

Friends of Lake Wingra



Promoting a healthy Lake Wingra
through an active watershed community

Wingra Watershed News

Spring/Summer 2005

volume 2, number 1

Too Many Geese?

Jim Lorman, Edgewood College and Friends of Lake Wingra

In the essay titled 'March' in *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold laments that a well-educated acquaintance "had never heard or seen the geese that twice a year proclaim the revolving seasons." "A March morning," he writes, "is only as drab as he who walks in it without a glance skyward, ear cocked for geese." In another essay, 'Goose Music,' Leopold reflects on the value of the sound of calling geese and asks what the world would be like if this music were lost.

Do you remember when it was a fairly rare and very special thing to hear "goose music" in the city and to look up to find their elegant V in the sky? Before geese settled by the hundreds in our parks during their autumn migrations? Before there were dozens of nesting adults and goslings spending the summer in and around Vilas Park?

If so, you've been around awhile! Urban populations of Canada geese have increased dramatically throughout the continent in the last few decades. Ironically, the giant Canada goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*), one of 11 recognized subspecies of geese in North America, was thought to be extinct in the first half of the 20th century. But remnant populations were discovered and widely introduced into new

Continued on page 7



Jim Lorman

Coming Soon: Native Vegetation Along the Vilas Park Lagoons

Laura England and Jim Lorman

The Friends of Lake Wingra, in cooperation with Dane County, the DNR, and the City of Madison, are working together to establish native vegetation along the lagoon shoreline adjacent to the soccer fields in Vilas Park. The native plant buffer will be a visually appealing mix of grasses and flowers that will provide habitat for a variety of insects, frogs, turtles, and birds. Once established, the native vegetation will provide several additional benefits to Lake Wingra. In particular, the shoreline vegetation will help discourage resident geese from congregating in the adjacent to the soccer fields because these birds prefer to have an open view of the water while on land. The native vegetation buffer will also act as a filter and remove sediments and other pollutants that are carried by surface runoff into the lake.

The proposed planting design will cover 850 feet of shoreline and be an average of 10 feet wide. We held a public meeting on March 16 to give the watershed community an opportunity to learn about the project and give us feedback. We're still open for feedback on the design of this native shoreline planting – contact us to learn more and contribute ideas.

We will need lots of help with this project – a few hours of your time will go a long way towards helping to establish a great looking native planting in your neighborhood park! We will also need help with watering and with weeding later in the season. To get involved, please contact us at 663-2838 or info@lakewingra.org.

Benefits of Native Shoreline Vegetation

- Discourages geese from crowding onto grassy areas
- Protects shorelines from erosion
- Helps filter polluted runoff before it enters the lake
- Improves wildlife habitat
- Creates a diverse and colorful plant border

Friends of Lake Wingra

1000 Edgewood College Dr.
Madison, WI 53711
608-663-2838
info@lakewingra.org
www.lakewingra.org

Mission

We promote a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

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Steve Glass
Jim Lorman
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Thanks

Many thanks to Karen Andro, Sue Ellingson, Tanya Meyer, and Judith Strasser.

Thanks to Edgewood College for serving as our fiscal sponsor and Dane County and the City of Madison for partnership on DNR grants.

Become a Friend

To become a Friend of Lake Wingra, send your tax-deductible contribution to Friends of Lake Wingra, c/o Office of Advancement, Edgewood College, 1000 Edgewood College Drive, Madison, WI 53711-1977. Please make checks to Edgewood College – FOLW.

Wingra Watershed News

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From the Chair

Be a Part of "Ground-breaking" Progress in the Lake Wingra Watershed

Laura England

January 2005 marked the seventh anniversary of the founding of the Friends of Lake Wingra. The Friends' early years involved forging partnerships with those concerned about the health of Lake Wingra including technical experts, government agencies, watershed residents/landowners, and citizen groups. We began the process of building a sense of identity among members of the watershed community – those who live, work and play in the Wingra Watershed. In the intermediate years, the Friends facilitated a thoughtful and iterative planning process with watershed stakeholders to identify guiding principles, values, goals, and techniques for managing the Wingra Watershed. This process resulted in completion of watershed management plans at the end of 2003 (posted in the Science & Management portion of our website: www.lakewingra.org).

In the years following, the Friends continued to build momentum and energy as we transitioned to active implementation of the plans for stormwater management, invasive species management and citizen stewardship. Our new seasonal event series, *Windows on Wingra*, has been well attended; see page 7 for details on our upcoming spring event and page 6 for a summary of our winter event. Our leaf clean-up campaign last fall grew to a citywide collaboration and involved countless volunteers; read about the campaign on page 4.

Spring and summer 2005 will bring "ground-breaking" progress to our watershed as we begin several on-the-ground projects to restore habitat. We will literally break ground as we plant native vegetation along the Vilas Park lagoons (details on page 1) and remove invasive purple loosestrife from Edgewood marsh. We'll be holding our first work party to remove invasive species and plant natives along the southwest bike path, a major corridor for the transport of invasives in the watershed (see calendar on back cover for details). Construction will also begin for Madison's first "rain garden street", a partnership between the Friends of Lake Wingra and the City of Madison (update on page 5).

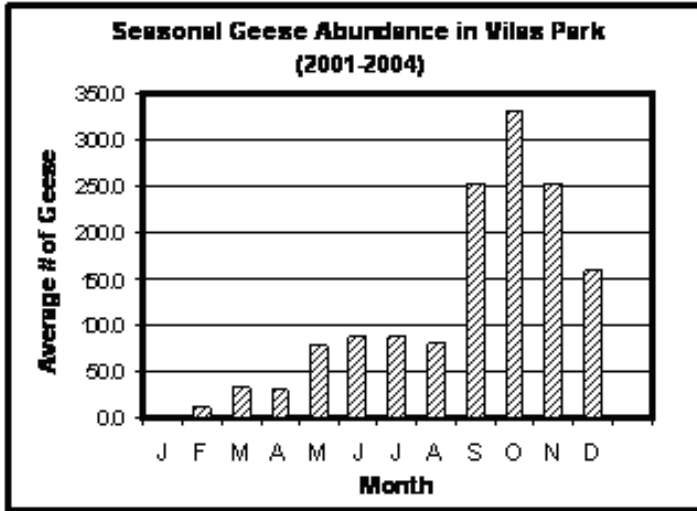
There will be lots of opportunities in the next six months to get involved. Check our calendar of events (back cover) and our website, www.lakewingra.org, for dates and details. We thank you for your commitment to protecting and restoring Lake Wingra, and we hope to see you at an upcoming Wingra event!

Friends of Lake Wingra thank Edgewood College for serving as our fiscal sponsor. As one of our founding partners and a steward of watershed and lakefront property, the College provides continuing leadership as well as an administrative home to the Friends. The Friends are grateful for the College's commitment to the education of current and future members of this and other watershed communities.

Too Many Geese?

(from page 1)

areas in the 1960s. Populations recovered dramatically as a result of protection and recovery efforts, increasing from an estimated 55,000 in 1965 to 2 million three decades later and 4 million in 2002.



During this time of rapid population growth, giant Canada geese have become increasingly adapted to urban and suburban environments, often breeding in cities and staying in or near them year-around, even in northern states like Wisconsin. Migrating populations join these resident urban populations, which apparently serve as “decoys” that attract migrants to urban areas occupied by resident geese.

As part of an on-going study, Edgewood College students conducted hundreds of goose counts in Vilas Park in the past few years (see accompanying graph). Summer resident populations included an average of 27 young and 60 adults in 2002-2004. The number of geese present on an “average” day in Vilas Park increased to about 300 in Sept-Nov, as migrating geese co-mingled with resident geese. While on some days very few geese choose to settle in the park, there are regularly close to 1000 geese in Vilas Park during migration, with the record count (necessarily an estimate at these large numbers) being nearly 1500 on November 8, 2003.

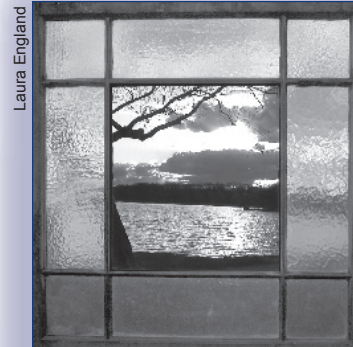
The droppings left by these geese are a nuisance for park users and apparently contribute significantly to bacterial and nutrient contamination of the lake. Grassy areas of Vilas Park heavily populated by geese averaged about 600 lbs per acre of feces (wet weight, as collected) in fall. More than three times this amount has been measured in particular areas of the park.

Giant Canada geese have been successfully managed at sites throughout the country with programs approved by the Humane Society and other national wildlife protection

organizations. These programs include educational efforts and ordinance changes that discourage the feeding of geese; landscape modification, particularly the creation of shoreline vegetation buffers (see accompanying article); use of trained dogs to encourage geese to leave the site; and egg oiling during the first two weeks of spring incubation to reduce the hatch-rate.

Friends of Lake Wingra would like to see a management plan implemented in Vilas Park aimed at reducing the resident goose population to about 20 birds. Surveys indicate that people do not generally consider Canada geese populations of less than 20-25 individuals to be a nuisance in a particular park. A population this small is also not likely to do significant landscape damage or contribute significantly to health or water quality problems.

Limiting urban goose populations is not anti-wildlife. Without management that reduces goose populations to reasonable levels, there is the danger of diminishing their wildlife value. To the extent people are beginning to see the geese in our parks as partly-domesticated pests, instead of spectacles of nature, this danger is already realized. Do we really want to let the goose mess spoil the goose music?



Laura England

*Windows
on
Wingra*

Spring Cleaning for Clean Springs

Saturday, May 21, 9:00 – 11:30 am

Mazzuchelli Center, Edgewood Campus

Among Lake Wingra’s most special places are the springs along the shoreline where groundwater bubbles up from deep in the earth to carry cool, clear water to the lake. Although many original springs dried up as the City grew, those that remain are environmental and cultural treasures. Join us to learn about the history and current state of Wingra’s springs; efforts to protect and recover springs by recharging groundwater; and research efforts to monitor the recovery of springs. We’ll also head outside to visit a recently rediscovered groundwater seep where we’ll do some “spring cleaning” (i.e. removal of invasive plants, sediments, trash, etc.!) Families welcome; refreshments included. There is no fee, but please register by contacting info@lakewingra.org or 663-2838.

The Voice of the Lake: A Poetry Workshop

Anne Forbes

Poetry... becomes a manifestation of landscape and climate, just as the ecosystem's flora and fauna are. A human voice becomes the voice of the place.

John Elder in *Imagining the Earth*

One of the joys of community is the pleasure that comes when we learn new, sometimes unexpected things about who we are. Little did we know that the invitation to *The Voice of the Lake: A Poetry Workshop* in January 2005 would surface almost forty aspiring and practicing watershed poets! At the workshops, poet and teacher Judith Strasser talked us through examples of poetry of place, using examples that illustrate how poems can share information about image, emotion, language, science, politics, and history. After an introductory writing exercise, Friends of Lake Wingra volunteers led image-collecting field trips to nearby locations on the lake and springs. After time for writing and sharing, everyone went home with some first-rate first draft material to work on later. We hope that these writers – and others of all ages - will continue to observe, imagine, create, and share their poetry of this place, Lake Wingra and its watershed.



Anne Forbes

Edgewood College student Jared Cullen drafts a poem.



Anne Forbes

The poets return from image-collecting field trip on the frozen lake.

Cold Marsh

Katy Wallace

Bone dry cattails bend
in the wind.
Shovellers dabble among deadwoods
their beaks laden
with thin spineless
muck bodies.

I lean into steely dusk
as daylight slips
under dark water, moss.
I recall sedge seed and
curling greens filling this bowl.

O soft hour,
with clouds so close.

Groundwater Recharge Project Proposed in Wingra Watershed

Steve Glass & David Liebl

The Odana Hills Golf Course is the proposed site of a large storm water infiltration facility in the Lake Wingra watershed, courtesy of MG & E. As part of a mitigation requirement for its new West Campus Co-Generation plant, MG & E has proposed (under the auspices of a DNR permit) an “enhanced, groundwater recharge facility” underneath the links of the City of Madison west side golf course. The facility will filter storm water retained in Odana Pond to nearly drinking water quality standards and then pump the resulting clean water into the ground where it will infiltrate through the soil to the water table. The facility will process 80 million gallons per year of storm water runoff. That’s about 22,000 gallons of storm water per day, 365 days per year that would otherwise rush overland, gouging erosion gullies and carrying nutrients and sediments to the lake.

The infiltration facility would thus address a key Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW) recommendation to “use Odana ponds for temporary detention of peak storm water flow volumes and velocity” that contribute to erosion of watershed uplands and sedimentation and filling in of the Lake itself.

The proposal is consistent with the goals of the FOLW storm water management plan that call for “restoring sub-surface hydrology through infiltration” of runoff. It is expected—although not guaranteed—the increased groundwater will lead to increases in spring flow or restoration of springs previously gone dry. University researchers are establishing a long-term monitoring program that will quantify any increases in spring flow.

The infiltration project will be an excellent educational demonstration project, and a future site for public information about watershed issues. MG & E has pledged to support FOLW educational efforts at the site.



Jim Lorman

Newly rediscovered spring on Edgewood Campus.



Kris Meidal

Watershed Watch: *A Compendium of Nature Observations In and Around Our Little Lake*

Kathy Miner

Coyote sightings have been numerous on the Edgewood/ Monroe Street side of Lake Wingra this winter. On Sunday, Feb. 6th, walking along the Ho-Nee-Um Trail at mid-morning, I suddenly heard a group of geese raise a fuss from near the island. I moved to where I had a clearer view, and saw a coyote walking on the ice! At one point it sat down on its haunches and scratched behind one ear with a hind leg, just like any dog. After a moment it got up and wandered off, eventually disappearing into the shoreline shrubbery.

A day later, Jim Lorman’s science class at Edgewood was interrupted by a similar sighting. Jim said that at first, he assumed he was seeing a dog walking west on the ice near the shoreline. But when he realized that there was no human nearby, he took a closer look. Seizing the “teachable moment”, Jim paused his lecture about cells and chromosomes long enough that the class could watch the coyote trot casually along the shore until it was out of sight.

Jim also re-discovered a historic spring on the Edgewood land in December. Apparently one of several that Governor Cadwallader Washburn stocked with trout when he owned the Edgewood property in the 1870s, this spring was long thought to have dried up. Riding his bicycle to work one day, Jim noticed the morning sun glinting off some open water when all the rest of the lake was frozen hard. When he went to investigate, he found the spring.

The sight and sound of returning sandhill cranes is eagerly anticipated each year. Sandhills are known to nest in the cattail marshes around Lake Wingra. This year, the first reported cranes were heard by Steve Glass of the UW Arboretum on February 24th.

Featured Partner:

Martha Sample and the West High Green Club

Kathy Miner

The Lake Wingra Watershed has some very good friends in Martha Sample and the Green Club of West High School. Last fall, these teenagers spent several Saturdays walking around the Vilas neighborhood, distributing "Love Your Lakes, Don't Leaf Them" brochures in connection with Madison's citywide fall leaf cleanup campaign.



As the chair of the club's "volunteering committee", Martha looks for volunteer projects and opportunities for the group's 30-some members. She said the leafleting project was a perfect experience for the Green Club, since it was a way to directly affect the West High community. The club has a specific mission to improve the environment around the



school's neighborhood, so "thinking like a watershed" was a good fit. Martha particularly liked the chance to be direct and personal – approaching people who were actually raking their lawns, giving them the brochure, and answering any questions they had about proper leaf cleanup and disposal. "It really made me feel like I was making a difference," she said.

Martha, a senior at West, has been involved with the Green Club since 10th grade. She says it was "the only extracurricular activity that sounded interesting to me." While she may have been slightly influenced by her parents' interests – her dad, Dave Sample, is a research scientist with the Wisconsin DNR and an expert in grassland birds – it's clear that she's going on her own initiative now. She hasn't decided on a specific career path yet, but is inclined toward outdoor work of some kind.

Martha says that Lake Wingra has been special to her throughout her lifetime – for swimming, paddle boating, rowing, canoeing, and just to run around. She wants to see it kept healthy, so "other kids can enjoy the lake as much as I did when I was younger." The Friends of Lake Wingra salute Martha Sample and her fellow members of the West High Green Club.

2004 "Love Your Lakes, Don't Leaf Them" Campaign a Success! Get Ready to Participate in 2005!

Anne Forbes

As trees 'green up' across the watershed for the spring and summer seasons, it may seem early to think about when leaves will fall later in the year. However, here are some things we'd like you to know:

As the leaves began to drop in October 2004, volunteers posted about 200 'Love Your Lakes, Don't Leaf Them' yard signs on commuter streets in the Wingra Watershed and dropped about 1300 brochures on doorsteps.

Through a neighbor-to-neighbor approach, block captains distributed the yard signs, asking those who participated to demonstrate lake-friendly leaf management practices in their yards.



We'd like to reach even more neighbors in 2005. If you'd like to volunteer as an individual – or if you are with a group looking for a service project – it will take many more hands to reach a larger portion of the watershed community. Call us at 663-2838 or email info@lakewingra.org.

Rain Garden Street Gets Rolling

Sue Ellingson

Madison will start building its first rain garden street this summer. In February, all neighbors on Adams St. who will have gardens installed on their terraces this next summer met with representatives from the City and the landscape designers.

“The neighbors really pitched in,” said Sue Ellingson, Friends of Lake Wingra’s coordinator for the project. “Some said, ‘Put in as much garden as you can.’ Each lot will have a full 30’ of rain garden along the terrace to infiltrate runoff. Their dedication is inspiring.”



A rain garden is simply a garden in a shallow depression where rainwater from a roof downspout can soak into the garden soil and be cleaned in the process. In a rain garden street, rain gardens are dug in the terrace, between the street and the sidewalk. The gardens capture runoff, not from roofs, but from the street. Street runoff dumps a lot of dirt and excess nutrients into Lake Wingra. Reducing runoff and associated pollution with something as low tech as a rain garden – wow, that’s an awesome idea.

The terrace rain gardens will be dug this summer, at the same time that Adams St. is undergoing a previously

planned reconstruction. Neighbors will meet with the project’s landscape designers several more times over the year to finalize garden designs that work both for the homeowners and runoff reduction objectives.

Construction begins this summer and planting is scheduled for spring 2006. Then our rainy-day day-dream of Madison’s first rain garden street will come true.

Tips for Protecting Lake Wingra

In the sea of paved and impervious surfaces that constitute a typical urban watershed, there is little room for storm water to infiltrate and capture nutrients and sediments to maintain a healthy lake. A significant solution is keeping rain water close to where it falls. The simple act of redirecting a downspout from your sidewalk or driveway to your lawn makes a difference. Generally, rainwater must flow over at least 20 feet of a pervious surface to absorb the water. The next step is building a rain garden. Another option is installing a rain barrel.

Build a Rain Garden!

Rain gardens are constructed shallow depressions designed to collect water primarily from downspouts. The idea is to let plants and soil clean and temporarily hold the rain water as it infiltrates into the ground close to where it fell. Rain gardens are also beautiful landscape features and can attract butterflies.

Install a Rain Barrel!

Where space is greatly limited, you may choose to build or purchase a rain barrel to collect rooftop runoff from your downspout. As an added benefit, the harvested rainwater can be used for watering lawns and gardens, and window cleaning. Collecting rooftop water also lowers demand for water during the hot summer months and may lower water utility bills.

Please go to www.lakewingra.org for more information about related workshops and resources.

Learn More

Interested in learning more about Lake Wingra and the Friends’ work in the watershed? See our growing online library of management planning documents, scientific reports and proposals at www.lakewingra.org.

Spring/Summer Calendar

See our online calendar at www.lakewingra.org for more details on these and other upcoming events.

FOLW Board Meetings.

April 28, May 26, June 23, July 28, and August 25, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Mazzuchelli Center, Edgewood Campus. All are welcome. Contact info@lakewingra.org or 663-2838 to confirm the location and agenda.

Saturday, April 16

Southwest Bike Path Stewardship Project Work Party. The southwest bike path is an important cultural and transportation corridor in the Wingra Watershed. Unfortunately, it is also a corridor for invasive species. FOLW is partnering with Dudgeon-Monroe Neighborhood Association to weed and plant along the southwest bike-pedestrian path this spring and summer. Help stop the spread of the watershed's least wanted species by participating in our first work party. No particular knowledge or skills needed – guidance on weed identification and planting will be provided - but enthusiasm is required. From 9 a.m. to 12 noon; meet at the intersection of Glenway with the bike path. If you are interested in helping, please contact Robin Ryan (lessie@chorus.net or 236-4145).

Monday, April 18

UW Arboretum Visitor Center. **It's FOLW's turn to host the Quarterly Meeting of Dane County Watershed Groups.** Keeping with tradition, we start with a potluck at 6:00, and at 6:30 we'll have a brief welcome to the Wingra watershed and FOLW's current activities. Then, we'll turn to the next steps for following through on strategies for protecting county waters generated at the *Voices of our Waters* workshop sponsored by the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission in November 2004. Everyone welcome; these quarterly gatherings are a great way to learn more about water issues throughout the county. If the weather permits, a special treat will be the viewing of the American woodcock's 'Sky Dance' over the Curtis Prairie.

Saturday, May 7

Friends of the Arboretum Native Plant Sale. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wildflower tent near the UW-Madison Arboretum Visitor Center (1207 Seminole Highway). For more info, visit www.uwarboretum.org.

Saturday, May 21

WOW! Windows On Wingra Workshop: Spring Cleaning for Clean Springs. For details, see write-up on p 7. 9:00 – 11:30 am, Mazzuchelli Center on Edgewood Campus. Families welcome. There is no fee, but please register by contacting info@lakewingra.org or 663-2838.

Yahara Lakes Week Check out the many events going on at: www.countyofdane.com/lwr/lakes/yaharalakesweek

Saturday, June 11

Take A Stake in the Lakes. Lend a hand with shoreline clean-up.

Tuesday, June 14

Quiet Paddle on Lake Wingra. Join FOLW and the Four Lakes chapter of the Sierra Club on an educational paddling tour of Lake Wingra. Meet at 6:30 pm at the boat house in Wingra Park. Canoe rental available, or bring your own. Contact Lacinda Athen at lathen@farin.com or 274-7870 to register (free).

Saturday, June 19

The Better Lawns and Gutters Tour. 12 noon - 4:00 p.m.

Friends of Lake Wingra

c/o Office of Advancement
Edgewood College
1000 Edgewood College Dr.
Madison, WI 53711-1977

