



Bone Lake Newsletter

Bone Lake — Once called Onondogacona which means lake of small pines

SPRING 2026

ADVISORY COMMITTEE UNDERWAY...



WHY DO WE CARE SO MUCH ABOUT AQUATIC PLANTS?

A diverse native aquatic plant community is the foundation for a healthy, balanced lake. Aquatic plants provide many benefits including food, shelter, and nurseries for fish, wildlife and insects. Go to page 8 to find out more.

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Planning for the future

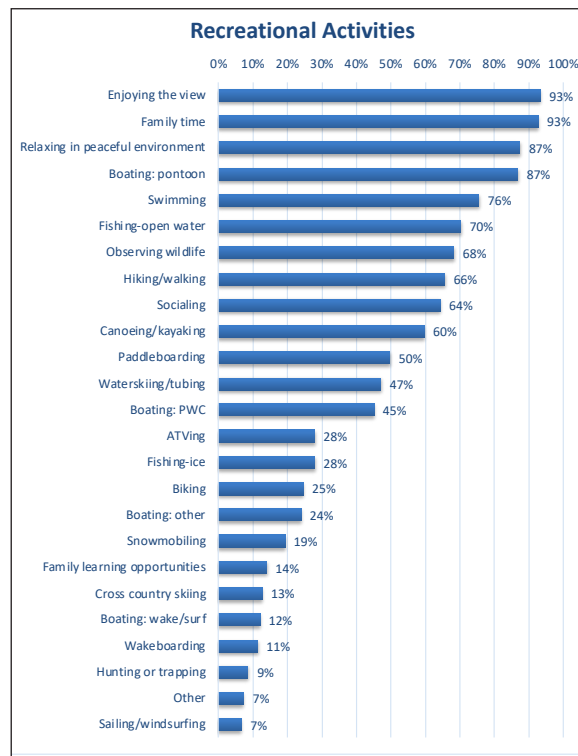
by Shelley Rose

We are on schedule and well on our way to publishing our 10-year Comprehensive Lake Management Plan update. Once approved by your board of commissioners, the plan will go out for public comment and review by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. So much work has happened over the past nine months to get us to this point.

Survey completed

Building on last summer's focus groups, we completed the survey of Bone Lake property owners in November, 2025. Here are a few survey highlights.

- Since 2013 there has been a steady increase in those who call Bone Lake home.
- Over 75 percent identified their top recreational activities on Bone Lake as family time, enjoying the view, relaxing in a peaceful environment, boating with a pontoon, and swimming.
- There has been an increase in owners who enjoy motorized boating from 86 percent in 2013 to 97 percent in 2025.
- Even after years of promoting shoreline practices to improve the lake's water quality, we have a disconnect on the most desirable shoreline to own (sandy beach or mowed lawn – 44 percent) versus what would be best for the lake health —native plantings.
- Top concerns were new invasive species entering the lake, unsafe boat or personal watercraft use, excessive invasive aquatic plant growth, the geese population, failing septic systems, and swimmers' itch.
- The majority indicated the District should continue all its current activities and especially programs to deter new aquatic invasive species and incentives to upgrade non-conforming septic systems.
- Nearly 37 percent of Bone Lakers would consider volunteering to help the District.



Find the 10-year Plan Property Owner Survey at bonelakewi.com > Bone Lake Mgmt Plan.

— continued on page 4

Dear Bone Lakers,

Well, we made it through another winter on Bone Lake. Once again it was an on-and-off winter for snow sports. I never got my snowmobile out or went cross country skiing. Just a reminder that our weather patterns are changing and we have to adapt.

Winter showed us it's sometimes crazy to live up north. We all suffered during the week of January 22-25 when we hit the lows of minus 20-30 below zero. It gave all those lucky snow birds more ammunition to throw back at us. Where ever you were, you were likely watching your propane tank quickly heading to "fill requirement".

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Mike Musial

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Now that the ice is off, another lucky guess landed the contest trophy. Darren Wennen is the recipient of the coveted Bone Lake ice-out trophy with his April 11th guess and will have bragging rights until next spring.

The Lions opened up the north landing on April 22 and installed the dock and started up the CD3 cleaning station. If you use the north landing please think about giving a donation to the Lions at the yellow pole, or volunteer to help them keep the park clean and open to all. Contact Gerry Albright at 715-901-2499 if you would like to help.

Once again we need to thank our commissioner Mike Musial for maintaining and getting all the buoys in place as well putting the south dock in place. Please remember not to hang onto or attach your boat to any buoys. If you see any buoys out of place or damaged, contact Mike so he can take care of it.



Give way to the new harvester when you see it on the lake this spring.

This year you will also see Mike commanding our new harvester on the lake. We received the harvester last June just as the curly-leaf pondweed died off, so we couldn't get much use of it. This year the harvest season will start mid-May and run through the end of June. Please keep a safe distance when the crews are working as this large boat can't stop quickly.

Now is a good time to check your docks and other equipment for zebra mussels after confirming their presence in Bone Lake. They will all be dead, but it is good to get them off your equipment and start with a clean dock. Be careful as the shells are very sharp and can easily cut your hands. Use gloves and a putty knife to scrap them off your equipment.

We need to continue to be diligent in our fight to keep invasive species out of Bone Lake. Please use the cleaning stations at both landings to clean your boat and trailer of weeds and zebra mussels. It is most important

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to do this before entering the lake as well as upon leaving the lake. It is also required by county law.

We have stopped the DNR Clean Boats Clean Waters program as we were collecting information for the DNR, but not receiving a lot of feedback from them. We have also been concerned over the inconsiderate and abusive response to the CBCW staff trying monitor the cleaning process. We appreciate all the time that these young people spent at the north and south landings. We are now going to go with paid adult monitors to help direct and inform boaters of the requirement to use the cleaning station. Watch for these paid jobs and requirements on the Bone Lake website and Facebook page.

At last August's annual meeting members voted and approved the upgrade of the south landing to the sum of \$10,000. Over the winter we had discussions with the Town of Georgetown to pay the other \$10,000. They agreed to be responsible for any work or equipment needed out of the water. We received final plans for the design and installation of precast concrete planks from Polk County. The completed grant and plans are in the hands of the DNR for review to make sure we have them completely correct to go to the DNR in May. Since our plans are under \$20,000 our local DNR in Siren can make the decision with their funding pool. We expect to hear back in August. If awarded, the construction would be done in September-October 2026.

Last fall we agreed to spend funds to update our 10-year Lake Management Plan. Shelley Rose, BLMD Vice Chair, agreed to lead this important work with help from Cheryl Clemens our long time consultant. During early spring Shelley asked for volunteers to help direct our goals and objectives and then agree on priorities for programs to keep our lake clean and protect our surrounding shoreline.

As of this writing the plan update is on schedule. New studies and reports are available on the Bone Lake website: 2025 Focus Group Report, 2025 Watershed Report, 2025 Property Owner Survey Report and 2025 Shoreline Survey Report.

A draft of the plan will go to the DNR, in addition to a public comment period. We are on track review adoption of the plan at this year's annual meeting.

We all need to thank the focus group attendees, the advisory committee volunteers and our commissioners Karen Engelbretson and Shelley Rose, along with our consultant Cheryl Clemens, who are giving a lot of their time and ideas to help create our 10-year plan. ■

— Cary Olson, Chair

Save the date
**Bone Lake 2026
Annual Meeting**

**Saturday, August 8
9:00 a.m.
Luck School**

At this year's annual meeting Bone Lake Management District members will approve the 2027 annual budget, elect one commissioner for a three-year term, and learn about our new 10-year Comprehensive Lake Management Plan. A meeting notice will be mailed to property owners in July.

Questions? Contact any BLMD commissioner.

Starting a fire? Get fire danger levels and the daily DNR burn restrictions at <https://apps.dnr.wi.gov/wisburn/#/>



HEIDI WENNEN

Ice-out winner declared!

Darren Wennen is the proud winner of the 2026 Bone Lake Boydsnest ice-out trophy designed by Brent Nygaard. Darren was one of the seventy-three participants in this eighteenth year of the contest. He guessed April 11 at 4:35 p.m.

The last of the ice washed ashore at the north end on April 11th at 4:00 pm. Bob and Lorraine Boyd and Josie their pooch were there to witness it.

Congratulations, Darren, and a big shout out to the four participants who also guessed April 11: Rich Trombley, Karen Engelbretson, Sue Nygaard, and Hayden Witt.

Ice piles up at Point Golden on April 7, 2026.



KIRK LARSON

Ten-year lake management plan

—continued from front page

Shoreline inventory completed

Also completed in late fall of last year was the Shoreline Inventory Report. For each of the four hundred and ninety-one parcels on Bone Lake, percent canopy, human structures, runoff concerns, and bank zone factors were documented in the first 35 feet

of the shoreline landward from the water's edge (riparian buffer zone). Additionally, human structures and aquatic plants were documented in the littoral zone (in the water at the shore) for each parcel.

One of our concerns is the increasing amount of lawn since the 2018 survey. Lawn allows for more nutrient runoff, affecting water quality and clarity. A great alternative is native plantings along the shoreline. Planting trees along the shoreline also helps with water quality and shoreline stabilization.

Full reports of both the Property Owner Survey and the Shoreline Survey are available on the Bone Lake website under the “Bone Lake Mgmt Plan” tab.

Advisory committee work

Once reports were compiled and summarized, an Advisory Committee was formed. This hard-working group of volunteers have property on the lake and care about the lake's future. Their work began in earnest at the beginning of March, meeting virtually every other week since March 11. They have studied background materials and provided input on lake concerns like water quality, protecting the lake's fish, wildlife and habitat, erosion and runoff, invasive species prevention, boating safety, and community

involvement. In between Zoom meetings, committee members provided additional feedback and direction to update our lake management plan goals and objectives. Committee work and the plan update has been led by the very capable Cheryl Clemens of Harmony Environmental. Thank you to the Bone Lakers who volunteered to serve on the planning Advisory Committee.

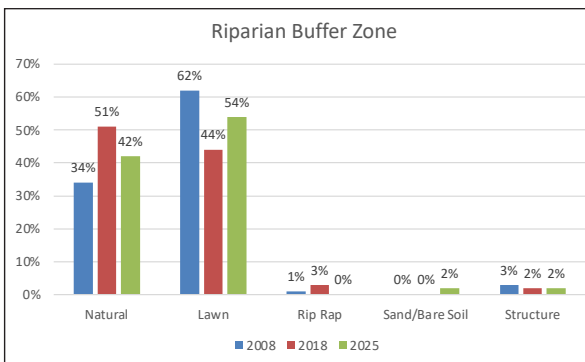
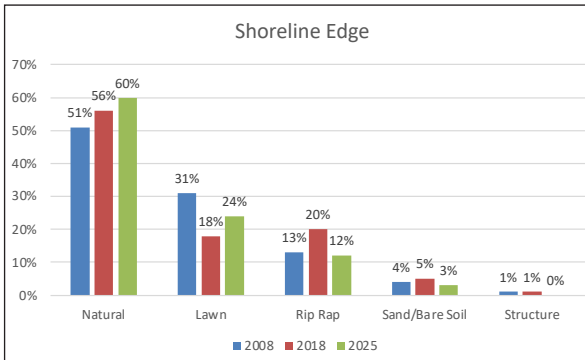
Public comment

You will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed plan during the public comment period. Please watch your email for the announcement. Make sure you are on the email list by signing up for email notices at bonelakewi.com. Click/tap “Join Our Mailing” at the main menu bar.

District approval

We anticipate the updated 10-year Comprehensive Lake Management Plan will be brought forward to District members for review at the 2026 District annual meeting on August 8. ■

District social events on June 20 and June 25 offer you an opportunity to review the new 10-year Plan during the public comment phase. See page 5.



Full reports of both the Property Owner Survey and the Shoreline Survey are available on the Bone Lake website under the “Bone Lake Mgmt Plan” tab.

Upcoming District events

The Bone Lake Management District is hosting two events in June where you can learn about our updated 10-year Comprehensive Lake Management Plan. The plan will be in the public comment phase, which is a major opportunity for you to provide input.

Saturday, June 20 District Donut Day

Come join the Bone Lake Management District for Donut Day on Saturday, June 20, 2026 from 9:30 to 11:00 in the morning at Don Langel Memorial Park, North Landing Pavilion. We'll have donuts for the first 100 people!

Meet your neighbors. Explore the park. Enjoy a donut from Auntie Mars Hilltop Donut Shop. Learn about how we can take care of Bone Lake. Families welcome!



Thursday, June 25 North Landing Social

Please join us for our Bone Lake evening social on Thursday, June 25, 2026, from 6:30 to 8:00, at the North Landing Pavilion in Don Langel Memorial Park. Bring your own beverage. We'll have a potluck dessert and appetizer table set up for treats if you'd like to bring a dish to share. Bringing something is completely by choice and not necessary to attend.

Please come and enjoy this very informal social event! It's a great way to meet some of your neighbors as well as learn about how together we can take care of Bone Lake!



The District 10-year Plan advisory committee has met on Zoom at two-week intervals during March-May. Clockwise from top left: Consultant Cheryl Clemens, Karen Engelbretson, David Hendrick, Shelley Rose, John Ukura, Jeff Peterson, Deb Dawson. Not pictured: Phil Beck, Ken Fjelstad.

Schedule for completion and public review process

Committee meetings
March - May 2026

Draft Implementation Plan for committee and board
May 15, 2026

Comments back on plan
June 1, 2026

Final Draft Implementation Plan and Summary for public review
June 6, 2026

North Landing community event:
June 20

North Landing community event:
June 25

Public comments due
July 3, 2026

Board meeting to approve plan for DNR review
July 11, 2026

Request DNR review of plan (60 days)
July 15, 2026

Annual meeting presentation
August 8

Surface water grants due
Sept. 15 (draft)

November 15 (final) 2026

Thank you 10-year Plan focus group participants:

- Carol Adleman
- Gerry Albright
- David Curley
- Mary Sue Curley
- Deb Dawson
- Jeff Dawson
- Julie English
- Wade English
- Barb Fjelstad
- Ken Fjelstad
- Mary Kay Johnson
- Kathy Killeen
- Tim Killeen
- Brad Miller
- Jane Miller
- Rachel Nusbaum
- Steve Peterson
- Ken Prusak
- Mark Randall
- Gina Ryan
- Shaun Ryan
- John Ukura
- Brian VanHout
- John Wagner

Polk County launches Boating Viewer

by Polk County Land & Water Resources Department

The Polk County Land and Water Resources Department is excited to launch the Polk County Boating Viewer.

This interactive map allows users to visualize the State of Wisconsin slow no wake regulations, physical buoys marking hazards, and areas suggested by lake organizations for enhanced wake activities. The map also includes Polk County ramp and carry-in boat access locations.

When opening the viewer, users will be prompted with a terms and conditions agreement which includes important information and must be read before proceeding. After agreeing to the terms and conditions of the viewer, a map of Polk County will display. Users can either manually zoom to a location or hit the "find my location" icon to zoom to their current location (lower right-hand corner for mobile devices or top left corner for computers).

When features on the map are selected, a pop-up window will appear with additional information including:

Boat landings

Includes lake name, type, lanes, surface, dock, parking, restrooms.

Waterbodies

Includes lake name, max depth, class, acres, and shoreline miles.

Slow no wake areas

100 foot buffer from shore: State regulations require all watercraft to be slow no wake within 100 feet of shore, dock, raft, pier, or restricted area.

200 foot buffer from shore: State regulations require personal watercraft to be slow no wake within 200 feet of shore.

Additional slow no wake designations

Water hazards marked by buoys (rocks or shallow areas). Not all hazards are marked by buoys or maps; caution should be used when navigating any waterbody as water depths can vary .

Suggested enhanced wake areas

These areas have been designated by the lake organization affiliated with the waterbody, and are suggested to reduce impacts on the lake.

Bone Lake's suggested wake sports area is indicated as 500 feet from shore and water 20 feet deep or greater.

This viewer has been designed as an educational resource and is not designed or intended to be used as the only source of navigation.



Scan the code to access the Polk County Boating Viewer from your phone or tablet when on the water and view along with your location on the lake.

Don Langel Park Report

by Gerry Albright, Luck Lions Club

The long standing wood pile has finally been removed by Noah Musial and the Town of Bone Lake.

The pile was burned April 2, thanks to Noah Musial, Nate Bell, Mike Musial, and Earl Erickson. Huge and dangerous, the nuisance pile generated from the bad storm on July 19, 2019 and the parking lot addition in 2023, was so large it burned for over two weeks! You could see the flames well down the lake. Noah used his heavy equipment to haul the remainders to the Bone Lake Town gravel pit. There is new grass where the pile used to be, so we ask people to please try to not park vehicles on the area to give the grass a chance to fill in.

Due to people using the dumpster as their personal household garbage hauler, the Lions are not sponsoring the dumpster this year. Instead, we have placed additional garbage carts around the park for use by picnickers and boaters. Please leave the park better than you found it for the sake of all visitors.

The winter ice pushed the boat launch cement around and left its mark on the asphalt. We are aware of the issue, and are actively looking into mitigation. The dock and fishing pier were installed April 22, earlier than usual, after ice out was declared on April 11 (see page 3).

Wildlife update

As of this writing, we have seen Bald Eagles (at least seven unique individuals including a couple of last year’s juveniles), the Purple Martins, Sandhill Cranes, a lone Eastern Bluebird, an Indigo Bunting, herons, White Pelicans, lake gulls, Trumpeter swans, Merganser ducks, and of course, the ubiquitous Canada geese, earlier this year. Wow that’s quite a list! Does earliness indicate a warmer summer?

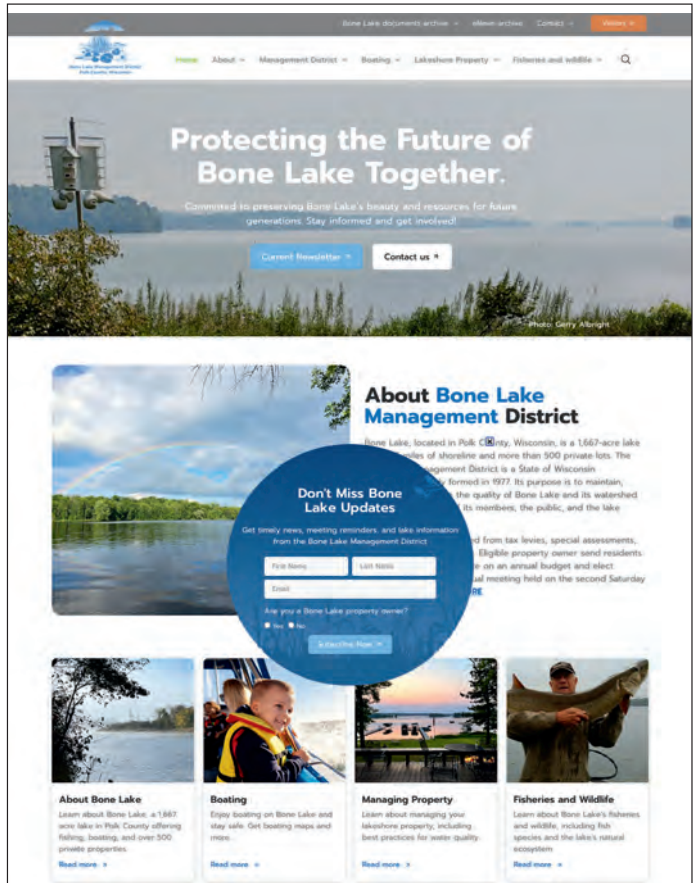
An otter family has declared the point home base again this year. So if swimming at the Point, don’t be carrying any fish with you, or you may get an unexpected visitor!

If the Park, its wildlife and the lake are important to you and you want to give back to make Bone Lake the best it can be, we are always looking for volunteers to help out no matter your skills. Contact me, or one of the Bone Lake commissioners, to reach the right people that keep the park and lake a special place for us all. ■

Gerry Albright 715-901-2499 gerry@albrightideas.com

New website almost ready

Bone Lake’s brand-new website will launch this summer with improved features including a District documents archive and easy-to-access information about the lake and its management. The site is designed for property owners and visitors alike to support you and your experience around the lake. Sign up for the District email list at our existing site for updates on the launch. bonelakewi.com ■



Screen shot of the new bonelakewi.com site currently in development. The new site will launch this summer.



Updated Bone Lake boating maps are now available at the north and south landings with great information for all. Keep one on board—printed on waterproof paper.

Musky study completed

Wisconsin DNR has completed their 2024-2025 Muskellunge Survey Report for Bone Lake by Kyle J. Broadway, DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist.

Muskies captured in 2024 were measured, weighed, sexed and marked with a fin clip and given a passive integrated transponder tag prior to release. The recapture occurred during 2025 where DNR identified the number of marked and unmarked Muskellunge captured; that information was used to generate a population size estimate.

Following is the Executive Summary from the completed report:

A low-moderate density muskellunge population with good size structure was present in Bone Lake that supports a popular fishery among anglers.

The adult population sexes combined ≥ 30 inches) during 2024 was estimated to be 401 fish (95% CI: 257 - 545), or 0.23 adult fish/acre; CV = 0.18). The population has declined during every survey since 1995 but now resembles the mean density (0.22 fish/acre) for A1 muskellunge lakes across Wisconsin, which should continue to provide good angling action while producing larger-bodied fish.

Despite declining adult densities, the population remains healthy with good size structure, body condition and average growth rates. High survival of stocked muskellunge in Bone Lake has successfully maintained a quality fishery. However, the balance between mortality (natural, angler harvest, delayed fishing mortality and tribal harvest) and recruitment (stocking) appears skewed as the population has been in decline since at least the early 2000s.

Survival of stocked fish to adult age classes was variable and thus, stocking efficacy and recruitment of stocked year classes to the fishery should be closely monitored in the future. The stocking rate of one large fingerling/acre on an alternate year basis should continue to maintain the population within the target population density range of 0.2 - 0.4 adults/acre.

The 50-inch minimum length limit effectively prevents most angler harvest and will remain in place.

Bone Lake is on a six-year rotation for DNR muskellunge population estimates. ■

The value of aquatic plants

Native aquatic plants—aquatic macrophytes—play a much bigger role in lake ecosystems than most of us realize. They're not just "weeds"; they're foundational to a healthy, balanced aquatic system. Aquatic macrophytes are submergent, under the water, or emergent, along the shore.

1. Water quality improvement

These plants absorb nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus from the water. That matters because excess nutrients fuel algal blooms that turn the lake green.

2. Habitat and biodiversity

Aquatic plants create complex underwater structures that provide food, shelter and breeding areas for fish, insects, and other organisms. Many fish depend on them for shade and protection from predators. Waterfowl feed on both the plants and the creatures living among them.

3. Shoreline and sediment stabilization

Their roots anchor sediments at the lake bottom and along shorelines, reducing erosion and preventing sediments from being stirred up. This protects lake edges from wave damage.

4. Oxygen production and ecosystem balance

Through Photosynthesis, aquatic plants produce oxygen during daylight hours, supporting fish and other aquatic life.

5. Algae control

By shading the water and competing for nutrients, native plants limit the growth of nuisance algae.

6. Support for food webs

They are a primary producer in the lake's food web, meaning they convert sunlight into energy that ultimately supports everything from tiny invertebrates to large fish.

7. Recreational and aesthetic value

Clearer water, healthier fish populations, and stable shorelines all contribute to overall lake enjoyment. Support the beautiful aquatic garden in and along the shores of Bone Lake.



KAREN ENGELBRETSON

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

by Cris Dueholm

You're sitting outside by the fire on a nice night, looking at the stars, mesmerized by the glowing embers, discussing your worldly problems, watching the boat traffic glide slowly by on a calm lake when out of the blue you hear a terribly loud Grawk-Grawk sound. You look at one another and start to laugh. You've just heard the Great Blue Heron and I take it you must live on a part of the lake that has a little more marsh-like area. That happens to be the herons' favorite area to hunt and nest as the waters are a little calmer. And that terrible sound is—prehistoric.

Great Blue Herons eat frogs, fish, insects, and amphibians if within striking distance. That long neck of theirs is used like a spear. And their strong daggerlike mandibles will impale or bite the food with great pressure as they shake the prey senseless before it can be swallowed whole— head first, of course, so it will slide down easily.

Mainly nesting in trees or sometimes on the ground, but always in colonies for their protection, males migrate here first to gather and bring the sticks to the nesting area, then giving the materials to their female partner of the year for her to arrange into a saucer-like shape. It may take several days to get the nest ready for her to lay her 2-6 eggs. Both herons incubate the eggs for 26-30 days, and the young will leave the nest in 60-80 days. The young are also very vocal when hatched! After leaving the nest the parents will continue to feed and teach them but this feeding thing is very hard for all birds to learn!

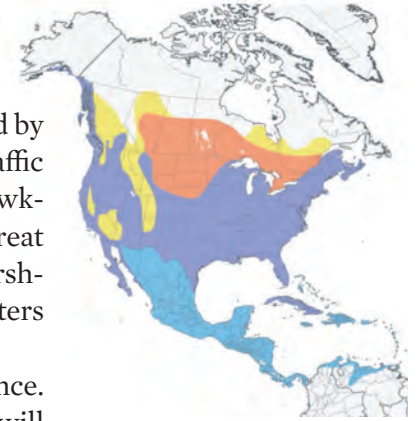
I've seen them on and near the islands as the habitat is great for them there.

When you see the Great Blue Herons surveying your shoreline they stand about 4 feet tall, weigh between 5-6 pounds (because of the hollow bones that most all birds have) and then a wing span close to 6 feet. Sounds like an eagle in some senses. They have a blue-gray plumage coloration, S-shaped neck when flying, beautiful black crowned head and body plumage during mating season, and then those long legs that bend uniquely backward when walking!

It's enjoyable watching them hunt for food down in front of my property walking over or under or standing on the docks. At times it seems that they have one eye on me and then another eye looking for food. When resting they will stand on their one leg and not fall over! Sounds like a lot of Yoga classes to me!

Some individuals will migrate south for the winter but their hardiness and being able to find open flowing water with food will keep them here.

So, next time you're outside, enjoying nature and you hear that awful Gawk-Gawk, the heron must have heard you tell a funny joke or is just letting you know you are in its territory. ■

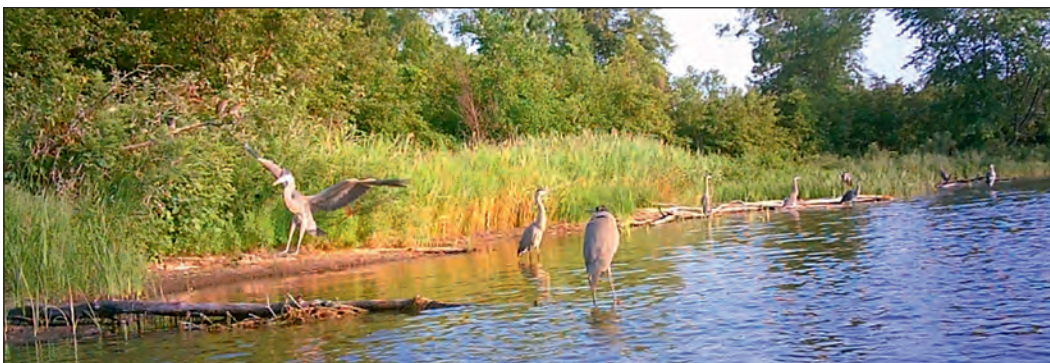


Year-round Breeding
Migration Nonbreeding

Great Blue Heron range map provided by Birds of the World and Cornell Lab of Ornithology.



A Great Blue Heron on the west shore where Prokor Creek enters the lake.*



A siege of herons gathered in the shallow waters off Chaffee Island during sunrise.*

*Captured by wildlife cameras placed in July, 2021 by the Wildlife and Natural Beauty Committee as part of the Sensitive Areas Survey.

Using weed control chemicals in lakeshore yards is harmful to life in the lake

Did you know? Herbicides and insecticides used in lakeshore yards and gardens are carried in runoff to the lake where they can harm or destroy aquatic plant growth and micro organisms essential to fish and aquatic life.

Most harmful are lawn and garden products that contain *Glyphosate*, *Imazapyr*, or *Triclopyr Ester*.

Pre-emergent herbicides of any kind should not be used near bodies of water. Leaching is almost guaranteed to occur, which would ensure that the chemicals are distributed throughout the water and sediment at the bottom of our lake.

Instead, water your gardens and planters with lake water. (Lake water is full of nutrients.) Plant native plants that don't require much fertilizer, and hand pull weeds. Adopt a natural lakeshore lawn that requires no fertilizer and little mowing. Make sure your lawn care service provider is aware of your concerns. Visit the website ecogardensolution.com for other information.



KAREN ENGELBRETSON

Happy spring! Hepatica, *Hepatica nobilis*, emerges from the leaf litter with tiny flowers on tall, hairy stems, pollinated and gone to seed before the trees leaf out.

Keep in touch

Subscribe to Bone Lake eNews! Go to bonelakewi.com and click **Join Our Mailing** on the front page. Be sure to reply to the confirmation email to complete your subscription.

Bone Lakers Facebook group page. To join, go to facebook.com/groups/BoneLakers. This page is maintained by a volunteer for the Bone Lake Management District.

Renting your lake home

Lake home rentals in Polk County are permitted, managed and regulated by the Polk County Health Department, establishing fees, issuing permits, making inspections and enforcing regulations.

Pre-inspections and fees are required to obtain a permit. For copies of codes, applications or other materials, contact the Polk County Health Department at 715-485-8500.

Allowed and permitted uses are governed by the Polk County Shoreland Protection Ordinance.

A **tourist rooming house** means a single-family dwelling in which sleeping accommodations are offered for pay to a maximum of two tourists or transients per bedroom, based on the sanitary system serving the dwelling, up to a total of eight from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. A maximum of 12 occupants are allowed from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. regardless of the number of bedrooms.

A **transient lodge** means any single-family dwelling rented on a short-term basis with a maximum occupancy of 9-12 people for up to 7 days per month from May thru September, and a total of 180 days per year unless a conditional use permit is obtained for more days per month/year.

Access these allowed and permitted uses at the Polk County website www.polkcountywi.gov, or contact the Polk County Zoning Department at 715-485-9279 for the most recent version.

**WISCONSIN
FREE FUN
WEEKEND
JUNE 6-7
2026**

[dnr.wisconsin.gov/
adventure/freefun](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/adventure/freefun)

Change of address?

Contact the Polk County's Treasurer's office at 715-485-9255 if you need to update your address for the Bone Lake Newsletter or for property tax mailings. The District does not maintain its own mailing list, rather we rely on Polk County property records for our mailings.

Recycling around Bone Lake

Georgetown Town Hall CR I at CR H. 24/7.

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www.polkcountywi.gov, search "Recycling"

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