



# Bone Lake Newsletter

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

FALL 2017

## MONITORING AND TRENDS

### Bone Lake water clarity and water quality

by John McCall



**Cedar waxwings love Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier*) also known as Juneberry for the month when the plants bear fruit. Available as single trunk or clump formation, the shrubs are very early spring bloomers with star-like white flowers. In the fall the small leaves turn golden. A good native alternative to lilac bushes for shoreland areas.

PHOTO: KAREN ENGELBRETSON

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[www.bonelakewi.com](http://www.bonelakewi.com)

Clarity is a most important attribute of lake water quality. There are many components and contaminants of lake water, and the most visible affect our perception of the overall quality of the lake and its suitability for swimming, fishing, and boating. We often judge the health of our lake by its clarity.

Clarity is simply the degree to which light can penetrate a source of water. In the spring, when the water is cold and vegetation has just begun, we can usually see clearly to the bottom in waters 12 feet and deeper. By summer's end, with an abundance of vegetation, blooms of algae, and other solid contaminants such as prop chop, grass clippings, fallen leaves, and silt, we often struggle to see the bottom in less than 5 feet of water.

Volunteers have been monitoring the clarity of Bone Lake waters for years, reporting the data to the Wisconsin DNR. That data is readily available in report format. However, the DNR does not regularly analyze the data to determine if there are trends in water clarity. People sometimes wonder if lake water quality is declining, and perceptions are heavily influenced by more recent observations.

Before presenting a summary of the data from the last 12 years, let me offer a brief explanation for how clarity is measured.

At the right is what is called a Secchi disk. This testing device is extremely simple. It consists of a lead-weighted wooden disk with a painted surface showing white and black contrasting sections. The disk is lowered progressively into the water by the volunteer until it can no longer be distinguished. A number of immersions usually occur to insure the precision of the reading, and the volunteer documents the depth at which the Secchi disk can no longer be seen. There is a certain amount of variation to the readings from one volunteer to another, from one weather condition to another, etc. Overall, the measurement is approximately  $\pm 10$  percent accurate. With many measurements over a long period of time, the results are fairly consistent and reliable. — continued on page 4



Secchi disk



## Dear Bone Lakers,

The Bone Lake Management District has been monitoring the Sandy Hook public access since the Balsam Lake Rod and Gun Club indicated their intention to develop a fifty-foot-wide lot on Sandy Hook Lane, which was designated as a result of development of the lakeshore. Phil Foster, Bone Lake Management District Vice Chairman, has been representing the District at the public hearings. Mr. John Molamphy, a member of the Georgetown board and also a member of the Balsam Lake Rod and Gun Club, has been representing both at various meetings and public hearings.

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Evaluation and Studies  
Bob Boyd  
Fisheries  
Bob Boyd and Mike Belich  
Waterfront Runoff  
Alex Chorewycz  
Watershed  
Ann Miller  
Wildlife and Natural Beauty  
Karen Engelbretson

**Aquatic Plant Management**

Bob Boyd, Phil Foster  
Clean Boats Clean Waters  
Richard Mackie

**Communications**

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Mike Musial

**Audit**

Mike Belich

The Balsam Lake Rod and Gun Club has a list of twenty-nine lake accesses that they have located, worked on and surveyed since 1999. Their goal is to assure these are developed accesses to Georgetown lakes.

The District acknowledges the public's right to access the lake. Bone Lake currently has two public accesses, one on the north end and one on the south end. The access at Sandy Hook has a very steep slope with a wetland at the bottom, as well as a "non-compliant" well. The lot has several large trees and mature vegetation.

Development will require management of a large amount of dirt, which will first require an engineering study. The steep slope makes the lot unsuitable as a boat launch but the Rod and Gun Club acknowledges this and visualizes walk-in canoe and kayak launching in summer, and access for all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles in winter.

The District is concerned about erosion and its potential effect on water quality, as well as safety and the very limited parking proposed for users.

At a public hearing held August 22, many spoke to oppose as well as to advocate for the landing. The Polk County Zoning Dept. Board of Adjustment granted a conditional use permit for the project. Several more permits will be needed. We will continue to monitor the project.

— Bob Murphy, Chair

**Minutes of Bone Lake Management District meetings are published at [www.bonelakewi.com](http://www.bonelakewi.com); follow the link to Administration. This page also includes the meeting schedule and contact information for commissioners.**

## It's Easy to Recycle Around Bone Lake

**Georgetown Town Hall**

Second and fourth Fridays and Saturdays of each month, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Questions? Call 715-483-1088.

**St. Croix Falls** Hwy. 8 across from Menards, any weekday.

**Balsam Lake** Hwy. 46 by the Government Center, any day, 24/7.

## Keep in touch

**Subscribe to Bone Lake eNews!** Get Bone Lake updates between newsletters throughout the year. Go to [bonelakewi.com](http://bonelakewi.com) and click "Join Our Mailing" on the front page. Be sure to reply to the confirmation email to complete your subscription and click the link to add [enews@bonelake.com](mailto:enews@bonelake.com) to your address book. Signed up but not getting emails? Contact [karen@kje.com](mailto:karen@kje.com).

**Bone Lakers Facebook group page** More than 600 members are sharing photos, events, recommendations and news about life around the lake. To join, go to [facebook.com/groups/BoneLakers](https://facebook.com/groups/BoneLakers).

The Bone Lake Newsletter is published biannually for its members by the Bone Lake Management District, Polk County, WI. For reproduction rights, content suggestions and submissions, contact the editor.

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**ADVERTISING COORDINATOR** This paid position is open. Contact the editor if interested.

## Georgetown's proposed public access at Sandy Hook Lane

### Conditional use permit requires:

### Status:

Wetland designation review by Wisconsin DNR    Site visit complete. Designation pending.

Site review by Polk County Land and Water  
Resources Dept.

Underway.

Engineering study of site and proposed design    Town of Georgetown is seeking a volunteer and/or funding.

Once developed, temporary barriers must block motorized access when the ground is not frozen, and property lines must be clearly marked. The process may take years before development can be completed.

## Bone Lake geese

by Karen Engelbretson

At the District annual meeting in August, member Russ Herbst commented about control methods for an increasing number of geese on Bone Lake and suggested a possible connection to high phosphorus levels in the lake.

Russ's comments were followed by the District's presentation on methods and options to repel and or reduce the goose population, one of which is an early season hunt (September 1-15) allowing a bag limit of five geese per day rather than the three per day allowed during the regular season (all other hunting rules apply).

Russ reported at the October 21 commissioners' meeting that he had hunted during the early season and bagged a total of eight birds—less than he expected, saying, "It's not easy to shoot geese around the lake." He suggested that in the spring the District conduct oiling or addling of goose eggs to reduce nesting success and begin to control the population. Another option is to round up and remove birds while flightless. These methods require state and/or federal permits.

The District acknowledges the problems a large goose population can cause lakeshore property owners and the general public. Beaches in the Village of Balsam Lake and at Half Moon Lake were closed last summer due to high bacteria levels attributed to geese.

There is data available to quantify the level of phosphorus in goose excrement and we will research ways to calculate how much actually reaches the lake. Typically, however, the problem with geese is bacteria, and the mess. The District will begin to estimate the goose population, identify nesting sites around the lake, and research appropriate control methods.

In the meantime, if geese are a problem at your property, consider these methods that help repel them:

- fence barriers to prevent geese from coming ashore;
- scare devices including noise and shiny things;
- chemical repellents that change the taste and color of grass;
- growing tall vegetation along the shore;
- installing a native planting along the shore.

Contact Karen Engelbretson or Phil Foster if interested in helping control the Bone Lake goose population.

To get started with a native planting along your shore, contact Mary Chorewycz (email [amchorewycz@yahoo.com](mailto:amchorewycz@yahoo.com)). Design help and funding is available. ■



**Additional dollars are now available to replace your septic system.**

If you have a failing/non-compliant system, and are thinking of replacing it, you are eligible to receive a cost share of 50 percent, up to \$2,500 from Bone Lake Management District. Get the details.

**Call Richard Mackie, Bone Lake septic ranger, at 715-857-5205.**





—continued from page 1

Below is a graph showing the past twelve years of Secchi disk readings taken from the deepest hole in the lake (43-45 feet) on the northern end. Duplicate readings are also taken just south of the big island and they are almost always identical to the deep hole readings with only minor variations.

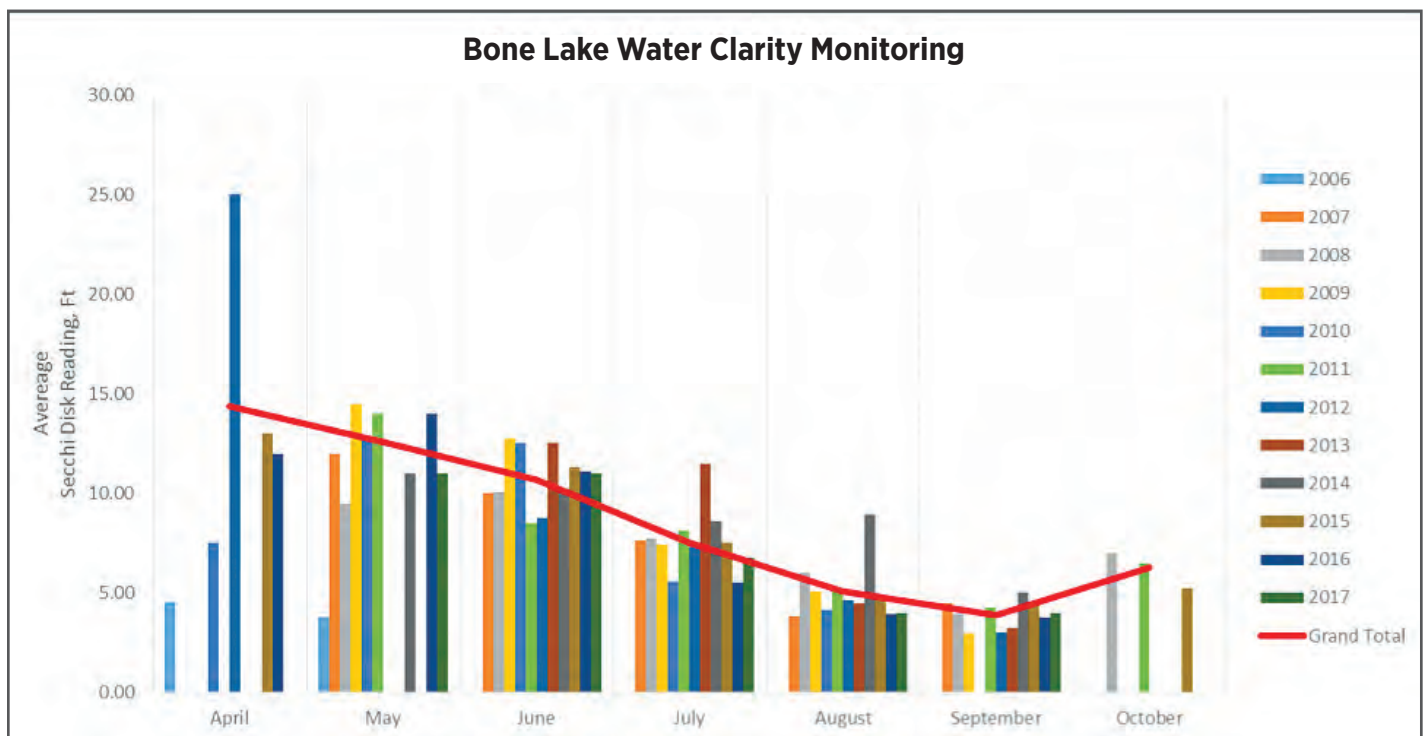
The bars represent data from each individual year. The solid line is the average of all years combined. The yearly trend shows extremely good clarity early in the year, persisting until late July, and reaching a low point in late August to September. With fall weather cooling the lake, there is a slight rebound in clarity by late September and October.

The data are fairly consistent from one year to the next; the trend is always the same. We have had a couple of years with what appears to be improved water clarity, and a few where clarity has suffered. Seasonal weather

conditions, average wind speeds, average ambient temperatures, and rainfall can influence clarity in any specific year.

Overall, an analysis of the data would suggest that there is no statistically significant trend in water clarity. Lake water clarity doesn't seem to be getting better or worse based on our measurements. Bone Lake is going to be fairly clear through the 4th of July and will be algae-ridden by Labor Day. That's the cycle that we've experienced for the past 12 years and is likely to continue.

However, this also is a good time to remind you that what we do to protect our lake is important and can have a serious effect on lake water clarity. Adding native vegetation at the shoreline, controlling runoff, and avoiding use of phosphate fertilizers all help to maintain clear waters. We don't want to see August readings show up in July! ■



**TIP:** Do you keep potted plants on your dock or near the shore? If you're fertilizing those pots you could be adding phosphorus to the lake. Make sure the chemical composition of your fertilizer has zero as the middle number. Better yet, use lake water to water your plants. Lake water is rich in nutrients that plants love.



## How Bone Lakers are controlling runoff to the lake

Controlling runoff to maintain (and potentially improve) water clarity requires many small steps contributed by many people. Or as one wise soul once said, “There is not a silver bullet for lake management. Think silver buckshot instead.”

The 2010 Bone Lake Management Plan established objectives for controlling runoff to the lake. The 10-year plan set a target of 50 percent reduction of runoff from one-fourth of the waterfront properties on Bone Lake, or approximately 132 properties.

So how are we doing? Our consultant, Cheryl Clemens, has visited 113 properties so far, with about 50 projects installed on 44 properties.

The plan also established objectives for septic system upgrades and reductions in phosphorus in runoff from the larger watershed area. Overall, we have achieved about 20-36 percent of what we set out to do.

As you probably are aware, the Lake District provides free technical assistance and significant financial

	Plan Objective	Progress to Date	Percentage of Objective	In Progress: 2017/18
Properties visited		113		
Number of 10X35/30 native plantings		25		+5
Number of infiltration projects		25		+1
Homeowner participation	132 properties	44 properties w/projects	33% (with plantings)	
Septic upgrades	50	18	36%	
Watershed phosphorus reduction	33 kg	6 kg	20%	

assistance for installing projects which reduce runoff to the lake. There are plenty of grant funds available and opportunities to do more.

The Lake District also has a study underway to more closely examine how much of the lake’s phosphorus is released from the bottom sediments. Results, which should be available by early next year, could influence management efforts into the future. ■

### Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Natural Resources see illegal use of hydraulic jets on more local waters

Hydraulic jets, such as products named HydroSweep, Aqua Blaster, Aqua Thruster and Aquasweep, resemble a fan or trolling motor contained in a short tube. They create strong currents of moving water and are advertised to control or remove muck and weeds from a lake bottom. Using hydraulic jets in this manner is not allowed in Minnesota or in Wisconsin yet use has increased in recent years.

The jets can be used legally when placed high enough above the lake bed to prevent disturbance of sediments, fish habitat or aquatic plants. Used in this way, the purpose is to prevent floating vegetation from gathering around docks and boat lifts.

Last summer, Polk County Conservation Warden Peter Wetzel provided a briefing to Lake Wapogasset and Bear Trap property owners about use of the devices. Wisconsin DNR considers the improper use of hydraulic jets a form of dredging which can adversely affect lake habitat. Fines for improper use of hydraulic jets range from \$1,500 to \$1,700. If used, the jet must be directed upward toward the lake surface so the equipment does not affect the lake bottom, and must be pointed outward and not downward. ■

Source: <http://www.echopress.com/outdoors/4306287-dnr-sees-illegal-use-hydraulic-jets-more-local-waters>; and [http://www.lakewapogasset.com/files/-Vol\\_36\\_no\\_3.pdf](http://www.lakewapogasset.com/files/-Vol_36_no_3.pdf)



### Aquatic Plant Management Update

Bone Lake’s Aquatic Plant Management Plan, a component of the overall Lake Management Plan, will be updated this winter by the Aquatic Plant Management Committee with input from property owners.

If you would like to join the committee and/or participate in input sessions, contact:

Bob Boyd,  
boydsnest@lakeland.ws  
or  
Phil Foster  
Philsuefoster@lakeland.ws

Notice of input sessions will be sent via Bone Lake eNews.

## Rosenthals complete water quality projects on northeast side of Bone Lake

by Cheryl Clemens

Ron and Gail Rosenthal's cabin is at the base of a steep hill on the northeast side of Bone Lake. They wanted to help the lake by doing something about the runoff that flowed down the driveway, causing erosion and sedimentation in the lake. We'll let them tell you about the projects and results.

### Why did you complete your projects?

**Diversions and Rock Infiltration** – “We completed these projects because we had erosion and sediment issues in and adjacent to our driveway that all drained towards Bone Lake, and we felt a combination of these two storm water management practices would eliminate these issues for the vast majority of rainfall events. Since we diverted and captured the rainwater into rock infiltration pits near the top of our driveway and at the bottom of the driveway, we haven't had any issues with storm water.”

**10X35 Native Planting** – “We did this because it seemed like the right thing to do for the lake. The native planting is in the path of the storm water runoff that comes from the driveway to the lake. Any water that gets past the driveway's rock infiltration pit has to run through the yard, then the native planting, and over a small berm to get to the lake. We felt this was the best way to get any sediment out of the water before it gets to the lake.”

### Are you satisfied with the result and process?

Yes, we are very satisfied with the help we received, the overall process and the results. We are thankful for the District's efforts and for the grants made available by the Wisconsin DNR for these types of projects. I don't think we would have tackled these projects without the financial help.

### Explain how you were involved in the projects.

“We were involved, with the help of Bone Lake's consultant, Cheryl Clemens, in the design and getting bids for the diversion and infiltration pits. We met with the contractors before any work started to make sure they understood what we were attempting to achieve. We researched the native planting species for the 10X35 planting using the handouts from the lake district and laid out the planting patterns ourselves, and actually purchased all the plants/mulch and planted them ourselves as well.

“We are happy to be part of a lake district that is active in trying to improve the water quality. We want to thank everyone involved for their work in these efforts.” ■

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In 2017 Ron and Gail Rosenthal joined twenty other Bone Lake property owners who have completed or planned 10X35 plantings on their property since 2015.







**BEFORE:** Runoff created ruts in the driveway and sent the sediment downhill to the lake.

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**AFTER :** This driveway diversion breaks up the flow of water, sending it to a well-vegetated area to soak into the soil and reduce erosion. The neighbors to the south installed similar diversions in 2015.

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The Rosenthals installed the lower rock infiltration pit at the base of the driveway in 2015. A board across the inflow creates a ponding area to serve as a pretreatment device to remove sediment. This water previously flowed unchecked to the lake. Neighbors to the north also installed a large rock infiltration basin to catch driveway runoff in 2015.

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The rock infiltration pit at the top of the driveway is surrounded by a sediment fence to keep rocks clean until the grass grows in. This project was installed in 2017.

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*The diversion and infiltration practices shown here work to improve Bone Lake's water clarity by capturing sediment in runoff that contains phosphorus.*

*Interested in pursuing a planting or runoff management project on your property? Contact Mary Chorewycz. Email [amchorewycz@yahoo.com](mailto:amchorewycz@yahoo.com) or call 651-454-9456.*

*Winter is a good time to start planning!*

## Prevention update

by Bob Boyd

**E**xtensive monitoring for Zebra Mussel presence in Bone Lake came back negative.

Twelve Zebra Mussels plate samplers were deployed by residents at various locations around Bone Lake. No Zebra Mussels were found on any of the sampler plates.

Zebra Mussel monitoring on Bone Lake by these agencies also came back negative: U.S. Fish and Wildlife services, U.S. National Park Service, Polk County Land and Water Resources.

All residents can help with the monitoring by inspecting your boat hoists and docks before putting them back in the water this spring. If you have a suspect mussel attached collect it and call Bob Boyd at 715-553-0629 for further identification.

Our Bone Lake AIS prevention strategy includes communication via newsletters and handouts.

Our Clean Boats Clean Waters personnel have received additional training in Zebra Mussel identification and have been supplying Zebra Mussel handouts to boaters. Cameras at the north and south Landing provide AIS educational messages and recorded water craft launches. ■

### Clean Boats Clean Waters data

	2016	2017
Boat Inspections	940	1,062
People contacted	1,854	2,297
Boats launched	2,700	2,629

**Learn more about zebra mussels at the DNR website:**  
[dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/zebra.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/fact/zebra.html).

*Someone once said volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.*

*There are many volunteer opportunities among Bone Lake committees and activities. Contact Phil Foster to learn more about them.*

**Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart. — Elizabeth Andrew**

## Estimating the Bone Lake musky population

by Bob Boyd

**During the spring of 2017 the WDNR set out fourteen fyke nets to capture muskies.** This is the first year of a two-year study that will be repeated in 2018 to estimate the musky population in Bone Lake.

**This is the result of their 2017 efforts:** They captured and released 185 muskies 30 inches or larger, 16 muskies less than 30 inches. The largest was 45.9 inches and the smallest was 21 inches. The fish were tagged with a chip the size of a large grain of rice injected just under the skin. When tagged muskies are recaptured they can be identified with an electronic device.

Go to [bonelakewi.com](http://bonelakewi.com) for two previous studies.



WDNR crew measuring and tagging muskies

### Creating habitat for fish

**Over the last few years the Bone Lake Fishery Committee has installed 80 half log cribs in the lake.** The cribs provide additional structure for spawning fish. More half log cribs will be installed in the future.

In 2010, 2011 and 2012 the Fishery Committee facilitated the stocking of 12,500 small mouth bass ranging in size from four to six inches. The goal was to boost a small native population of smallmouth bass to more of a fishable population.

According to some residents more and larger smallmouth bass are being caught. Bass tournament anglers have reported some fourteen to seventeen-inch small mouth bass being caught.

No additional smallmouth bass stocking is scheduled at this time. ■



# Birds and water and Juncos

by Cris Dueholm

The other day someone said to me “What’s happened? I don’t hear the birds anymore.” I smiled and said “nature is right on schedule!”

It’s at this time of year when seasons change whether we like it or not! The birds have been in a migration mode and the animals are looking for that perfect place to find protection for what winter is about to do to us.

If I were a bird or animal living on this lake I would need to find:

1. Shelter to keep me warm during those extreme cold nights and protection from the wind and snowstorms.
2. A constant source of food with higher fat contents. Some birds will need to eat double their daily amount.
3. Water! Birds and animals need water everyday to either drink or bathe in whether it’s from snow, food, or an open water source.

As you survey the edges of the frozen lake you will see ground water coming up and in some cases spilling onto the ice or pooling. Did you know the temperature of that ground water is around 54°F and will stay close to that temp in the winter? On some extreme cold nights it may freeze over but will open the next day. One DNR study found that 80 percent of birds and animals will use that source of water.

(The rest of us should notice flowing ground water when we are out on the ice near the shoreline. The ice may be mushy here so be careful not to fall through.)

Watch closely near these open water sources and you may find a small slate and white colored bird that has come back to us from the very northern regions of Canada. It’s the Dark-eyed Junco, *Junco hyemalis*, or sometimes called “snowbird,” since it appears here just before the first snowfall.

Juncos are a medium-sized sparrow, a ground feeder, hopping around and scratching with both feet for seeds and insects in the leaf litter, and what’s left of your shoreline and garden plantings.

In spring they will migrate north to breed and nest in a depression on the ground. The female will find the best secluded place amongst tree roots, rock outcroppings and build a nest of small twigs, lining it with grasses and pine needles. In about a month’s time mom will be sitting, feeding and coaxing the young out of the nest. She may have another batch yet that year.

In each region of the country you may hear a slightly different dialect of their songs. You can find their unique sounds on: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org).

Just as the Juncos announce the onset of winter, I’ve noticed the deer have changed their color, turkeys are gathering in flocks, I hear the coyotes on their late night journeys, and larger flocks of waterfowl are gathering on the lake. The squirrels’ coats are getting thicker while they bury acorns. Swans, geese, and Sandhill Cranes are beginning to glean the fields. The adult loons left in September with my one juvenile loon leaving closer to lake freeze up. The Great Horned Owl at south end of the lake is staking out his territory for the January egg laying! That’s the beginning of spring!

I smile and think, “Yup, nature is right on schedule!” ■



The Dark-eyed Junco winter range spans most the lower 48 states while breeding territory extends into northern Canada and Alaska. Like its song, the Junco’s color pattern varies across its range. In general they’re dark gray/ brown brightened by a pink bill. Watch for them in your yard and around your feeders.

# Bone Lake volunteers recognized

by Phil Foster

At our annual meeting in August, we recognized six individuals/couples for their volunteer contributions to Bone Lake over the past few years. Each received a ceramic serving platter handcrafted by a local artist with an outline of Bone Lake. We have a great group of volunteers but always looking for fresh ideas and energy to help improve Bone Lake. Contact information is on our website for the various committee chairs or contact me at 715-857-5304 or [philsuefoster@lakeland.ws](mailto:philsuefoster@lakeland.ws).



Sis and Steve Bol have been doing a fabulous job hosting the Bone Lake Spring Social the first Saturday of each May and also for hosting the July 4th boat parade.



Kathy and Jim Widen both do lake monitoring and Jim serves on the fisheries committee, too.



Frank Schlick had been doing the financial audit of the District financial statements for many years.



Linette and Paul Werner have been serving on the social committee and hosting the sunken island party the past couple of years.



Jolene and Joel Owens provide the fantastic July 4th fireworks at the south end of Bone Lake.



John McCall has been recording our secchi disk readings many times each year to measure Bone Lake's water clarity.



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