



## **Meeting Minutes**

Meeting date: September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

The sixth 2011 meeting of Polk County Association of Lakes and Rivers (PCALR) was held Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 at the Polk County Justice Center in Balsam Lake. Meeting came to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **Attending:**

Gordon Kill, Big Round; Phil Foster, Bone; Ken Peterson, Butternut; Katelin Holm, LWRD; Karen Engelbretson, Bone; Richard Mackie, Bone; Cheryl Clemens, Harmony Environmental; Cheryl Miller, Lotus; Dan Bergeron, Big Round; Wayne Wolsey, Bone; Ray Schmidt, Wild Goose; Loey Weber, Big Blake; Sam Weber, Big Blake; Pat and Dave Mueller, Bone.

### **Agenda:**

#### **Polk County Land and Water Resources Department (LWRD) AIS grant, Katelin Holm.**

The LWRD is working on a grant application to submit for the 2012 season. Updates were provided regarding AIS early detection monitoring work completed by LWRD in 2011 on nine Polk County lakes. The monitoring work on each lake includes snorkeling any commercial boat landings for thirty minutes, snorkeling five sites in-lake for twenty minutes, and a meander survey with 50 haphazard rake throws. Vertical zebra mussel veliger net tows and horizontal spiny waterflea tows are collected at three locations. Data is also collected for surface conductivity and Secchi depth.

A 2012 AIS grant would include AIS early detection monitoring on Polk County Lakes as well as on the St. Croix River. An educational component would include a media campaign, citizen lake monitoring trainings, and education outreach presentation and displays.

PCALR was asked for input regarding AIS educational gaps the 2012 grant could address. Ideas suggested were fishing license envelopes with an AIS related message; maps similar to those at Bone, Balsam, and Big Round Lakes; signage at boat landings with messages regarding if AIS are present; signage with a ifellow sportsmanî message; and volunteer AIS monitoring program with database entry.

Input was also sought regarding how long it took lake organizations to install new AIS signs. On some lakes the process was very quick (less than 20 minutes) and on others the process was more complicated and involved tasks such as sighting, post driving, pouring cement, etc.

**Bone Lake Bird Survey, Brian Collins, Ornithologist and Biologist.** Bone Lake's lake management grant recently funded a 58-point auditory survey of Bone Lake's 12.5 miles of shoreline to inventory the bird community. This survey was completed by Brian Collins who is a teacher at Unity School, writes a monthly article for Cabin Lake magazine, and is a contract ornithologist with the DNR. Over a four year period Brian has completed 994 Bird Surveys. Brian presented the findings of the Bone Lake bird study with a multimedia presentation.

The method used by Brian is called a Point Count Survey and involves a 10 minute survey which is conducted at intervals along the lakeshore in a canoe or kayak. At Bone Lake the survey was completed at 58 points which were located 300 meters apart and spanned the entire 12.5 miles of shoreline. During each survey Brian counts every bird heard within a 50 m radius and outside of a 50 m radius. Brian noted that certain species such as chickadees, robins, and ruby throated hummingbirds are sometimes under-represented by the Point County Survey.

Brian played a recording he had made and demonstrated the Point County Survey for meeting attendees. Within one minute Brian was able to determine the main bird community.

The Point Count Survey provides a good indicator of species presence/absence and abundance and can be used to provide information regarding habitat. Changes in a landscape can lead to changes in a bird community which can be represented through surveys. Whenever Brian does a survey he marks each site with GPS to tie data to geography and also categorizes the habitat based on land use.

At Bone Lake:

- 36/54 points were categorized as residential woodlots (mowed lawn with tree canopy)
- 13/54 points were categorized as second growth forest
- 2/54 points were categorized as sedge meadow/tamarack lowland forest
- 3/54 points were categorized as transitional, meaning habitats overlapped

From the data collected through Point Count Surveys conclusions can be made regarding:

- **Species dominance:** which species are most highly represented
- **Niche occupation:** what is the birds role in its environment
- **Habitat relationships**
- **Community associates:** which species is the most important or common, which species have the highest conservation priority

Eighty-five species were found at Bone Lake with greater than 31 individual birds found during each ten minute survey.

Relative abundance is found by determining the total number of one species divided by the total number of all species. The relative abundance for the most common species on Bone Lake were:

- Barn swallow: 11%
- Tree swallow: 5%
- Baltimore oriole: 5%
- Chipping sparrow: 4%
- American robin: 4%

Brian recorded sixteen individual bald eagles on Bone Lake which was a conservation highlight of the survey. Additionally, purple martins, which are globally a bird of concern, made up 3% of the total community. The red-headed woodpecker population at Bone Lake is also a unique treasure. In most surveys in Wisconsin, the red-headed woodpecker is found once every 62 hours. On Bone Lake one was heard once every 10 surveys (every 100 minutes).

Golden-winged warblers, which are being considered for threatened status in Wisconsin in the future, were also documented at Bone Lake. About 25% of the global population of golden-winged warblers live in Wisconsin. However, these warblers are being outcompeted by blue-winged warblers.

Eight individual loons were found on Bone Lake; however, no chicks were noted during the surveys. Loon chicks require good nesting habitat and protection for survival. Adult loons will leave chicks unattended for a good portion of the day. The negative impact of lead tackle was highlighted since a single lead sinker, when ingested, can kill an adult loon.

Birds tell us about the landscape and the habitat in an area and their populations respond to these factors. From the bird community at Bone Lake it can be concluded that there is clean water with abundant insects.

However, ground nesting forest birds, such as ovenbirds and black and white warblers, were nearly absent in the Bone Lake bird surveys. Since these birds nest on the ground, each additional road or disturbed area increases the likelihood that a predator will locate and destroy the nest. Shoreline restorations and the planting of native grasses, sedges, and forbs would help to replace the habitat necessary for these species.

**Fun facts.** The belted kingfisher can hardly walk because their feet are so small. This bird is a burrowing bird which nests in holes in banks.

The American redstart is a neo-tropical migrant that doesn't develop the same orange plumage when raised in captivity. Additionally, if an adult is found with black and orange coloration it has traveled at least 8,000 miles. Only 5% of each year's cohort survive to make that plumage.

Next PCALR meeting is Wednesday, October 19<sup>th</sup>

Minutes submitted by

Katelin Holm, Secretary

Polk County Association of Lakes and Rivers

September 26<sup>th</sup>