Big Sugarbush Notes
Published by Big Sugarbush Lake Association of Minnesota

As summer wanes...

Fall general meeting
Big Sugarbush Lake Association

3 p.m. Saturday, September 4, Sugarbush Township Hall (across from Strawberry Lake Store).

From the president

By Tom Schaffer

What’s In a Name? While checking on some things at the Becker County Recorder’s Office I learned that when our lake was platted and recorded back in the 1870s it was named Big Sugar Bush Lake rather than Big Sugarbush Lake. All of the county and state maps refer to it as Big Sugar Bush Lake, so perhaps we should also.

Also when the streets were re-named last year the residents on the northeast side of the lake (including Nancy and me) were contacted by the county and told that our street address was now “North Sugar Bush Road.” The southeast road was identified as South Sugar Bush Heights Road. The phone books were all published with the addresses listed as described above. When the two street signs were put up on the County Road 34 intersections the names were reversed, and the 911 map on the Becker County web site also shows them incorrectly. I am working with the township board to see what their intent was and, according to the county, the signs and the 911 map may be changed to agree with the phone book addresses.

You’re invited!

Dave and Mary Mueller have invited everyone to their cabin after the association meeting. They promise to provide the meat, buns and refreshments, and would like people to bring a side dish. Please RSVP to their lake number, 983-3509, or cell phone number 641-425-0388. Bring a chair (if you want to sit, that is).
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Becker County COLA notes

COLA is an acronym for the Coalition of Lake Associations, which represents the interests of owners of property on lakes in Becker County. The coalition includes members from Bad Medicine, Big Cormorant, Big Sugar Bush, Big Toad, Buffalo/Rice/Rock, Cotton, Detroit, Eunice, Floyd/North Floyd/Little Floyd, Fix, Height of Land, Island, Larson/Nelson/ Rossman, Little Cormorant, Little Toad, Long, Maud, Melissa/Sally, Middle Cormorant, Pearl, Pickerel, Round/Ice Cracking, Straight/Osage, Strawberry, Turtle, Upper Cormorant and White Earth lakes, as well as the Cormorant Watershed and the Becker County Commission.

I sat in for Rod Bergen, our COLA representative, at the July meeting and heard of approved and requested new developments on Melissa, Toad, Sauer and Little Cormorant Lakes. The Melissa development originally proposed 82 total living units but was finally approved to include 33 units. It almost seems that developers propose something they know will not be approved and negotiate down to a number they really wanted in the first place.

Sound familiar?? Reports from various lake representatives included news of 4th of July boat parades (Cotton and Eunice tied for most boats with 20. I counted 15 in our parade), directories being completed, lake-wide rummage sales and picnics and Secchi disk readings. (At 21+ feet Big Sugar Bush is one of the clearest in the county.)

I asked Carolyn Engebretson, a Becker County Commissioner attending the meeting, why there is such a drive to re-classify lakeshore now. She told me that if the county didn’t re-classify the land, the state would. As usual, one just has to follow the money to learn that the real goal is additional tax revenue. Now I’m trying to learn where the additional revenue is to be spent. Do you suppose they plan to blacktop Goat Ranch Road or the roads around the lake??

Environmental questions

I asked if those who re-classify property from agricultural to residential, increasing the taxes by as much as seven-fold, actually visit the sites first or if they just work from maps in the recorder’s office. You can guess the answer. Next I asked what happens when property is re-classified as residential but cannot be developed because the banks are too steep or it is covered by a wetland or because there is a bog across the shoreline. (By Minnesota law, bogs aren’t to be moved.) Suppose the shoreline is a bass breeding area and is (or should be) protected by the DNR? Who ensures tree removal and lakeshore alterations are done with the proper permits and according to codes? Carolyn couldn’t answer my questions. She did say property owners can use an appeal process that if they believe the reclassified land can’t be developed for any reason. She did agree to visit Nancy and me here at the lake and go for a boat ride to see lakeshore that has been re-classified and assess its viability for development. Re-classification and the resulting tax increases are forcing owners throughout the area to develop land that otherwise may not have been developed for years, if ever.

Potential concern?

Increasing development of even marginal lakeshore along with another dynamic which will occur in 2011 may have an influence on future lake property values. 2011 is the year that the last of the 76 million Baby-Boomers will reach the age of 65. They have grown up and have worked over the past five decades throughout the U.S. They only had 46 million babies, however and as a result there aren’t enough workers to take their places as they retire. (We’re seeing an increase in out-sourcing of jobs to other countries and an increase in hiring of immigrants here in the U.S.) That same dynamic also means that in seven short years the number of people who will be retiring to second homes or purchasing recreational property nationwide will decline sharply. What will happen as development of even marginal lakeshore continues while the number of potential lakeshore buyers is cut in half? Supply and demand (or in this case, potential over-supply and lack of demand) could result in values going down. Perhaps there are enough potential purchasers in our area that the lack of demand won’t occur here but it is something the commissioners and developers should consider.

Birding update

Thanks to Lynda and Robert Backman for the great tips on attracting more birds they presented at the spring meeting. After their program I put up two feeders of black sunflower seeds and two filled with thistle seeds. I attracted a lot of birds as well as raccoons, chipmunks, woodchucks, red squirrels, a mouse and seven huge crows. I dealt with the raccoons by bringing the sunflower feeders in at night and putting them back out in the morning. A broomstick and a baffle made out of a distilled water bottle discouraged the chipmunks but it isn’t pretty. I felt sorry for the chipmunks so I put corn feed on the patio below the feeders. That’s when the mouse arrived. I quit feeding the chipmunks the corn feed and haven’t seen the mouse since. The chipmunks now eat the seeds the birds drop and seem happy. (Why shouldn’t they be happy? They’ve already filled every hollow tree on the property with sunflower seeds.) Finally, I apparently chased the crows and woodchucks enough that they don’t come around much any more.

The good news is that we now see many goldfinches, a pair of rose-breasted grosbeaks and their immature male offspring, lots of muthatches, chickadees, chipping sparrows, house and purple finches, various woodpeckers, a female cardinal and a scarlet tanager. The Backman coaching worked but now I’ll welcome any suggestions for solving the raccoon problem so I can leave the feeders out overnight. One night I hung a feeder at the end of a thin tree limb. I decided to check on it before I
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went to bed. When I shined a flashlight out the window there were already two raccoons staring at me from the limb. They were bending it down far enough for a third raccoon to dump the sunflower seeds all over the ground. I was sure I could hear all three laughing at me as I tried to get to sleep. Last weekend there were five masked raiders trying to unload the thistle feeder by smacking it with their paws. It didn’t work so they dumped the sunflower feeder again, ate their fill and left to continue their raid at the neighbours’.

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much of the winter catch originates.

The underwater and shoreline situation has changed.

Shawn Perich, in this “Points North” column for the Outdoor News (www.outdoornews.com) pondered recently the decline of premium sunfish venues. “Quality bluegill fishing might be the rarest angling available in our part of the world (MN & WI)... most bass/panfish lakes are compromised by development, though sadly many folks characterize the compromises as improvements. Homes and lawns—permanent clearcuts—surround lakeshores. The marshy edge where the land meets the water is clear-cut too. The “brush” and “weeds” that grew on the beach and in the shallows were cut down, ripped out, poisoned, or smothered to “clean up” the shoreline, obliterating the most productive areas of the lake—a wondrous natural hatchery and nursery for fish...."

Research targets weed removal

At a recent Department of Natural Resources-sponsored 2004 Lakes and Rivers Conference in Deerwood, Minn., fisheries biologist Paul Radomski presented the results of a three-year study on the cumulative effects of shoreline development on fish habitat. His research shows that the removal of bullrushes, yellow and white water lilies, and cattails by people trying to improve beaches correlated with the reduction of the biomass of fish. Further, “for each developed lake lot,” the study found, “an average reduction of 66 percent of the adjacent near short floating vegetation was observed. On 531 sunfish/walleye lakes in north-central Minnesota, 20 to 28 percent of the emergent vegetation has been lost to development.” Radomski pointed out that these losses continue to occur. Some lakes have been altered beyond reasonable repair.

Sunfish will not spawn on just any shoreline. They need very specific depth, bottom composition and over (and water temperature) to successfully complete their spring spawn. Two of the few major “beds (spawning areas) used extensively in the 1960s and ’70s are now altered by partial or complete removal of bullrushes, which has changed the required bottom composition for reproduction.

A mature 11-inch sunfish weighs a pound or more. An eight-inch sunfish is seven to nine years old. (See the Minnesota DNR web site for great info on all fish. Key words: “Minnesota sunfish weight age.”) Sunfish rarely live beyond 10 years. Large bag limits of 30 sunfish per day (unchanged in the face of declining “keepers-size” fish statewide) continued to encourage the decline in the resources until the 2003 summer season, when the limit was reduced to 15. The horse had already escaped the barn.

With fewer premium spawning grounds, the vulnerability of the sunfish, an easy fish to catch in almost any circumstance, is obvious. A few aggressive fishermen, fishing the “beds” and sorting out the biggest breeding fish, can raise havoc with a lake’s bluegill future. Many of the remaining fish are those less likely to successfully reproduce and in some cases are genetically inferior. There has been DNR research which points to the fact that when large breeding “bull” sunfish are removed from the beds, lesser sterile males will “false spawn” in their place with no reproductive results.

It would seem reasonable to assume that with the recent increase in Sugarbush water levels more nesting areas would result. This does not seem to be the case, as much of the new areas appear not to have the bottom composition required for a successful spawning experience.

A DNR priority

The Minnesota DNR publishes a habitat-friendly landscaping book for shore property owners. Information can be found on the web site. Biologist Radomski has made this an issue of primary importance with his staff. The DNR have made it apparent it wants to get the word out! Becker County code information is also available directly from the county. The information is available for anyone who wants it. (Why wouldn’t everyone want it?)

A lake property owners recently asked me if those who are in violation of codes and DNR guidelines come to the lake association meetings. I pointed out that many of the serious violations have taken place many years ago, many by previous property owners. However, it is no secret that violations are occurring yearly. It would seem incumbent upon every property owner to become aware of the codes and guidelines which relate to under-the-water, at-the-shoreline and on-the-lot itself.
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Appropriate (self) education makes good sense for the future quality of the resource, including the sunfish.

On the surface it would seem that the future for “really big” bluegills is not very rosy. The sunfish are not going to become harder to catch. The lake is not going to grow new native shoreline. And in any season people are not going to abstain from sunfishing! The “possession limit” has, however, been adjusted to reflect the daily limit of 15 (In the past, the possession limit was double the daily legal take.) In other words, one’s freezer in 2004 legally cannot contain more than the 15 sunfish at any one time.

In light of the reduced daily limits and possession numbers, a new attitude might be appropriate, maybe even fashionable. One who practices “catch (photograph) and release” as recommended by our DNR, particularly on the spring spawning beds, assures enjoyment for another day. It may well be a valuable example to those we teach fishing, those who will guide Big Sugarbush through the next generation and beyond. They deserve the best future we can leave them. And so do the sunfish.

**Minutes**

**Big Sugarbush Lake Association General Meeting**

**May 29, 2004**

The meeting was called to order by President Ross Collins.

**Old Business**

MSC: to approve the minutes from the fall meeting.

Treasurer’s report: Treasurer Ron Carlson was absent.

Ross Collins gave the treasurer’s report. There is a balance of $1627.58.

MSC: Treasurer’s report accepted

Directory: Jerry Amundson reported on the directory. Several options were presented. The options were discussed. Ken Matson, Jerry Amundson, Ade Sponberg and Bruce Nornes will distribute the copies after they are finished.

MSC: have the directory published in color with a $5 charge for members of the association and $10 for nonmembers.

Road Signs: There are no name signs up on Tageto Road.

COLA: Rod Bergen presented the COLA report. Everyone was encouraged to attend one of these meetings. They meet the third Thursday of the month at the Detroit Lakes technical college.

**New Business**

Fourth of July Parade: Parade is scheduled for Sunday July 4, at 4 p.m. Meet at the public access. There will be no awards this year.

Election of Board Members: MSC Jim Jaskin, Fran Matson and Diane Becker were elected to the board. Terms are for three years.

Land Dispute: Ken Bruss sent a letter to the association indicating there is a dispute over ownership of 42 feet of land. His abstract says that his lot has a common boundary with the government lot adjacent to it. Apparently there is a question if the first subdivision has been officially surveyed and registered with the county.

Introduction of members.

Announcements: Be sure to clean off your boats and trailers when you take them to other lakes so as not to inadvertently bring exotics to our lake.

Fred Drenkow has copies of the transparency of Minnesota Lakes if anyone is interested.

Property owners can petition township to maintain their roads if they are not designated township roads. Property owners are responsible to do this themselves.

Township meetings are the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Board Meeting: The board met briefly after the association meeting adjourned. Officers were elected. President, Tom Shaffer; vice president, Jim Jaskin; treasurer, Ron Carlson; secretary, Lynda Backman.

Respectfully Submitted, Lynda Backman, secretary.

**Itchin’ to burn?**

Many people around Minnesota still use on-site disposal methods like “backyard burning” to dispose of their household wastes. From burning waste in fire pits and woodstoves to the traditional burn barrel, more than two percent of Minnesota’s municipal solid waste is still managed in this way.

But for most Minnesotans, it is against the law to burn or bury household waste— it has been illegal since 1969. Burning garbage releases toxic air pollutants that can contaminate our waters. Dioxin is the key toxin of concern as a potent human carcinogen that is especially harmful for pregnant women, children, and the elderly. Just one burn barrel can produce as much or more than a full-scale municipal waste combustor burning 200 tons a day. For more information, see the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance web site at www.moea.state.mn.us/reduce/burnbarrel.cfm for information on backyard burning, or the Environmental Protection Agency at www.epa.gov/msw/backyard/.
So what are we supposed to do?

Each year, regional fisheries managers issue permits to about 11,000 lakeshore homeowners who wish to remove vegetation in front of their property. Thousands of other homeowners cut or pull submerged vegetation in a small area for recreation, which doesn’t require a permit. What is the cumulative effect of these practices on Minnesota’s lakes? Does the current aquatic plant management program adequately protect important aquatic plant habitat and provide sufficient recreational access? These are a few of the questions that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) hopes to answer in an 18-month study that will include input from lakeshore property owners, lake associations, hunting and angling groups and commercial businesses. The aquatic plants growing along Minnesota’s lakeshore mean different things to different people. For some, aquatic plants are valuable fish and wildlife habitat, an aquatic garden that dampens the energy of the waves, or a component of the beauty that draws us to the lake. In other cases, aquatic plants produce nuisance conditions that interfere with swimming or boating, or are non-native plants that crowd out native species.

These conflicting views create a significant challenge for the DNR and its Aquatic Plant Management Program, and as more Minnesotans build lakeshore homes, a significant problem that needs to be addressed.

“At this point, we can’t say what changes will be made to current aquatic plant management strategies,” said Steve Enger, a DNR supervisor who oversees the aquatic plant management program. “The important point is to design a program that will be good for Minnesota’s lakes, will meet the needs of lakeshore residents, and that all groups can work together to implement.” The DNR allows a limited amount of some types of aquatic vegetation to be cut or pulled without a permit, but regulates many types of control activities.

Aquatic plant removal: What you need to know

While cutting or pulling submerged vegetation in a small area for recreation is allowed without a permit, many activities require an Aquatic Plant Management permit. Most permits are valid for one year and cost $35.

Projects that require a permit include:
- Using herbicides or algaecides to control aquatic plants in public waters;
- Removing emergent vegetation, like bulrush, cattails or wild rice;
- Removing floating leaf vegetation, like water lilies, in an area larger than a channel 15 feet wide extending to open water;
- Cutting, pulling or mechanically controlling vegetation in an area larger than 2,500 square feet or wider than 50 feet;
- Removing or relocating a free-floating bag of any size;
- Installing or operating an automated plant control device (such as the Crary WeedRoller, Beachgroomer or Lake Sweeper);

Projects that do not require a permit include:
- Cutting or pulling submerged vegetation from an area that does not extend more than 50 feet along the shore, or more than one half your frontage width, whichever is smaller. The cleared area may not exceed 2,500 square feet;
- Cutting or pulling floating leaf plants, like water lilies, to create a channel 15 feet wide extending to open water. More extensive removal requires a permit. Cut or pulled vegetation must be removed from the water and the cleared area must remain in the same place each year.

Many lakeshore property owners are restoring the shoreline property to a more natural condition. The DNR supports protection and restoration of shoreline, but encourages property owners to plan these projects carefully. A permit from the DNR is required to plant aquatic vegetation below the ordinary high water mark of public waters. This will help reduce the potential for adverse impacts from these projects. There is no charge for this permit.

Shoreline alterations: What you need to know

Lakeshore owners who are considering projects that would alter their shoreline or lake bottom should review the DNR Division of Waters permit requirements before work begins. Certain types of alterations below the ordinary high water level of public waters or public waters wetlands require an individual Public Waters Work Permit. Activities that fall under this requirement include excavating, dredging, filling, draining or the placement of structures.

Information on both the Aquatic Plant Management Program and the Public Waters Work Permit Program is available on the DNR Web site at www.dnr.state.mn.us or by calling 1-888-MINNDNR (646-6367).

For more information about the Public Waters Work Permit program, contact the area hydrologist at your DNR Area Office or contact the Central Office Division of Waters at (651) 296-4800.

(Submitted by Bob Backman in a moment of weakness.)
The worm turns

Seems that even the lowly servant to generations of anglers can be a menace. Fishing with worms? Don’t know how to dispose of extras? We hear that, deep-fried, they are nearly edible.

Earthworms are not as helpful as many people think. Gardeners, anglers and other outdoors enthusiasts are likely to encounter earthworms; those earthworms found in Minnesota are exotic species from Europe and Asia. Aside from their use for bait and composting, most people don’t know the rest of the story. A group of scientists think they should.

Minnesota has no native earthworms, angle worms or night crawlers. Those that have been introduced here are harming many native forests, reducing wildflower populations, and may be causing increased erosion and reduced water quality.

Research conducted by staff and graduate students from the University of Minnesota Center for Hardwood Ecology is documenting the harmful effects of exotic earthworms.

“Our research is verifying what others have observed in Minnesota and Wisconsin forests,” said Cindy Hale, who has been doing worm research for several years. “The worms are not as good as we were all led to believe.”

Steve Mortensen, biologist from the Leech Lake Reservation, added, “We have observed the leaf litter in forests disappearing and along with it the native wildflowers, ferns and tree seedlings. Once earthworms have invaded, they cannot be removed.”

Experts encourage anglers and others not to spread earthworms to new areas. DNR Exotic Species Program Coordinator Jay Rendall suggests disposing of unwanted earthworms used as bait in the trash and not at boat landings, roadsides or in the woods. It is also possible to unknowingly spread the worms by moving soil, compost and mulch, even in small amounts, from one place to another. For more information about earthworms, visit the DNR Web site at www.dnr.state.mn.us or visit Minnesota Worm Watch at www.nrri.umn.edu/worms.

New threat ‘mussels’ into Minnesota lakes; solution? Vigilance

The pest apparently imported some 20 years ago from Europe and Asia on Great Lakes ships has reached northern Minnesota. The zebra mussel was found last year in the Brainerd lakes area, and it has both the conservation and the tourism industry worried, according to an article by the Associated Press. “This is not at all what we wanted to see,” said Gary Montz, aquatic invertebrate biologist for the DNR.

The small but prolific shellfish clogs boat engines, fouls beaches and affects fish populations. They eventually kill native mussels. They stink up the lake as they decompose. They cut the feet of swimmers with their sharp shells. They are hard to control, are spread as part of bait buckets boat hulls and motors, even vegetation left on boat trailers. In the larval stage they float easily downstream to other lakes.

Lakes infested by zebra mussel become unattractive to both property owners and visitors. Could they reach Big Sugarbush? You bet. Solution? Again, vigilance. Clean off your stuff before putting it back into Sugarbush from another lake. Admittedly, some visitors to the Public Access won’t be reading this newsletter. All we can do then is hope that, with more and more people aware of the problem, being careful will be come a habit.

Fast facts: hummingbirds

Hummingbirds feed on nectar of flowers. They get extra nourishment by eating insect. Because they have such narrow bills, they can eat only tiny prey, such as gnats, mites and fleas. Even mosquitoes are too large for a hummingbird to eat.

The male ruby-throat is iridescent green with a black throat patch called a gorget, which appears bright ruby red in sunlight. Its forked tail fans out to show aggression.

The female is larger and has a longer bill than the male. She lacks the throat patch and has white-tipped feathers on the edges of her tail.

The hardest part of the hummingbird’s Central America migration each spring and fall is the 500-mile crossing of the Gulf of Mexico. Birds must fly almost all day and night (18 hours or more) without stopping for food, water or rest.

Hummingbird hearts beat about 1,260 beats a minute. A hummingbird can live three to five years in the wild.

Hummingbirds can fly up to 50 miles per hour. Some people have seen them fly 300 feet above the ground.

Hummers eat nearly their own weight in nectar every day—comparable to our drinking a bathtub of fruit juice.
Land use activities

Where do we fit into the functions of a lake system? Everywhere! Human activity can have effects in all areas of a lake system. What we create, modify, or destroy in our development and land use practices within the watershed will have consequences that will be felt throughout the whole aquatic system.

We can impact many parts of a lake system, but the area of greatest concern and potential for the greatest overall change in water quality is where we get involved in the nutrient cycle. Development of shoreland and changes to the land surface within the watershed always change the original nutrient load to the lake. Farming, forestry, residential development, industry and road building all have an effect on changing the nutrient load.

With increased human activity within the watershed, there will be an increased amount of nutrients entering the lake. Primarily, nutrient increases will come by two different means. The first is by direct input, point source pollution, and the second is by increased surface runoff, nonpoint source pollution.

Direct inputs of nutrients come from phosphorus being concentrated and injected directly into the lake. These direct inputs may be from storm sewer discharges, effluents from waste water treatment systems, and individual septic systems. Although storm sewers and septic systems are classified as nonpoint sources by state agencies, you may want to view them as direct inputs to the lake because they are easily located in the watershed and around the shoreline.

Whether these discharges are directly into the lake or into the river upstream of the lake, their effects will be realized in the lake in a negative way by providing more fertilizer for algae and aquatic vascular plants.

Increased surface runoff is the result of changes to the slope of the land, disturbance of the soil, removal of original vegetation, and draining or filling of wetlands. These changes increase the amount of surface runoff and the speed at which this runoff comes off the land. Increased surface runoff may also lead to erosion, which increases the rate of sedimentation and nutrient loading.

Most of the phosphorus entering Minnesota’s lakes is carried to the lake by water running over the ground’s surface following rainfall or snowmelt. In addition to the small amounts of phosphorus present in rainwater, the runoff picks up more phosphorus from the material it comes in contact with as it flows. Much of this phosphorus is transported directly to the lake unless the water is absorbed into the ground first. Although water which enters the ground may eventually enter the lake through groundwater flow, most of the phosphorus it contains will either be filtered out at the soil surface or will adhere to small spoil particles as it moves through the ground.

Surface runoff transports phosphorus to a lake not only from near shore areas but from the entire lake watershed, which may include areas many miles from the lake.

Any increase of nutrients into the lake is just like adding fertilizer to a lawn or garden. The result is a stimulation of the plants in the lake, especially algae. Algal blooms turn water green, reduce water transparency, deplete the oxygen supply, and smell terrible. Ultimately, these blooms alter wildlife habitat, impair scenic views, reduce recreational appeal, and reduce property values.

Once polluted, recovery of a lake is a very slow process. Unlike rivers and streams, lakes are slow to exchange their water and have flush rates up to several years. Water quality will not improve until specific action is taken to reduce the source of nutrients within the watershed.

It is not realistic to think that all watersheds can be maintained in pristine condition, but it is very possible to begin to change some of the land use practices that lead to the problem of cultural eutrophication. Overfertilization of the lake is the cumulative effect of many people working, living, and playing within the watershed, contributing to changes in water quality over time. Therefore, only by changing or breaking old, bad habits can we lessen our impact on water quality, by learning to live in a more equal partnership with the environment around us.

A realistic and effective means of tackling the problems of lake management and land use is to organize at the local level by forming a lake association.
Lakeshore landscaping in the news: a Twin Cities debate

The Home and Garden section of the Minneapolis Star Tribune includes a major feature on new trends in lakeshore landscaping designed to both meet needs of property owners and minimize impact on the lake. The article in the August 18 edition includes an interview of lakeshore owners on Fish Lake in Maple Grove who re-landscaped their lawn grass at the water’s edge. Carolyn Halbur said she used to use the neat, well-manicured lawn as an ideal, feeling sorry for those owners who chose to stick with the natural vegetation. Then she found out how those manicured lawns can pollute the lake. Now a lawn at the lake “makes her think of erosion, fertilizer runoff and algae scum.”

Halbur’s re-landscaped lakeshore includes a buffer zone of wildflowers and other native plants, and a small clearing for lake access. She says it’s easier to maintain, attracts birds and butterflies, and changes color with the seasons.

While it’s becoming more common, many still resist this Department of Natural Resources-recommended approach. A Twin Cities real estate agent specializing in lake property noted that people who pay the kind of money lake property is going for nowadays “expect a nice sand beach, riprap and a great view.” He added real estate sales people generally see lake property without a good view of the lake selling for less. “If it (native vegetation) encroaches on the view, it will impact your property value,” noted agent Tim Lovett. Carrol Henderson, DNR nongame wildlife program supervisor, suggests owners will need a financial incentive to restore their shorelines, adding, “Lakeshores are one of the most endangered habitats in Minnesota.”

And all without a GPS...

Through the use of satellite telemetry, Kevin Kenow of the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center of the U.S. Geologic Survey and his collaborators discovered that loons in Wisconsin and Minnesota used one of two migration routes. On one route, they head southward through the interior United States toward the Gulf of Mexico. The other route is eastward across the Appalachian Mountains to the Atlantic coast. Researchers also discovered that common loons could travel almost 600 miles in a three-day period, and approximately 1,200 miles in one migration.