

Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

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WELCOME TO A NEW SEASON

It's going to be a strange one. Hope you are safe and sound.

HEADS UP!

Sawyer County's Health and Human Services Department has provided guidance on travel to and from Sawyer County. See this [message](#) from Matt McKay, Env. Health Tech. and Drinking Water Specialist.

2020 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES TREATMENT

Late last summer a COLA Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) contractor identified and documented the location of all known AIS in the LCO lakes. The two AIS are Curly-leaf Pondweed (CLP) and Eurasian Water-milfoil (EWM) ([more](#)). While some of the locations are small and can be controlled by volunteers doing hand pulling of the plants, five locations are too large or the plants so dense that herbicide treatment is the only feasible option to manage the spread of these infestations.

COLA has applied for a [WDNR permit](#) to apply herbicide at the [five locations](#) this mid-spring for CLP and mid-summer for EWM. COLA is hopeful that by treating these five locations with herbicide this season we will reduce the areal extent and density at each location, reduce the risk of spreading CLP and EWM to other part of the lake(s).

Next year we hope to deploy the Eco-Harvester to control AIS without herbicides (see [related sidebar](#)).

LCO WATER QUALITY SUMMARY FOR 2019

Here's a quick glance at the state of [LCO's water quality in 2019](#).

OAT WILT HAS RECENTLY BEEN FOUND ON LCO

In 2019 there were two confirmed cases of the disease on private properties on LCO; it is highly likely there are more cases on other properties ([more](#)).

[Oak wilt video](#)

RECORD HIGH WATER LEVELS TO CONTINUE IN 2020

DETROIT- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District, announces that January 2020 water levels were higher on all of the Great Lakes than they were in January 2019 ([more](#)).

PLEASE RENEW YOUR COLA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2020-2021

[Renew your membership](#) today in one of Wisconsin's most active and respected lake associations.

Are your neighbors and extended family members of COLA? If not, please ask them to [join](#).

2020 NATURAL HISTORY FIELD TRIPS

Sponsored by the Extension Program at the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College

From Mike Heim: "The days are now getting noticeably longer and, altho the many of the smaller wonders of our beautiful Earth are still deeply blanketed in snow, our thoughts tilt ever so slightly toward spring. Field trips are one of the things that elicit daydreams, as I always revel in sharing the sublime natural wonders hidden away here in our Northwoods."

See the schedule for field trips [here](#).

IS THIS ECO-HARVESTER IN COLA'S FUTURE?

COLA's getting closer, but there are several details remaining. Funding will be difficult, especially in the current economic climate. More updates in future issues. More about the Eco-Harvester [here](#) and [here](#).

CITIZEN LAKE MONITORING NETWORK

Take a look at the Spring issue of [Citizen Lake Monitoring Network](#). The feature article is about cold water fish lakes and how important the monitoring is to understanding what's going on in WI regarding cold water fish habitat.

LAKE TIDES

The [FREE newsletter](#) for people interested in Wisconsin Lakes.

Published by University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point & University of Wisconsin - Extension Lakes.

700 FT SETBACK REQUIREMENTS FOR ENHANCED BOAT WAKES

An enhanced boat wake ordinance became effective on November 12, 2018. To view the ordinance [click here](#).

A higher resolution map of the 700 ft setback requirements for enhanced boat wakes is provided [here](#).

ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS, LONG TALES

Springtime at Parallel 45.9 North

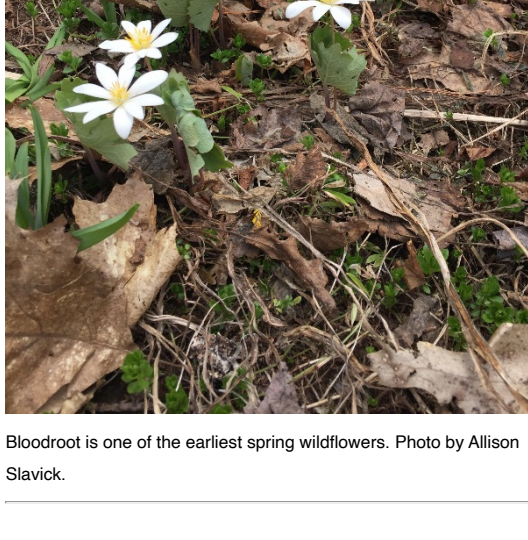
By Allison Slavick
Contributing Writer

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring."

Rachel Carson

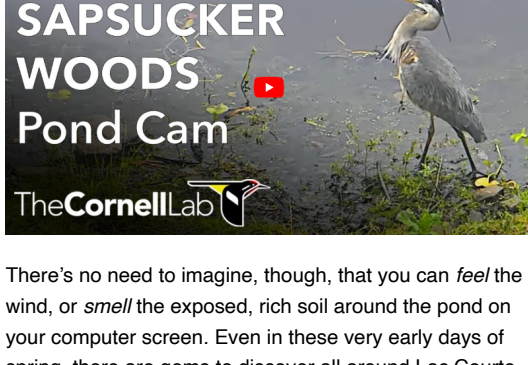
At the end of northern Wisconsin's snowy winter, with bare ground just emerging, spring may seem improbable. At parallel 45.9, lakes Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles are in the mid-latitudes, which are defined as a region of the Earth between latitudes 22 to 66 (north or south). While temperature and daylength are consistent at the equator, in the mid-latitudes the changing angle of the sun means "stronger" sunlight, bringing a temperature shift that results in what we call our seasons.

Does it seem like spring is coming earlier each year? It is, and the data support that observation: in our region of the mid-latitudes (the mid-mid-latitudes), for every ten degrees north from the equator, spring arrives about four days earlier than it did just ten years ago. In the southern U.S., spring arrives one day earlier, but if you were in the Arctic, you'd experience spring about 16 days earlier.



Bloodroot is one of the earliest spring wildflowers. Photo by Allison Slavick.

On the globe, each degree of latitude is 69 miles apart. Ithaca, New York is at parallel 42.4, which places Ithaca about 242 miles to the south of Sawyer County, at a closer latitude than Madison, Wisconsin, as the crow flies. For vernal inspiration, and those in need of reassurance that spring is on its way, turn to the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology's live bird cams](#). If you click on the ["Sapsucker Woods Pond Cam"](#), which is positioned on the pond right outside the Lab in Ithaca, you'll hear the raucous call of redwing blackbirds and grackles, and honking geese. Turn up the sound on your computer, and you can hear the wind and see it rippling across the open water of the pond.*



There's no need to imagine, though, that you can *feel* the wind, or *smell* the exposed, rich soil around the pond on your computer screen. Even in these very early days of spring, there are gems to discover all around Lac Courte Oreilles. At some point in your life you've probably been instructed to "use all your senses." Step outside and listen. Lakes in the north are still covered with a layer of thick ice, but a sure sign of spring are the booming or reverberating sounds of lake ice, especially at night, as the ice expands and contracts with changing temperatures.

If the ice has partially melted along your lakeshore, look into the shallow water. If there's clear skim ice, peer through it. You might see some unusual swimming creatures. These small critters are the nymph stage of the caddisfly, and they are important to a lake's fishery (if you tie flies, you've probably tied the nymph of a caddisfly). They become active as sunlight returns to the lake.

"There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter."

The caddisfly nymph spins a silky, sticky net around its soft body to which it attaches a protective case of gravel, tiny twigs, pebbles, and plant debris. Once you've seen a caddisfly nymph, you won't forget it. On land, the adult caddisfly is elusive. Depending on the species (there are many) and location, caddisflies will "hatch" anywhere from March through August. The adults look similar to a moth with wings folded back. If you see caddisfly nymphs along the shore, it's a sign of good water quality.

At your feet, you may have seen on the crunchy snow's surface black, pepper-like dots that at first appear inanimate until when disturbed they spring into the air. These are snow fleas or, more accurately, springtails; they live under bark and in leaf litter, emerging when snow has begun to melt around tree bases and banks. Springtails do not use their tails (they haven't one) or their legs to jump. They have a mechanism called a furcula that folds underneath their bodies. The furcula when unfolded springs the insect upward. Springtails feed on decaying vegetation, not blood, so there's no reason to worry about you or your pets catching fleas.

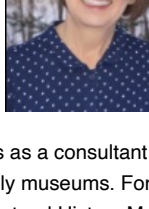


Trailing arbutus blooms not long after the snow melts. Photo by Allison Slavick.

If you tap sugar maples for sap to make syrup you've had an opportunity to use your sense of taste. Birds take advantage of the flow of sap, too. The yellow-bellied sapsucker will soon be in abundance in forested land around Lac Courte Oreilles. The sapsucker's breeding range in Wisconsin is generally above parallel 44.5; it's the only eastern woodpecker that's completely migratory. You've likely seen the holes it drills in trees in neat rows, called sapwells or sap licks, from which the sapsucker licks (not sucks) sap. The sapsucker has been observed feeding on hundreds of species of trees, but prefers maples and birches. The flowing sap in turn attracts insects, which the sapsucker also feeds upon. Hummingbirds take advantage of their first meals of sap and insects when they return in May.

The quote from Rachel Carson, above, continues: *There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.* In April, the refrains may appear to be small, but they are not. Woodcocks have arrived, and warblers are soon to follow. Marsh marigolds will appear under the pussy willows, already emerging around the lake and along roadsides. The fragrant trailing arbutus, found most commonly under conifers, will bloom this month, as will bloodroot. Step outside and the air smells different – earthier and delicious. Birds are calling. Ruffed grouse will soon drum, a mating ritual brought about by the lengthening days. If you use all your senses, you'll uncover healing treasures every day.

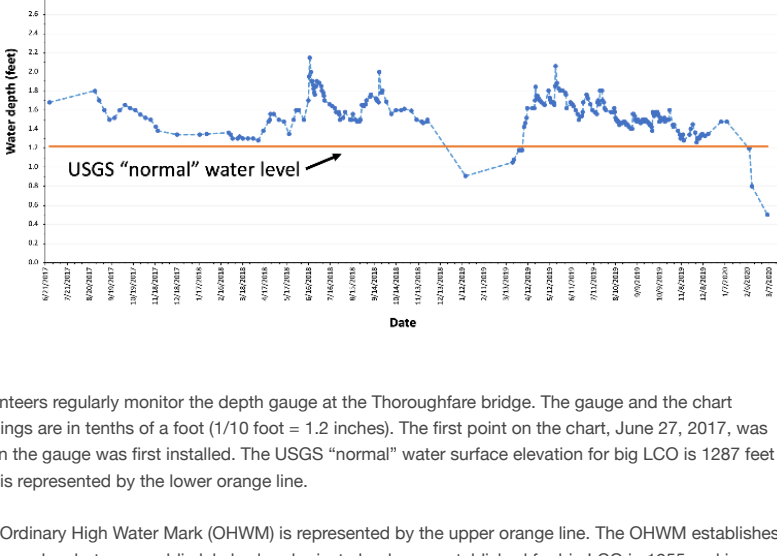
*And who can resist looking at some of the other webcams found there: a [barred owl](#), a [red-tailed hawk](#), and an [osprey](#) on their nests.



Allison Slavick works as a consultant to nonprofits all over the country, especially museums. For fifteen years she directed the Cable Natural History Museum, and previously worked as a scientist at the New York Botanical Garden and the Smithsonian Institution. She mountain bikes, skis, and picks berries near her home on Crystal Lake in southern Bayfield County. Questions, comments, or suggestions for future articles may be sent to her at allison.slavick@gmail.com.

Questions, comments, or suggestions for future articles may be sent to communications@cola-wi.org.

LCO Water Depth Recorded at Thoroughfare Bridge Gauge



Volunteers regularly monitor the depth gauge at the Thoroughfare bridge. The gauge and the chart readings are in tenths of a foot (1/10 foot = 1.2 inches). The first point on the chart, June 27, 2017, was when the gauge was first installed. The USGS "normal" water surface elevation for big LCO is 1287 feet and is represented by the lower orange line.

The Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) is represented by the upper orange line. The OHWM establishes the boundary between public lakebed and private land, was established for big LCO in 1955 and is 1289.27 feet above mean sea level. The OHWM is "the point on the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the water is so continuous as to leave a distinct mark either by erosion, destruction of terrestrial vegetation or other easily recognized characteristic."

Periodic readings are recorded as accurately as reasonable. The water itself is in perpetual motion, not only flowing downstream but rising and falling due to waves, the current in the channel, the wind which can actually push water and "stack" it toward one end of the lake or the other and the seiche effect caused by the gravitational pull of the moon and sun.

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COLA Mission: 1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, their shorelands and surrounding areas, while respecting the interests of property owners and the rights of the general public; and 2) to consider, study, survey and respond to issues deemed relevant by COLA's membership.

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