

APRIL 2024

Our Mission: To protect, preserve, and improve the environmental and aesthetic qualities of the Eau Claire Lakes Area watershed, including the lakes, rivers, shorelands, wetlands, forests, and attendant wildlife resources.

BAYFIELD AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES, WI

<https://friendsofeauclairrelakesarea.com>



Photo Credit: Andrew Reinders Photography

In this all ages presentation, DNR Wildlife Biologist Josh Spiegel will present the history, management, and current status of Wisconsin's Elk Herd. Elk once roamed Wisconsin and have since been reintroduced to the Wisconsin landscape in two locations.

You're Invited!

2024 Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 20th
Barnes Town Hall
9 am - 11:15 am

9:00 - 10:00 Business Meeting
10:00 - 10:15 Coffee Break
10:15 - 11:15 **Wisconsin's Elk Herd**

A central Wisconsin native, Josh Spiegel, Sawyer County Wildlife Biologist with the Wisconsin DNR, received a Bachelor of Science Degree with an emphasis in Wildlife Ecology from Northland College. Josh has a passion and interest related to outdoor recreation, including interest in Wisconsin's wildlife management. He has worked with the DNR Elk Program since 2012.

... a note of thanks from the President

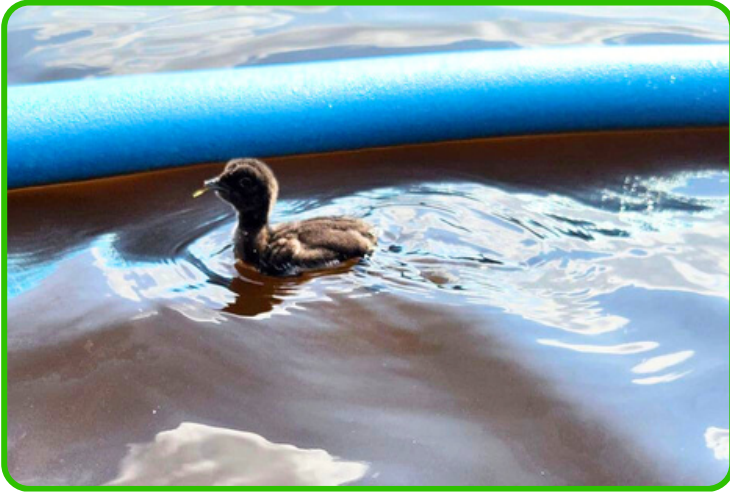
Dear Friends, Your generous financial support made possible our many endeavors to preserve our lakes and land. I'm proud to reflect on some of the 2023 projects that supported our mission of protecting the headwaters of the scenic St. Croix River basin for years to come. If you're not yet a member, we hope you'll join us. And members, it's now time to renew your FOECLA membership for 2024.

- At the top of the list of our initiatives is preventing the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). In 2023, FOECLA contributed over \$10,000 to the Town of Barnes in support of AIS management. You can sign up to be an AIS volunteer on the Town's website.
- We wrapped up our first round of DNR Healthy Lakes and Rivers grants, and started work on round two. This grant program supports the development of native plantings, fish stick habitats, rain gardens, and diversions along our vulnerable lakeshores.
- Our program of measuring lake levels is ongoing and is supported by many volunteers. We are developing a record of lake level fluctuations that can be used for planning future lake projects.
- In 2023, our Water Quality Committee dug into the data on wake boats and the impact of larger wakes on our fragile shorelines, lake bottoms, and the wildlife that live in and around the lakes. See inside for our findings and a terrific infographic.
- Each year FOECLA sponsors the Lake Ecology Education Program (LEEP). LEEP offers Drummond 7th graders classroom training and field experiences, demonstrating how lakes and lands work together to provide a variety of enjoyable recreational activities.
- In 2023, our Scholarship Committee selected Alex Rasmussen, a senior from the Drummond Area School District, to receive a \$1,000 scholarship. Alex is attending Michigan Tech, majoring in physics.
- We visited with friends, new and old, at the Taste of Barnes, where we also served cake to celebrate our 50th year! Our table included AIS specimens, our boating safety brochure, and information on lead fishing bait and its impact on loons and eagles.
- At our 2023 Annual Meeting, we sponsored a terrific program: "Raptors of the Great Lakes Region" by Christian Cold. We hope you'll join us Saturday, July 20th, for Josh Spiegel's presentation: "Wisconsin's Elk Herd".



President, Friends of the Eau Claire Lakes Area

Loon Rescue - 4th of July Edition



The 4th of July, by far our busiest period in terms of boat traffic, coincides with a time of high vulnerability for loon eggs and loon chicks. With natural predators and adverse weather conditions already reducing loon chick survival, recreational boat wakes can doom loon eggs and loon chicks by separating them from their parents. **Linda and Kevin Grenzer, of Loon Rescue, Inc.**, recall two loon chick rescue stories from last 4th of July and offer good advice to share with friends and family.

1. Be on the lookout for loon families and give them a 200' wide berth when you are out on the lake.
2. If your boat's wake is crashing into the shoreline, you risk swamping out loon nests and their fragile eggs.
3. If you spot a lone loon chick, contact Kevin and Linda Grenzer by phone at **(715) 966-5415 or (715) 453-4916**. Get their advice as every situation is different.

"Remember these loons are sharing their home with us."

"Today [7/2/2023] Kevin took a call from a resident on Solberg Lake in Phillips, WI, about a newly hatched loon chick by itself along the shoreline for a very long time. The lake was extremely busy with boat and jet ski traffic due to the hot July 4th weekend and large waves were crashing up along the shore where this chick was floating. *We suspect this lonely loon chick got separated from its parents due to the busy lake.* The callers stayed with this chick, but no parents came and they could not see any loons out on the lake. While waiting, *this chick found comfort by floating next to a pool noodle which they placed next to it.*

This chick would perish if left along the shore on this busy holiday weekend, so Kevin asked them to scoop up the tiny chick and place it in a beach towel. Solberg Lake is an 844-acre lake with more than one territorial pair. Kevin asked the callers to *search for adults by boat in the general area they found the chick.* The callers found one adult, approximately 200 yards down the shoreline. The chick started peeping, which got the parent's attention, and the parent started hooting to find the chick. The callers carefully released the chick on the other side of the boat and the parent and chick quickly reunited. We are forever grateful for these Solberg residents who "went above and beyond" to stay with this lost chick, contact us, rescue this lost chick, and find its parent. *Many loon chicks are just hatching this 4th of July. Please be on the lookout for these loon families and give them a 200' wide berth when you are out on the lake. Remember these loons are sharing their home with us."*

"On the 4th of July, we received another call about *a loon chick by itself for an extended time.* Polly noticed a loon chick all alone in the channel leading to 1201-acre Little Rice Lake in Crandon, WI. This chick was very vocal, but no parent was answering its call. Polly called the Raptor Education Group, who gave them our phone number. When Polly could not find any parents close to where this chick was in the channel, I suggested she *scoop up this chick and go further out by boat to see if they could locate the loon family.* Polly and her family drove around the lake to search for the chick's parents. They knew of 2 pairs of loons, each with chicks. They found one pair of loons with 2 chicks approximately the same size as the chick they had just rescued. Polly knew there was another pair of loons with chicks, but they could not locate the other pair. I spoke to Polly and learned *the other pair's chicks were older and bigger than the chick they just rescued, so I knew this chick did not belong to those parents.* Polly also said they came upon a single adult, but I said it would be *too risky to release a chick to a loon that we were not sure could be a parent.*

Given the limited possibilities we had with this chick, our attention went back to the loon pair they had found with 2 chicks which were the same size as the chick they rescued. *Loons usually have one to two chicks, but occasionally loons have 3 chicks.* I did advise Polly what to look for if the parents and their 2 chicks did not welcome the chick when they released it by the family. Once this loon chick was released, the loon family reunited and the lonely chick snuggled up to the other 2 chicks. The reunion was a success!"

Did You Know? You can contact Kevin and Linda Grenzer by phone at (715) 966-5415 or (715) 453-4916 for help with sick, injured, or entangled loons, or loon chicks separated from their families.



Water skiing doesn't destroy pristine lakes, but...

WAKESURFING? That's a whole new story!

The bow comes up and the stern goes down to increase the wake, so it's hard to see ahead.

3 to 4 foot high wakes are created so people can wakesurf, without a rope, like surfing in the ocean.

Algae blooms are fueled by nutrients freed from disturbed sediment. Some can kill fish and pets, and make people sick.

Fishermen have been knocked over, pontoons drenched, and small craft capsized by the massive wakes.

If fishermen, pleasure boaters, paddlers, and others can't enjoy our lakes, then tourism, property values and business income will plummet.

Loon nests are just inches above water in calm areas. Big wakes can destroy eggs.

Is the boating industry's 200 feet from shore rule enough?

Sediment is stirred up and plants are damaged 20 feet deep by the powerful motor and deep downward angled propeller.

Little fish live among the plants. Fewer plants means fewer little fish for big game fish to eat.

Ballast tanks don't drain completely and can bring invasives from other lakes.

Invasive plants spread easily in damaged areas.

Spiny waterfleas can upset the entire ecosystem, resulting in fewer game fish and murky water.

As the wake enters shallow water, plants are damaged, sediment is churned, and fish eggs can be destroyed.

When the big wake crashes on shore it can cause erosion and damage docks and moored boats.

How do they make those huge wakes?

- Add ballast water, up to 5000 pounds (600 gallons)
- Operate at speeds that bring the bow up and stern down
- Use wake enhancing fins
- The wake is 6 to 12 times more powerful than ski boat wakes!

16" = Height of wake 200' from wakesurf boat's path (per industry)
7" = Typical kayak freeboard
10" = Typical canoe freeboard
12" = Typical small fishing boat freeboard
9" = Height of waves, 25 mph wind, 30 minutes, 1 mile wide lake

For More Information See: LastWildernessAlliance.org
Report dangerous boating at DNR's anonymous 24/7 hotline: **1-800-TIP-WDNR**

Design, research: Carol Phillips • Layout: arteffects4u@gmail.com • Illustration: www.charlesfloyddesignandillustration.com
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FOECLA's mission statement guides us as a Board and an organization, always reminding us of our commitment to protect, preserve, and improve the natural resources around us. When new recreational uses of our lakes recently emerged – wakesurfing and wakeboarding – our Water Quality Committee took time to research the design of wake boats and the potential impacts of wake sports on lake health. We found that wake boats, when operated for wake sports, pose serious threats to our lakes.

While all boats generate wakes, wake boats are designed to generate waves 3 to 4 feet high on which people can wakesurf or wakeboard. A wake boat may also deploy special fins to maximize wave height and shape. Wake boats need to be heavy to make these waves; therefore, the boat itself may weigh up to 2 tons and carry 2 tons of ballast water from the lake. Wake boats also need extremely powerful motors to slowly plow through the water (9-11 mph for wakesurfing) with their bows up and their sterns down. Finally, wake boats don't level out like ski boats do, so a wake boat's propeller wash remains directed downward while operating. Threats posed by wake boats, when creating large wakes for wake sports, include:

- **Shoreline erosion** – Wake boats can produce waves with 17 times the energy of other powerboats. It can take up to 1,000 feet for that energy to dissipate to the levels observed 100-200 feet from other recreational boats when operating at cruising speed. This stronger wave energy can erode shorelines, swamp loon nests and destroy spawning beds.
- **Lakebed sediment disturbance** – At depths less than 20 feet, wake boats can uproot desirable aquatic plants. Nutrients trapped in lakebed sediment that fuel algae growth (like phosphorus and nitrogen) may be dislodged and resuspended. Sediment resuspension decreases water clarity, subsequently reducing the ability of fish to find food, the depth to which aquatic plants can grow, and the dissolved oxygen content in the water.
- **Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)** – Wake boats can spread AIS in two ways. First, when operating to create large wakes, wake boats have the power to uproot and shred curly-leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil, undermining our community's efforts to control these invasive species. Second, wake boat ballast tanks can harbor and transport invasive species to or from our lakes. Wake boat design prevents Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) inspectors at our local boat landings from determining if ballast tanks are being properly drained and free of AIS.

Wake sports have become a topic of concern across the United States and, at last count, seventeen Wisconsin towns have established enhanced wake ordinances. Closer to home, Cable, Drummond, and Grand View, have adopted local ordinances prohibiting elevated wakes and/or wakesurfing. Organizations such as Last Wilderness Alliance and Lakes at Stake have formed to educate the public statewide about their concerns regarding wakesurfing and pending legislation.

Researched and authored by the FOECLA Water Quality Committee



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EAU CLAIRE LAKES AREA

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*FOECLA Annual Meeting!
Saturday, July 20th, 9-11
Barnes Town Hall
See you there!*



Fall foliage looking toward Upper Eau Claire and Birch lakes

Photo Credit: Kip Rubenzer