

November 15, 2022

LOON HOOTS

Reflections on Seasons End

Geese are working into the lake as I watch from my duck cabin on Fox Lake, reflecting on the summer just past. It's the end of the season on Plum and I am reminded of a story I wrote long ago for the newsletter for South Hole Advancement, our duck club. It was the end of the season then too, a melancholy time, a lot like now. I thought I'd share it with you. It follows on the next page.

At South Hole, we like this story because it is a celebration of the season just past, with unspoken anticipation of another to come.

It fits the moment. I hope you like it too.

The duck hunters in our membership will understand this better, but for those uninitiated in the traditions of waterfowling, or my obscure metaphors, here are some tips to make it clearer:

- Number 1 and number 2 are box blinds on the lakeshore.
- The music is a metaphor for duck calling (my apologies to Bobby Freeman for choosing his song - its perfect, though).
- Blocks are duck decoys
- Mallards are the focus, because they are delicious on the table
- "the Poacher" was another duck hunter whose blind was far down the shoreline.
- Loon "\$#!+" is the extra-fine, "head of a pin" sized floating duck weed coating the surface of our potholes in summer—and the name of the newsletter (undisguised).

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THE LAST DANCE

My last morning of duck hunting in the 20th century dawned clear and unseasonably warm, just like so many other days in this strangely warm and dry season. Southeast winds, going to southwest massaged the shoreline. A quickly rising sun revealed sleep-over mallards lifting off the lake for an early morning breakfast. The ball-room floor, rippling in the wind, was attractively decorated with 75 of our best dressed phonies, dancing at the end of their cords. Laughter drifted on the light wind from #2 where 10 year old Jenny was entertaining her dad and Peter and a guest. In #1, hot coffee at 7 was followed by cream streusel at 7:30 as Tom and Chuck and I waited comfortably.

The music started around 8 as a large flock of whistling swans hooted their way to three point landings. Early arrivals at the dance also included a few single ladies (mallards) looking for a good time and a trio of shy wall-flowers (gadwalls) who looked, but seemed to panic at the sight of the crowd on the water in front of us. We were threatened by a quartet of hyperactive freshmen (bluebills) trying to disrupt the more formal tone of our party.

Suddenly, they arrive – 50 Mallards – high, down the shoreline, over the poacher, looking west but ever so slightly disorganized. “Too far” says I. “Maybe not” says Chuck. “Try ‘em – ask them nice.” And the dance begins.



....do ya wa-anna dance, anda hold my hand.....tell me I'm your lover man, oh ba-by do you wanna dance.....

Two ladies, in the front, look. Then they tilt, standing on their right wing tips, peeling off, banking, swinging on a long invisible tether, then dropping toward us. A grand entrance. A few girl friends follow and then the whole group, all dressed alike, all wanting to make the same grand entrance to the dance.



.....do ya wa-anna dance under the moonlight.....kiss and hug me, all through the night,..oh ba by... do you wa-anna dance.....

Anxious, not wanting to be the last in the door, the rear echelon drops more quickly. One sassy lady and I are singing a duet. She's pretty excited, gabbly and swingin left, then right, then left again, showing off in a race with her girl friend to be the first one down.

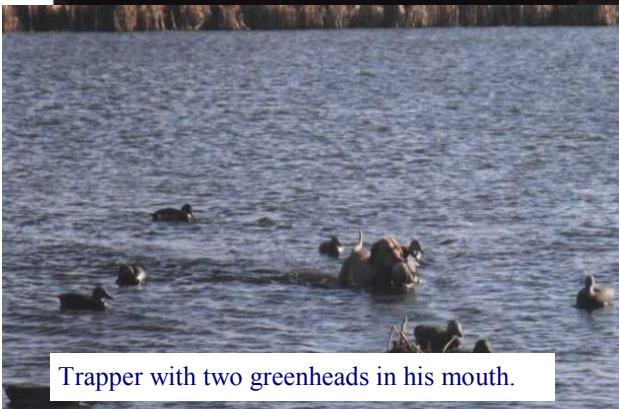


..doya doya doya doya wanna dance.....doya doya doya doya wanna dance.....doya doya doya wa-anna da-a-ance

The music gets louder as the ducks sing back. The lead lady is now on the water. More ladies are setting in, feet up - doing the funky chicken over the blocks. The main bunch is leaderless now. 40 become small cliques of 3 to 6, banking on all sides, in front, behind us and overhead. We search for the brightly uniformed drakes and just as the greenheads appear overhead, the ladies jump off the dance floor, confusing an already frantic scene.

The music stops.

The room is suddenly quiet. Trapper and Doc, our tan and brown coated janitors start sweeping the dance floor, collecting our prizes - fat greenheads - the main course for Christmas dinner. The band takes a break and pretty soon we're into coffee and streusel again with a treat for the sweepers. The ballroom is restored, but its getting late and the birds seem to have found another party. Time to pick up for the last time in the 1900's and get the ballroom ready for the next big event – winter. Picking up the blocks, we are already talking about next season as sky high V's of ducks migrate south. We ended this one on a high note...the last dance was a good one.



Trapper with two greenheads in his mouth.



"Aw *%#* ." never fails. The focus is on 20 mallards with wings set



Hazardous Wakes and the Natural Resources Board

Last Wilderness Alliance continues to gather data on the effects of large wakes on the environment and other lake users. They were requested to present to the NRB meeting in Ashland. LWA initiated a series of meetings and settled on presentations by three speakers. The board was very receptive to the information provided and asked thoughtful questions of the speakers during and after the meeting. Further presentations are planned and materials are being provided as the DNR Secretary moves forward on a second study by staff.

Recreational Impacts

Wisconsin Lakes has had meetings of their Recreational Impacts work group that has studied lake capacity in the face of expanding uses and pressure. Three lake leaders from Northern Wisconsin (including Plum Lake) are members of this working group with 3 others from Southern Wisconsin Lake Associations.

RIPPLE EFFECTS CHALLENGE

Here is the challenge.....there is an unidentified short story that actually comes from Plum in this book, written by a Plum Laker. The first person to find identify it and send me an email with the correct information is invited to a hors d'oeuvre/cocktail cruise next summer.

RIPPLE EFFECTS

BY Ted Rulseh

Teds new book is out!!

It is a lush and absorbing story of the Northwoods glacial lakes region, told in personal vignettes that are delightful reflections of its history, its unique beauty and the challenges it faces from an increasing population of admirers who are loving it to death. With an easy style and depth of understanding, Rulseh weaves an engaging tale that provides a clear appreciation of the lake environment and a glimpse of how we might save it for our children. He is both a student and teacher and now an influential steward of our northern Highland region. He has crafted a very important piece for our lake country.



HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT

The winter of 22-23 Fish Sticks project is in final planning. The grant is in place and our committee has been formed. Members are Tom Popalisky, George Lannert, Bill Sima, Don Anderson, Merle Purin, Wayne Snow and John Richter. The use of a contractor is being urged by the county and is under consideration. Materials are being assembled and we will be waiting (and hoping) for a cold start to the winter and little snow while the lake freezes up to provide thick ice. While we have some anchor trees, we are in need of more 5 to 8" maple or oak and some smaller balsam to fill out the three bundles. If you have available trees, we will be happy to cut and remove them over the snow with a skidding cone. Please contact John Richter at 414-587-3760, email is ajr5@aol.com. Construction should take place in January or early February of 23.

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