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 [www.lakeripley.org](http://www.lakeripley.org)  
@LRMDLS2020

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## FROM THE HELM

### Lake Ripley Farmer Leading on Conservation

Lianna and I had a chance to sit down with a local farmer in the Lake Ripley watershed, Bill Rohloff, and he shared some amazing stories and even better farming practices his family were willing to try at a time when most farmers wouldn't even consider changing their practices. Bill didn't think he would enter the family business of farming. In fact, he had dreams of moving out to Colorado to experience a different way of life. But his plans changed when his dad got hurt on the tractor in the spring of 1974 and asked him to help out on the farm until he could get back on his feet again. At that time, the farm consisted of 180 acres and was exclusively a dairy farm until 1986.

Farming isn't where Bill's passion for conservation started. On a warm, spring afternoon in 1971, which also happened to be the second Earth Day, Bill and his friends were helping clean trash out of the Bark River in Fort Atkinson. As he was pulling trash out of the river, Bill thought about how unnatural this was. The river shouldn't be riddled with all this pollution; people should take better care of their natural resources. This day changed his perspective, and he became more aware of these large-scale environmental issues.

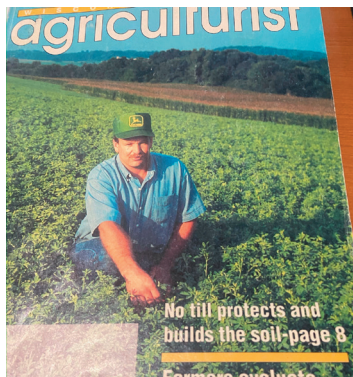
Back at the family farm, Bill was beginning to learn about no-till farming. Decades ahead of his time, Bill saw a need to be more efficient and at the same time better protect the farmlands near Lake Ripley. In 1982, an agronomist came out to the farm and taught Bill about cover crops and no-till farming. After much discussion, Bill and his dad decided to plant an alfalfa crop, which they ended up planting with a no-till drill. To this day, that stand of alfalfa is the best stand Bill has ever seen. And to think – the crop was this successful without tilling the land! This sparked serious interest in Bill, and shortly thereafter, he began experimenting with other conservation practices. Bill experimented with his equipment, trying



Longtime farmer, Bill Rohloff, in front of one of his barns.

## CONSERVATION CONTINUED

to make it the most efficient, and ecofriendly, as possible. He was so proud of the no-till drill machine. This machine puts a small crease in the ground, drops the seed into it and then covers it up – eliminating the need to chisel plow the fields in the spring! His farm has been continuous no-till since 1995.



The best alfalfa stand Bill had ever seen!



Cover crops are crops grown for the protection and enrichment of the soil. Bill has been planting cover crops since 2008. Throughout the years, he has planted different kinds of cover crops to help strengthen his soil. Bill has used tillage radishes, Austrian winter peas, oats, winter rye, and others. Each of these cover crops provides some kind of benefit to the soil. For example, Austrian winter pea is a cool-season cover crop that is an abundant nitrogen fixer and makes a great ground cover for erosion control and weed suppression. He has first-hand experience of how beneficial cover crops are for his crop production. Not only do they reduce the amount of water runoff during heavy periods of precipitation, but they can also reduce leaching and help to keep soil nutrients in place.

Bill spoke about planting cover crops in between the rows, utilizing that otherwise vacant space, which would otherwise contribute to runoff in the spring. He informed us of new technologies that allows herbicide to be applied if weeds are present, instead of application across the entire field. This alone saves the farmers money and can eliminate the widespread spraying of fields when most of the spray is wasted into the environment! Think about the overall benefits: less hours in the field, less money spent on fuel, tractor maintenance,

herbicides, farm help and other expenses. These new technologies have been proven to be more productive in crop yield. We think that's an overall win for everyone.



Soybeans planted in between old corn rows. These plants and the soil are protected from severe wind and heavy rainfall.

Bill and his family have been planting this seed for years around the state, and farmers have been listening. This education is invaluable when it is spoken farmer to farmer. Bill considers himself a "caretaker of the land; someone who protects the environment". He is involved in the Jefferson County Soil Builders (if you're a farmer in Jefferson County and don't know what this is – reach out to us!) and is hoping to host a workshop at his farm to educate folks who live in the District about no-till farming and how other conservation practices can benefit the environment. He is passionate about environmentally sustainable food production, and the best ways to achieve that. Bill spoke highly of his wife, Rhonda, who he says was responsible for a lot of their successes; teamwork makes the dream work!

Jimmy DeGidio, Chair



Self-propelled sprayer.



## LAKE HEALTH AND THE NATIVE PLANT SALE

Our annual native plant sale is not something we do just for fun. Nor is it a fundraiser for us. We hold the plant sale because it benefits our lake! Native plants along the shoreline and in the areas surrounding the lake will actually improve water quality in our lake. Most residents say water quality is their top concern, but some residents still choose to maintain lawns right to the water's edge, not seeing how their yard is contributing to water quality problems. So, let's say this very clearly: if you live near the lake, your yard is either part of the problem or part of the solution. And lawns are part of the problem!

Here's why: rain on lawns becomes mostly runoff, flowing across the surface, to the lake. Why? Because lawn grass roots are so shallow. Native plant roots go down 5-20 feet! These plants intercept runoff and pull it down deep, reducing runoff into the lake, and replenishing the groundwater that helps sustain our lake.

Native plants also provide food and shelter for pollinators, songbirds, and small wildlife. Lawns do not provide any habitat. Lawns are considered ecological 'dead space'. In the USA, there are 40-50 million acres of lawn, requiring lawn-care products and mowing. Think of the loss of habitat this represents! Think of the runoff problems this creates! But if each yard includes some space for native plant gardens, it's a win for our lake!

This is a free country. We have strong opinions about our personal yards. But we all share our lake! So, we have choices to make. We can choose to make our yards lake-friendly because we all do want good water quality and a healthy lake. So why do we have a native plant sale? Because we can help lake residents create lake-friendly shorelines!

Please get your orders to us by March 6, 2023. You can view the plant selection at [www.agrecol.com](http://www.agrecol.com). That website will also help you choose plants that will do well in your specific yard. There are additional resources on the District's website ([www.lakeripley.org/programs/](http://www.lakeripley.org/programs/)). If you do need help, call the District office at 608-423-4537 or email [lake.manager@tn.oakland.jefferson.wi.gov](mailto:lake.manager@tn.oakland.jefferson.wi.gov). We can provide advice.

Remember these three tips:

1. For each plant species, choose 4 plants (or multiples of 4).
2. Payment should accompany your order.
3. We will pick up the combined order about mid-May and reassemble into individual orders at the Town Hall for pickup. We will notify you ahead of time when that day will be.

Thank you for choosing to be a friend of Lake Ripley!



## DID YOU KNOW WINTER MIGRATION ISN'T JUST FOR THE BIRDS?

By Karen Etter Hale and Bill Mueller

You may know that monarch butterflies and painted lady butterflies migrate south for winter, but did you know that some dragonflies do this too?

Many of our dragonflies spend their winter in Wisconsin lakes as aquatic larvae, shielded from the cold by living under the ice in the relatively warm water and sediments. Others, like the green darner, fly all the way to Florida or the Gulf of Mexico as adults to escape the cold! They stay there for an entire generation over the winter, and the newly hatched green darners head north again in springtime for the warmer months. A new

generation is born in late spring in the north, and flies back to the south in September before the first hard frost.



Photo from: <http://azdragonfly.org>.  
A green darner in midflight.

Winter migration isn't just for the birds; certain butterflies and dragonflies...and even some of us humans, have realized that winter migration to Florida isn't such a bad idea either.

## DOGGONE...IT'S ALMOST LEASH TIME!

When you read this, it will be February. As we have been working on winter stewardship projects in our Preserve, we have seen unleashed dogs running around in the prairie. Nesting season is not far off and when it arrives, your dogs should be on a leash! Why?

Well, in 2000, research revealed a startling statistic: **3 billion birds lost in North America since 1970!** In 2022, the "State of the Birds Report" for the USA found that many bird species are continuing to decline, in almost every habitat, except wetlands. Bird populations in forests, grasslands, deserts, and ocean shorelines continue to decline, with the greatest decline (-34%) being among grassland birds. Habitat loss is the biggest contributor to this decline. (The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 2022).

First, let's rejoice that wetland restoration efforts by many groups over many years have made a significant difference for water birds of all kinds! This proves that efforts such as these really do make a difference.

Habitat restoration is something the District works hard at because it is important for water quality in Lake Ripley. Habitat restoration also helps reduce one of the main drivers of climate change: atmospheric carbon dioxide, because native plants sequester huge amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> in the soil!

But that habitat restoration also recreates habitat for wildlife of all kinds. Grassland birds need



prairies, and forest birds need woodlands. If you visit our Preserve, you know that we have been working for years to restore both our prairie and woodland areas.

One of the grassland birds highlighted in the 2022 Report as having lost "50% or more" of its population is the Bobolink. We have seen Bobolinks in our prairie for several years now. So, our prairie is one place where these lovely birds have a chance of rebuilding their population, rather than quietly succumbing to extinction.

BUT – this progress can easily be negated by unleashed dogs running off-trail because Bobolinks nest on the ground!! As do several species of grassland sparrows who also nest in our prairie. **SO PLEASE - LEASH YOUR DOGS APRIL THROUGH SEPTEMBER!**



## WINTER HIDEAWAYS

Winter walkers in the Preserve prairie will have noticed how heavy snows have pushed over the plants. But far from being lifeless, this messy tangle of stems is harboring much life! Perhaps you have noticed small songbirds exploring this old vegetation. Often, they are gleaning calorie-rich seeds remaining in old flower seedheads. But they might be hunting for insects. Insects? In mid-winter?

The insect world, with all its phenomenal diversity, has adapted many strategies to successfully endure winter's harsh cold. Some wait out the winter in one of their life stages, often the egg stage or the pupal stage (think cocoons and chrysalises). In many species, these hibernators hide in the bottom 12 inches of hollow stems. This is why native plant gardeners leave that bottom part of the stem untouched when they remove old debris in spring, so that these tiny creatures can emerge at the time that is best for them!

Have you ever noticed the green or brown spheres on old goldenrod stems? These galls are like fast-food diners for Chickadees, who know a high-protein meal lies inside! During the spring, the goldenrod fly injects her egg into a goldenrod stem, along with some chemicals that cause the stem to swell. When the egg hatches, the small grub eats the soft interior all summer. As fall approaches, the grub eats an escape tunnel almost to the hard outside, and then begins its winter dormancy. The Chickadees tap the galls until they sense the escape tunnel, and down that hole pokes the beak, to retrieve a good meal!

The woolly bear caterpillars that children adore finding in fall is another example of an insect (the Isabella moth) overwintering in its larval (or caterpillar) stage. In this stage they can survive below freezing temperatures, all curled up (just the way they do when picked up) and snuggled into above-ground plant debris. This is another great reason to leave plenty of debris in your garden all winter!



*A goldenrod gall on a plant in the Preserve.*

Most butterflies and moths overwinter in their pupal stage, in cozy chrysalises and cocoons, usually dangling from a stem or a twig right out in the winter air. But to the delight of early spring walkers, the Mourning Cloak butterfly hibernates in its adult stage in hollow stumps or logs, or even just under the leaves on the ground. Often emerging before the early woodland spring ephemerals, they feed on the sap emerging from broken twigs, or they follow Sapsuckers to sip from the sap-suffused holes drilled in trunks!

Down in the ice-covered wetlands, the aquatic insects are also successfully overwintering. Cold water holds more oxygen than warm water. The larval stage of insects such as dragonflies have gills with which to absorb that oxygen, as do overwintering tadpoles or green frogs (but that's another story!). The cold has put them all into a state of reduced metabolism, so they require less oxygen.

Walking in winter sometimes feels peaceful for the seeming stillness and quiet, yet all around us are tiny lives hidden away while winter endures.

## CRITICAL HABITAT DESIGNATIONS

Over the past 30 years, the District has been documenting sensitive areas within Lake Ripley. Sensitive areas, or critical habitat areas, are defined by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) as the areas that are most important to the overall health of aquatic plants and animals. Remarkably, 80 percent of the plants and animals on the state's endangered and threatened species list spend all or part of their life cycle within the near shore zone. As many as 90 percent of the living things in lakes and rivers are found along the shallow margins and shores (WDNR, 2023).

Wisconsin law mandates special protections for these critical habitats. Critical Habitat Designation is a program that recognizes those areas and maps them so that residents know which areas on their lake are most vulnerable to impacts from human activity. A critical habitat designation assists waterfront owners by identifying these areas, so they can design their waterfront projects to protect habitat and ensure the long-term health of the lake where they live.

Areas are designated as Critical Habitat if they have Public Rights Features, Sensitive Areas, or both. Public rights features (defined in NR 1.06, Wis. Adm. Code) include the following:

1. fish and wildlife habitat;
2. physical features (such as fish spawning habitat) of lakes and streams that ensure protection of water quality;
3. reaches of bank, shore or bed that are predominantly natural in appearance; and
4. navigation thoroughfares;



*Lake Ripley's eight proposed Critical Habitat Designations.*

The WDNR is working with the District to designate eight different areas on Lake Ripley as "Critical Habitat Designations". These areas have been extensively studied and it has been determined that all eight areas have either Public Rights Features, Sensitive Areas, or both. The WDNR will host a Public Hearing prior to the official designation of these areas, to hear any public input.

For more information on the process of designating critical habitat areas, please visit <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lakes/criticalhabitat>.



## BOATING ETIQUETTE







Boating looks like a blast, but it takes knowledge and experience to learn all the rules of water as a boat operator. Etiquette is defined as “the customary code of polite behavior among members of a particular profession or group.” Boating behavior is no different.

Boat etiquette includes proper behavior on open water, when performing water sports, at the boat launches, observing boat traffic rules while traveling, speed limits, anchoring and mooring, shoreline littering, sound levels of music, and wake limits.

Safe navigation on Wisconsin waterways is everyone’s responsibility. All operators are equally responsible for taking action as necessary to avoid collisions. There are two terms that help explain these rules:

- ▲ Stand-On Vessel – This is considered the vessel with the right of way. This is the vessel that should maintain its course and speed.
- ▲ Give-Way Vessel – The vessel that must take early and substantial action to avoid collision by stopping, slowing down, or changing course.

The WDNR diagram provided shows what to do in certain situations. For more information on safe boating information, visit <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Boat>.

Power vs. Power		Power vs. Sail
	<p><b>Meeting Head-On</b>  <b>Power vs. Power:</b> Neither vessel is the stand-on vessel. Both vessels should keep to the starboard (right).  <b>Power vs. Sail:</b> The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.</p>	
	<p><b>Crossing Situations</b>  <b>Power vs. Power:</b> The vessel on the operator’s port (left) side is the give-way vessel. The vessel on the operator’s starboard (right) side is the stand-on vessel.  <b>Power vs. Sail:</b> The powerboat is the give-way vessel. The sailboat is the stand-on vessel.</p>	
	<p><b>Overtaking</b>  <b>Power vs. Power:</b> The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.  <b>Power vs. Sail:</b> The vessel that is overtaking another vessel is the give-way vessel. The vessel being overtaken is the stand-on vessel.</p>	

## AVOID PROPELLER STRIKE INJURIES!

Most propeller strike accidents result from operator error. Victims include swimmers, scuba divers, fallen water-skiers, and boat operators or passengers. Most propeller accidents can be prevented by following basic safe boating practices.

- ▲ Maintain a proper lookout. The primary cause of propeller strike accidents is operator inattention.
- ▲ Make sure the engine is off so that the propeller is not rotating when passengers are boarding or leaving a boat.

- ▲ Never start a boat with the engine in gear.

Slow down when approaching congested areas and anchorages. In congested areas, always be alert for swimmers and divers.

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR BOATER EDUCATION? QUIZ TIME!

- A type IV floatation device is also known as a/an:
  - Inflatable device
  - Throwable device
  - Children's life jacket
  - Adult life jacket
- You should have a life jacket (Type I, II, III, or V) onboard for:
  - Every passenger 12 years or younger
  - Every passenger who can't swim
  - Every passenger who wants it
  - Every passenger
- What safety gear is required by law?
  - Life jackets, throwable device, fire extinguisher, sound device & visual distress signal
  - Life jackets, fire extinguisher, sound device & visual distress signal
  - Life jackets, throwable device, fire extinguisher, & visual distress signal
  - None
- When two vessels are meeting head-on, both vessels should turn to starboard and pass each other port to port.
  - True
  - False
- What is the leading cause of boating fatalities?
  - Heat stroke
  - Carbon monoxide poisoning
  - Drowning
  - Venomous animals
- What percentage of drowning victims in boating accidents weren't wearing a life jacket?
  - 50-60%
  - 60-70%
  - 70-80%
  - 80-90%
- Dogs should always wear a life jacket onboard.
  - True
  - False
- When should you reapply sunscreen?
  - Every hour
  - After swimming and sweating
  - Every two hours
  - Every two hours, and after swimming and sweating
- Port side refers to the right side on the boat.
  - True
  - False
- Which side is which color of navigation light on?
  - Red on starboard side, green on port side
  - Red on port side, green on starboard side
- Human powered boats, like kayaks, have the right of way over any vessel.
  - True
  - False

Did you see a violation? Call or text 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1800-847-9367) to report it to the WDNR.



Photo from [www.tippvet.com](http://www.tippvet.com)

Answers: 1) b, 2) d, 3) a, 4) a, 5) c, 6) d, 7) a, 8) d, 9) b, 10) b, 11) a.



## HAZARDOUS WAKES – TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW

By Jeff Meessmann and Jim Olson of Last Wilderness Alliance

Boats that produce hazardous wakes are unlike anything we have ever seen on our lakes before.

1. Wake surfing boats weigh up to 6,000 pounds; can have motors up to 500hp and can load up to 4,000 pounds of ballast water.
2. This allows the bow to rise out of the water and the stern to fall, creating a wake as much as 4 feet high.
3. Wakes created in this manner are up to 12 times more powerful than wakes created by a waterski boat.
4. As the prop drops down, it plows through the water shredding vegetation and firehoses the lakebed.
5. These firehose-like plumes of water can extend up to 20 feet below the surface.
6. Firehosing the lakebed uproots plants and disturbs lakebed sediment releasing high mounts of phosphorus that cause harmful bacteria and algae blooms.
7. On the surface of the water, these large wakes can take more than 500 feet to dissipate to a level equal to the wake of a water ski boat.
8. These high energy wakes erode the shoreline, damage shoreline structures, and cause damage to wildlife nesting areas.
9. The thousands of pounds of water taken on as ballast is never fully emptied and can transport aquatic invasive species from lake to lake.
10. Other lake users – swimmers, paddleboarders, kayakers, fishermen, pleasure boaters and waterskiers – are at risk of being swamped.



Photo from [www.proptalk.com](http://www.proptalk.com)

Be sure to visit, to LIKE and FOLLOW our Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/LRMDLS2020](http://www.facebook.com/LRMDLS2020)

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