their project. Coir logs were installed along the water's edge to prevent erosion and shoreline damage caused by increased wave action. Native plants that thrive along the water's edge were installed. The soils in our part of the state are naturally rich in phosphorus, so any erosion causes increased levels in the lake water, disturbing the ecological balance, increasing algae growth and potentially altering lake oxygen levels which negatively impacts fish and other aquatic life.

They are very happy the changes they have made prevent water rushing down the hill and into the lake. Bob and Sandi offer this advice, "If you are having water problems, really pay attention. Watch carefully to discover exactly where the runoff comes from and know the route it takes to be able to solve the problem." They also share that it can be quite expensive to hire professionals to do all the work, but contractors and vendors are willing to work with customers to reduce the expense. Your projects can be done incrementally and vendors will help you plan for that. Homeowners can do the plantings themselves, as well.

They have enjoyed sharing their experience and the knowledge gained with interested neighbors who are initiating projects on their properties, "It's catching" Bob said. Sandi remarked that "It's a learning process, there were so many practices that caused negative impacts on the lake that we didn't know." Now that they have a deeper understanding, they are pleased to see the cultural shift away from suburban landscapes to lake preserving, natural ones.

THANK YOU, Bob and Sandi Eddy, for becoming official Lake Stewards, protecting our lakes' water quality with your intentional nurturing and restoration of your land.

Both Cass and Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) experts are very willing to offer support, making site visits, designing plans and giving valuable advice. They also have programs to provide extensive financial reimbursement, sometimes up to 50% of the project's cost.

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

<https://www.casscountymn.gov/1231/Soil-Water-Conservation-District-SWCD>

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# CONGRATULATIONS DENISE WICKTOR AND MARK ANDERSON RALALA'S NEWEST LAKE STEWARDS

Twenty years ago Denise Wicktor and Mark Anderson began searching for a cabin to enjoy a beautiful lake, the serenity of the woods and for quality time together where their blended family could bond and make memories. Instead they found a lot with a spectacular bluff view of a "lake with clear, deep, clean water." Denise commented, "It is so natural, like being in the middle of the woods, it feels almost magical." They purchased the lot on north Roosevelt Lake and began construction on their cabin in 2004, prioritizing preserving the natural surroundings that they love.

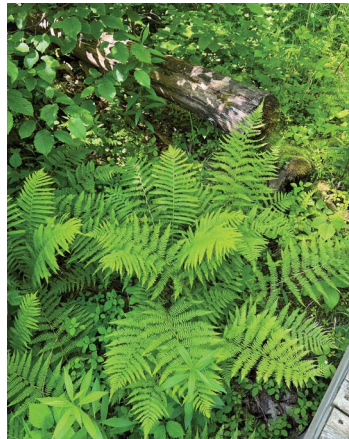
They have made contentious decisions to limit runoff and maintain native vegetation. Down the steep bank to the lake they installed an elevat-



ed boardwalk and steps that allow rainwater infiltration.

Beautiful native vegetation covers their slope to the lake, including yellow lady slippers. Many springs keep the lower levels of their property boggy, but they wisely have chosen to embrace that rather than battle nature and have been rewarded with beautiful plants such as yellow marsh marigolds.

Denise and Mark have purposefully minimized their alteration of the natural foliage near the lakeshore but still have space to enjoy recreating at the lake. Water quality enhancing aquatic plants are allowed to remain in the water. Dead trees that have fallen into the lake are allowed to remain providing habitat for fish, turtles and other wildlife.



***Thank you Denise and Mark for conscientiously managing your land to protect and preserve the lake and the watershed.***

## RALALA BENNIES are available:

RALALA will **reimburse** property owners **\$100** of the **\$150** fee for Crow Wing SWCD site visits or **\$500** for completed eligible projects. Cass SWCD provides site visits at no charge.

[ralalalakes@gmail.com](mailto:ralalalakes@gmail.com) Attention: BENNIES

## BECOME A LAKE STEWARD

Start by taking the Quiz at: <https://mnlakesandrivers.org/lake-associations/lake-association-programs/lakesteward/>



## THANKS TO THE BUOY GUYS!



**THANK YOU, Roger Brekken,** for your long term commitment to monitoring and repairing the navigational buoys on Roosevelt and Lawrence Lakes. More than a decade ago, Roger, while boating on Roosevelt, noticed a waterlogged buoy floating only 6 to 8 inches above the waterline rather than the 18 to 20 inches that should be visible. His detective work revealed that Cass County Sheriff's Department had responsibility for the buoys, so he contacted the sheriff and offered his assistance replacing the buoy, if one was available. A collaboration was born. Roger monitors, repairs, maintains the chains and coordinates replacement of damaged buoys. Brian Olds installs and removes the buoys. Cass County Sheriff's Department purchases and oversees the buoys. In 2023, after an application process, they issued a permit for and provided an additional buoy to mark a shallow, impassable waterway on north Roosevelt Lake.

Roger commented that the most common failures of buoys are waterlogging and chain links wearing out, allowing the buoy to float away from its proper location. Roger, a very resourceful, northern Minnesota "farm boy", who has continued to help his nephew on the family farm until this year, used his ingenuity to scrounge buoy anchors for many years. Early on in his buoy career, he recycled a discarded beet lifter ring from the farm, and visited the railroad scrap yard to collect short rails. The buoys now have cement weights to keep them upright. Repurposing those heavy cylinders from damaged buoys as anchors works perfectly.

**Roger credits Dave Lawson for currently monitoring and installing the buoys in Woods Bay. Thank you, Dave!**

**If you notice a damaged or misplaced buoy please send an email to [ralala.lakes@gmail.com](mailto:ralala.lakes@gmail.com)**

All of us who enjoy boating on our lakes are very grateful to **Brian Olds, Owner of Olds Lift and Dock Service**, and his crew, the other important members of the buoy team.

As soon as possible each spring after ice out and before the fishing opener, Brian precisely places the navigational buoys using his barge and removes them each October after MEA weekend.

Brian has deep roots in the community, his grandfather, born in 1902, in Pequot Lakes, moved here right before the Depression and Brian's family has lived here since then. In 1990, after five years in the Army, Brian returned to Outing and started working for the dock company in the spring and fall installing and removing docks and boat lifts. Spring of 1997 he bought the business with its 123 accounts on 24 different lakes.

At that time all the work was back breaking physical labor! They did not have the barge and winches and floating devices that are in use today. There was a stretch on Roosevelt Lake

of five customers in a row with long docks (before the advent of the Roll-a-Dock) and multiple boat lifts they named "Murderer's Row" because installing those waterfronts all in one day almost killed them!

Brian eventually grew the business to over 600 accounts, but realized it was impossible to service everyone in a timely manner, so he limited the number of lakes he would serve. He now serves 500 customers with 150 of those on Roosevelt Lake alone.

All the employees at Olds Dock and Lift Services are certified to provide services on the lakes with special emphasis on practices to reduce the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species. They have their own high power hot water decontamination unit on site and are conscientiously using it for the dock installation equipment and also the pontoon rentals. They are being vigilant protecting our lakes.

**Thank you, Brian Olds, and your crew, for donating your time and expertise installing and removing the navigational buoys ensuring the safety of boaters on our lakes!**





## LOON SAFE FISHING GUIDELINES

Fishing is a popular activity on our lakes and for good reason! Fishing immerses us in the natural world, can be done by people of various ages and skill levels, and often serves as a family bonding activity across generations. **Anglers and other sportsmen have been major supporters of conservation. Continue this tradition by following these easy guidelines, which help to ensure that angling activities won't harm loons and other wildlife.**

Lead poisoning resulting from the ingestion of lead fishing tackle is the third leading cause of documented adult loon death, following net entanglement and boat strikes according to Carol Henderson, renowned Minnesota loon expert. Just one fishing sinker or jig the size of a pebble is enough to kill a loon, causing death within 2-4 weeks of ingesting it.

To prevent these unnecessary deaths, use only non-lead tackle. **Properly dispose of lead tackle as hazardous waste, at the CLT Lakes and Shores Committee/Ralala booth at the:**

### LIONS CORN FEED

**August 17 at the Pickled Loon Saloon, Highway 6, Emily, MN**

**Receive lead free tackle samples and become eligible for prizes**

**2 - \$50 gift certificates from Land O'Lakes Marine**

**8 - Combo fishing rod and reels**



**Loons are visual predators, and they may instinctively strike at a lure or tackle on your line if they see it moving through the water. Loons may also strike at a fish on your line. If a loon breaks your line and ends up with the line trailing from its mouth or another part of its body, there is a good chance that it will use its bill to try to remove the line. When that happens, loons typically end up with the line wrapped tightly around their bills. This effectively wires their bills shut, preventing them from eating and preening which keeps their feathers waterproofed. Loons that are tangled in this way can decline rapidly, and without intervention they may die within a few days to a few weeks. To prevent entanglement, please avoid casting towards or in the general vicinity of loons. Properly dispose of fishing line.**

Monofilament line deeply imbedded in loon's leg (directly below the white band) causing swelling, pain and impairment.



Deposit your old fishing line at the Roosevelt and Lawrence Lake Boat Launch sites.

The Minnesota Loon Rescue Network is a network of trained volunteers assisting with the capture and transport of sick or injured loons to Minnesota DNR certified rehabilitation clinics.

**If you encounter a sick or injured loon, call 612-226-6571 or 816-516-0759.**

Visit them on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Minnesota-LoonRescueNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/Minnesota-LoonRescueNetwork)

# WHY SHOULD WE PROTECT OUR LOONS?

by Sheila Langer

Photos by Sheila Langer



Loons have the same role for a lake as the canary did for the mines of years past, acting as an indicator of environmental health. Loons need water clarity because they are visual hunters, and they need an abundance of food to survive and thrive. Loons are believed to have a lifespan of about 30 years.

According to the MNDNR, there are about 12,000 common loons in Minnesota, second only to Alaska for total loon population. Loon counts in Minnesota have remained stable; however, Wisconsin has seen a 20% decline in their numbers over the last three decades.

Monitoring our loons, including their reproductive success, is a great way to monitor broader lake health. Knowing how many of our loon chicks survive each summer is a good indicator of the impact water conditions have on our fish and wildlife.

Some of the things that impact loon chick survival are rising water levels and this past June our area had close to seven inches of rain. Sadly, this sudden heavy rainfall caused two of our loon nests to wash away shortly before eggs were due to hatch. When this happens early in the nesting season, loons may make a second nesting attempt. Loons build their nests in the tall natural grasses on the water's edge. Loons can't walk well on land due to their large, webbed

feet which are far back on their bodies. These feet act as propellers when loons hunt underwater but make them clumsy on land.

Human disturbance and development are ongoing threats to loons. There are many activities that are harmful to loons including disturbance of nesting sites as a result of boats, canoes, kayaks, personal watercraft and water level changes.

Local human disturbance can be lessened when people are more sensitive to the needs of loons and learn some of their warning signs that you may be too close to them. One of the things a loon will do if it is bothered by the presence of a boat is to swim away. If a loon swims away from you, please allow it to get away. If a loon begins to call as you approach, it is best to back away and avoid causing them stress. If

you accidentally flush a loon off of the nest, leave the area immediately—if the threat leaves, most loons will get right back on the nest. When loons are relaxed and calm, they are able to carry out normal behaviors to care for themselves and their chicks.

Reproductive success data from monitoring our loons clearly shows the number of chicks each pair produces each year has been declining. For the past two years, our loon pairs have only hatched 1 chick compared to two chicks in previous years. When we survey the loons during the month of June, we are looking for loons that are paired up and seem to be territorial or nested. During the month of July, we are counting the chicks that have hatched. In August we are checking to see if loon chicks have survived long enough to fledge and hopefully make it to fall migration. As we learn of better boating, fishing and shoreline practices, we not only protect and support loons but the many other aquatic species that share our lakes.





# THE BIRDS OF RALALA LAKES

## THE OSPREY



stretched outward, plunging as much as 3 feet below the water's surface. When they emerge with their prey, you'll see them flap their strong wings and shake water off their feathers before perching near the shoreline to enjoy their catch.

When we open up the cabin in the Spring, spotting the first Osprey of the season is always exciting and a relief. They winter in Central and South America and the migration back to Minnesota must be an extraordinary journey. It's always a good sign when you see an Osprey on our RALALA lakes.

Witnessing an Osprey dive for a fish is like watching nature's own action film. But *Top Gun* has nothing on these birds of prey! While Hollywood may take notes from these raptors, it was the military that was inspired by this fascinating bird of prey, naming a tiltrotor helicopter after it.

This makes sense in many ways, as the Osprey is an agile flyer, shifts speeds quickly, dives at a moment's notice, and hovers skillfully above the water in search of a meal. They transform their body into an aerodynamic machine eclipsing speeds of 80 miles per hour as they dive toward the water, talons

They are photogenic birds. The camera likes them and vice-versa. It might look like we're directing them to capture such expressive reaction shots, but it's them approaching our pontoon, flying just overhead, checking us out. They are curious raptors and I've captured a lot of amazing photos of them. Some of the close-ups of their faces that I've taken are fascinating as they fly just above our pontoon looking straight into my lens. They may be my and my husband's favorite bird to observe on Roosevelt because it's so fun to see them in action and that they seem to recognize the photo opportunity.

Also known as "Fishhawks" or "Seahawks", an Osprey's diet mainly consists of live fish. They will sporadically consume other small mammals only when their fish supply is limited. One interesting physiological difference from other raptors (other than owls) is that they have a reversible toe. They also have barbed pads and hooked talons. This helps them clutch their prey and they will rotate the fish, so its head faces forward, creating less wind resistance. When they catch a fish, it's not going to get away. Another interesting characteristic is their piercing yellow eyes. This indicates Ospreys are diurnal birds of prey which means they hunt during daylight hours. If you see one with reddish eyes, it means you've spotted a juvenile, as the yellow color can take 1-3 years to mature.

They are also fierce defenders of their immediate territory. They will chase away Eagles and other Ospreys who venture too close to their nests. My husband and I were lucky to have witnessed this recently on the north end of Roosevelt Lake. It was like something out of a movie. An Eagle had strayed into an Osprey's nesting territory, and they began sparring mid-air with their talons out, turning upside down, vocalizing their displeasure with each other. After a few minutes of dive-bombing moves by the Osprey, the Eagle continued on. The Osprey had made its point.

Historically, the Osprey shares quite a bit with Eagles. But thankfully, their population has rebounded since the banning of the pesticide DDT in the 1970s. They were removed from Minnesota's Species of Greatest Conservation Needs List in 2015. However, Ospreys are still facing challenges with limited nesting sites due to dead tree removal



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM P.1

- 2024 spring and early summer rain deluges, and continuing abundance of rain, created more nutrient rich run-off nurturing growth of established plants.

**We will continue to evaluate information and options for management of EWM. We will diligently pursue all funding sources including Crooked Lake Township, the City of Emily, Cass and Crow Wing Counties and the DNR.**

**We will send email updates to each of our members as we address this important issue.**



*Article  
and  
photos by  
Trista Snapko*

and overdevelopment of shoreline. One thing that the MN DNR Non-Game Wildlife Program and other conservation programs have done is build structures and platforms for them to nest upon. Property owners are also encouraged to make these platforms and the instructions are located on the DNR website. The male Osprey usually brings nesting material to the female who designs the nest. And they will bring just about anything they can carry back to their nests - even plastics, balloons, netting and fishing line. **Tragically, the chicks can get caught in the netting and fishing line, causing injury, or preventing them from leaving the nest. This is where we come in and can make a positive impact. If we maintain natural shorelines the best we can and keep our properties and lakes clean from garbage, it's a win-win for the Ospreys and for us.**

There are at least two pairs of adult ospreys on Roosevelt Lake that we see regularly. We've seen a third pair flying over Lawrence Lake too. This is excellent news and the Hollywood ending they deserve.



*Photos by Sheila Langer*

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# VOLUNTEERS COMPLETE SHORELINE RESTORATION

Volunteers, observers and experts Ryan Carlson, Cass Soil and Water Conservation District Resource Technician and Laura Mendoza Romero, shoreline restoration consultant from Great Roots LLC, joined Roosevelt Lake property owners, John and Bonnie Rowell on May 13th to complete their shoreline restoration project.

The **Rowells** have been very conscientious managers of their property to protect lake quality. Their land is covered with natural vegetation and planned features to slow the flow of phosphorus laden runoff into the lake. Even with their careful stewardship, their steep bank into the lake suffered erosion, the result of high lake levels, ice movement and wave action. They received an estimate from a vendor for remediation and decided to rise to the challenge to do it themselves. They reached out to **Cass Soil and Water Conservation District** and received expert advice and guidance through the permitting process and compliance with all regulations.

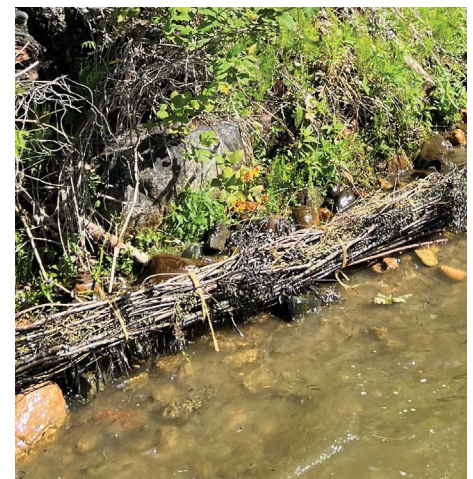
Shoreline consultant, **Laura Mendoza Romero** visited their property, devised the plan, collected building materials and plants and arrived on "Project Day" with all supplies to provide leadership and instruction. **RALALA** was happy to play a small role advertising the project and seeking volunteers and observers to "Come and learn."

**Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District** recommended the best willow variety for wattles and gave permission to harvest some in a Brainerd park. Three weeks prior to the project, John and Bonnie harvested the necessary three hundred 8 to 10 foot willows, the diameter of their thumbs. They had been allowed to dry so they would not sprout.

As instructed, the willows were evenly spaced and laid in two 50 foot rows. Volunteers AND those who came to merely observe joined in to tie bundles to make the wattles, carry them to the shoreline, and float them into position.



Long stakes were pounded into the willow bundles to hold them securely in place. Three sections of a two layered erosion blanket were cut. One layer to surround and secure the plants, and the strong rope-like layer to firmly stabilize the bank until the plants become established and their long roots do the job.



Laura directed the whole team to maneuver the erosion blanket into place. Small hooked stakes were pounded into the blanket to secure it to the bank.



Three hundred native plants were then planted all over the embankment. Red twig dogwood were planted behind the wattle and close to the water's edge on the bank. Small openings were cut in the erosion blanket to allow the planting of sedges, who thrive with damp feet, and a wide variety of flowering native plants, planned to deliver an array of colorful flowers in succession blooms.



Project manager (right), **Laura Mendoza Romero**, shoreline restoration consultant from [greatrootsllc.com](http://greatrootsllc.com) inspected the work and gave her approval.



Ryan Carlson (lower right in the photo), Cass Soil and Water Conservation Resource Technician, arrived at the beginning of the day to visit, but stayed the entire day to offer guidance and labor alongside the rest of the volunteers, and also served as selfie photographer for the tired, happy and well fed crew, thanks to the delicious lunch provided by John and Bonnie.



**Treasurer, Diana Lee, presented a RALALA BENNIE to John and Bonnie Rowell.**

**The \$500 check is a reimbursement for completed projects that benefit the lake.**

# MINNESOTA YOUTH WATERCRAFT OPERATOR TRAINING

by Gary Langer

By Gary Langer



RALALA, in partnership with the Crow Wing Sheriff's Department sponsored a Youth Watercraft Operator Training course at the Channel Bar and Grill in Outing on June 13th attended by 13 students ranging in age from 12 to 17 years old. Lunch was provided by RALALA.

The Watercraft Operator Training course led by Crow Wing Sheriff personnel is terrific! The course consists of 3 hours of classroom instruction followed by an in-depth test. Upon successful completion of the test, each individual received hands-on water operation training in boats provided by the Crow Wing Sheriff's Department. Each participant will receive a Watercraft Operator Certificate from the State of Minnesota.

Watch for the 2025 Minnesota Youth Watercraft Operator Training schedule which will be posted

in our spring newsletter if you have a child in the 12-17 age group next summer.



Photos by Sheila Langer

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# REMOVAL OF AQUATIC VEGETATION

There seems to have been a "Perfect Storm" causing dramatic growth of all aquatic plants in area lakes. Last year's lack of rain and hot temperatures were ideal growing conditions. This year's mild winter followed by nutrient laden rainwater runoff this spring and summer also aided significant plant growth.

"Aquatic weeds" or "lake weeds" can be catch-all terms for aquatic plants and algae, including both native and non-native plants, that are unwanted for one or more reasons. While most lake users accept a certain level of aquatic plant growth, these plants are often considered "weeds" once they grow past a certain amount or grow in high-recreation areas.



However, aquatic plants are important. Plants provide oxygen as a byproduct of photosynthesis, are a major food source for fish and other wildlife in the lake, help stabilize bottom sediments and help prevent shoreline erosion.

Before beginning removal of any aquatic vegetation, follow the link below to find DNR regulations outlining removal guidelines, acceptable procedures to do so, and when permits are required.

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/apg/regulations.html>

**Please note that any cut or harvested aquatic plants must be removed from the lake and disposed of on land. Invasive Eurasian watermilfoil spreads by plant fragments that float away and take root in new locations. Leaving plant remains in the water could cause further spread.**

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**Event Details**

**Event Date**  
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 Noon - 4:00 PM

**Location**  
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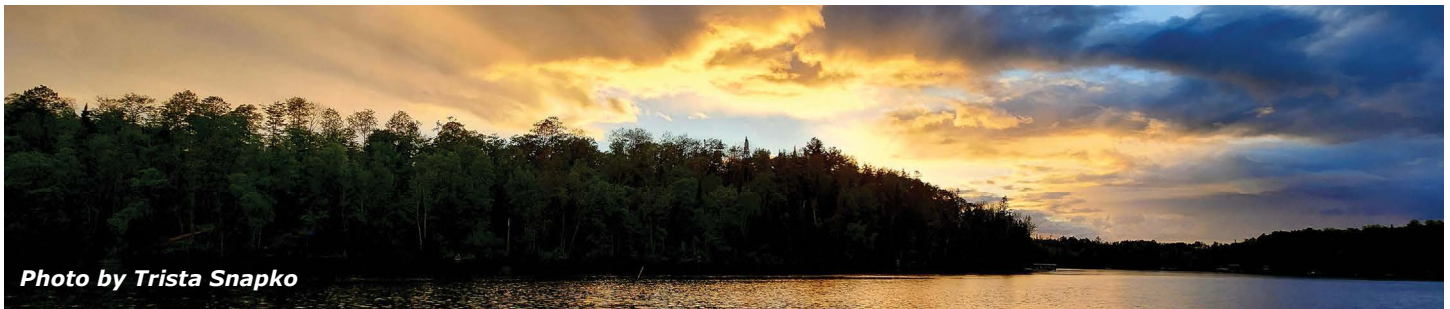


Photo by Trista Snapko

## CONGRATULATIONS TO FIRST LAKE STEWARDS ON LEAVITT LAKE

### Betsy and Cliff Skagen

(rhymes with toboggan) always dreamed of living full time on a lake, but never believed it would happen. That all changed when they uprooted their St. Paul home of 22 years and moved to Leavitt Lake in 2020.

Their empty-nest plans changed when the Pandemic caused their college-aged children to move in with them. "It was a little challenging—we had four people living, working and taking classes in our down-sized house, all while it was undergoing renovation," Betsy laughed. "But we were grateful for the gift of unexpected time with our kids in such a beautiful setting."

Both native Minnesotans, the Skagens had lived many places before settling in St. Paul. "Being a multi-racial family, we were a little nervous about how we would be accepted in rural Minnesota, but we just love the incredibly warm community," Cliff said. Their kids have since moved on with their lives, but because of the time they spent in Outing, they now consider it "home" and return often.

Betsy, an artist who formerly owned a writing and graphic design firm, also bases her business, Blue Waters Studio and Emporium, in Outing. She mixes traditional methods and a commercial laser cutter to create mixed media art and lake home decor. She also teaches classes. "My favorite thing is our art club. It is not about creating perfect art, it is about creativity, community, playing and learning new techniques."



[betsyskagen.com](http://betsyskagen.com) or Blue Waters Studio on Facebook

The Skagens recently faced a significant challenge when Cliff, a school principal and district administrator, sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Despite breaking bones, detaching and puncturing his retina and several other injuries, Cliff only took a couple of weeks off work to recover. However, it eventually became clear the TBI had done more damage than initially thought. While his intelligence was not affected, the TBI caused severe headaches and other symptoms. When doctors determined these conditions were permanent, Cliff said an emotional goodbye to his students and staff.

"It's hard, because education, especially education for high-risk kids and students of color, has been my passion for 30 years," Cliff said. "I miss the students and staff every day. The silver lining is how much I enjoy living in Outing, watching the lake as the seasons change and finally having time to spend with Betsy. I hope I can continue to heal so I can eventually give back by doing volunteer work in education leadership."

To protect the lake, the Skagens do not use lawn products, allow the natural vegetation to grow all over their property, and maintain a wide variety of trees to stabilize the slope to the lake. Adjacent to the lake they do not disturb the boggy area and allow native plants to create a natural buffer along the shoreline. Fallen trees are allowed to remain in the lake creating habitat for aquatic life and fish.

The Skagens encourage everyone to take the Lake Steward Quiz. "We never expected to score as high as we did," Betsy said. "Like everyone, we care about the lake, loons and wildlife, but we are far from perfect environmentalists. The quiz helps you recognize what you are already doing and gives you easy ideas to do more."

Cliff added, "The more people who take the survey and become Lake Stewards, the more we will all increase awareness and help protect the lake for generations to come."

**Congratulations, Cliff and Betsy, and thank you for your stewardship of your land to protect the water quality of the lakes.**



## LANDA DECONTAMINATION UNIT DEMONSTRATION

On June 9, 2024, Steve Henry, Cass County AIS Lake Technician, provided an informative watercraft decontamination demonstration at the Roosevelt Lake boat launch site where the Landa Decontamination Unit is in service. He visually inspected and used the unit's high pressure, hot water to decontaminate a boat that had been in Thunder Lake waters the previous day.

Thunder Lake is a short distance north of Outing, and has a DNR confirmed infestation of zebra mussels, posing a significant threat to lakes in our area. During Steve's decontamination procedure he discovered zebra mussels in the boat's live well, a common place they are found and, unfortunately, often overlooked by boaters.



Roosevelt Lake receives watercraft every week from AIS infested lakes. This state-of-the-art decontamination unit is our primary defense against AIS entering Roosevelt. It is very important that visiting fishermen, along with friends and family members with watercraft, bring their boats to the Roosevelt Lake launch site to be decontaminated before entering any of our lakes.

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**THANK YOU, Volunteers, who participated in the spring clean-up of the two mile stretch of Highway 6 north of Emily.**

**Volunteers are always welcome, watch for fall 2024 clean-up dates in our newsletter, and on our website and facebook page.**  
[ralalalakes.org](http://ralalalakes.org)

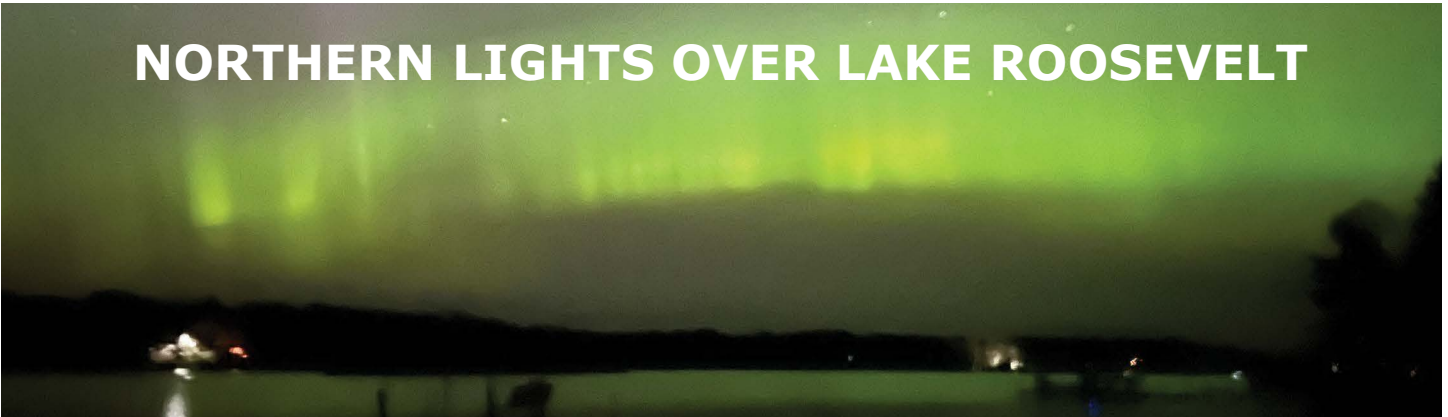


Roosevelt and Lawrence  
 Area Lakes Association  
 P.O. Box 139  
 Outing, MN 56662-0139

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

## NORTHERN LIGHTS OVER LAKE ROOSEVELT

Photo by Trista Snapko



## RALALA Sponsors a Booth at EMILY DAY

RALALA Board member, **Mary De Hanson**, organized the booth at Emily Day on July 20, 2024.



The booth provided information about **RALALA** activities and initiatives.

Activities for kids and a chance to win a gigantic loon floatie, donated by **Tremolo Communications**, attracted families.

**Thank you to Tremolo for your support and sponsorship.**

**Roseann** (right) was the lucky winner of the drawing for Larry the Loon.

