

# WELCOME TO THE RICE LAKE NATURE TRAIL

This guide will describe a **variety of plants and animals** that you may see while hiking this **1/3 mile nature trail**.



PR-229



Walk quietly and watch along the shoreline, you may see turtles, frogs, great blue herons, muskrats, and *more!*

# 1.

## WETLAND SONGS

- In the summer and especially in June, listen for the low-pitched foghorn bellow of the male **Bullfrog** (*Lithobates Catesbeianus*) - *the loudest song in the wetland!*
- **Bullfrogs** are also Wisconsin's largest frog and can grow as large as a softball.
- **Young tadpoles** take two years to develop into adults, so they require a deep, permanent water body.
- Other commonly seen species are **Green Frogs** (*Lithobates Clamitans*) and **American Toads** (*Anaxyrus Americanus*).

Bullfrog



Greenfrog



American Toad



# 2.

## GIMMIE SHELTER

- The large willow tree that has fallen into the water is providing habitat for a myriad of species.
- **Turtles** often climb out of the water onto fallen trees to bask in the sun.
- **Fish** will use the shade underneath to stay hidden from predators as well as lay eggs.
- Additionally, **fallen trees** can help protect the shoreline from wave action that could cause erosion.



# 3.

## THE VALUE OF AN OAK

- **The trees in front of you make up the 2nd most common tree species in Wisconsin - Oak.** The most common oak trees in the area are White, Red, Bur, and Swamp White Oak. They are a valuable home to many species of birds and small mammals.
- ! Many year-round and migrating species of birds rely on insects living in trees to survive. **Keep your eyes open for migrating warblers in the spring and fall.** Studies has shown that native trees host more insects, in species diversity and number, than non-native trees.
- **Additionally, acorns are heavily relied upon as a food source for many species including deer, red, and grey squirrels, wild turkeys, opossums, blue jays, and woods ducks.**
- In years when the acorn crop is especially good, deer produce more twin fawns due to the increased nutrition of the mighty acorn.

*Yellow Warbler*

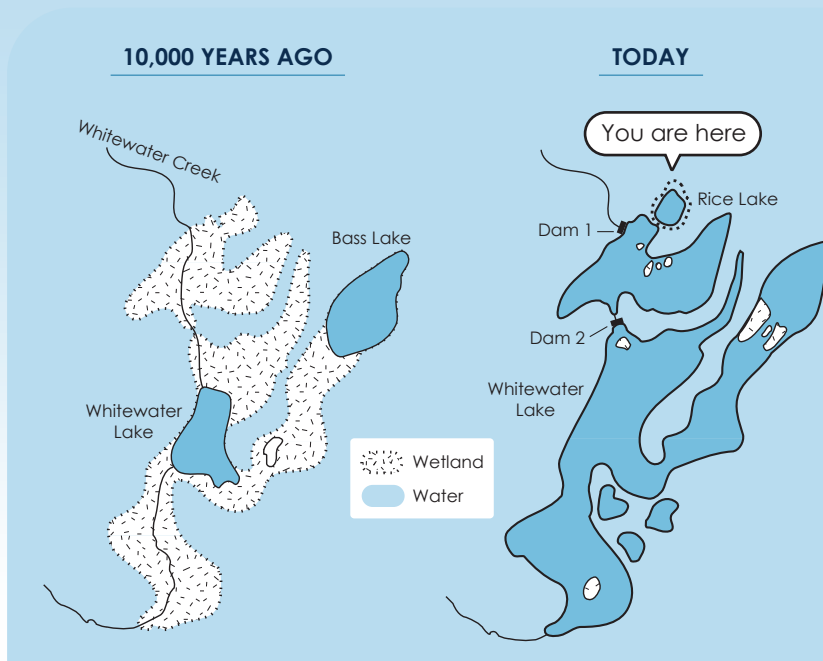


\*Dendroica  
Petechia

# 4.

## THE GLACIER (THE BEGINNINGS OF RICE LAKE)

- **The large rocks you see along both sides of the trail are called “glacial erratics”.**
- They were brought here by a glacier which had picked them up much further north and they landed here as the glacier melted.
- That melting ice is also what formed the original lakes that became Rice Lake and Whitewater Lake when dams were built in 1947 and 1954 across Whitewater Creek.



5.

# TURTLE SANCTUARY

- ! **Painted, snapping, and spiny softshell turtles are common in Rice Lake.** Watch for them sunning themselves on logs and rocks on sunny days.
- Absorbing Vitamin D from sunlight helps them digest calcium. Calcium is necessary for shell development in young turtles, and for eggshell development in female turtles.
- Basking also helps dry off the turtle's shell which inhibits the growth of bacteria and fungus.

*Snapping Turtle*



*Spiny Softshell Turtle*



*Painted Turtle*



6.

# SHOREBIRDS ON THE HUNT

- **There are a few long legged residents in the Rice Lake area.**
- Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Green Herons often hunt along the shoreline vegetation. These birds prefer the safety of dense vegetation rather than the open water of the lake.
- ! Quiet observers will have a better chance of spotting a heron or egret as they slightly search for fish along the shorelines.

*Blue Herons*



*Green Herons*



*Great Egrets*



# 7.

## WATERFOWL

- A large variety of waterfowl visit this area during spring and fall migration.
- ! Be on the lookout for Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, Mallards, American Coots, as well as Common and Hooded Mergansers. It is common to see Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, and Mallards nesting here in the summer.
- ! Look for a train of up to a dozen babies following their mother in the summer as they learn to search for food.

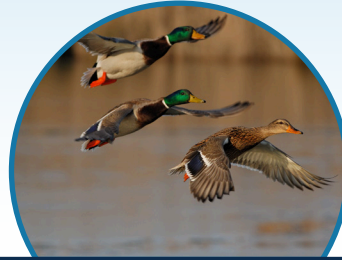
Canada Geese



Wood Duck



Mallards



Merganser



# 8.

## SHORELINE MAMMALS

- Rice Lake teems with wildlife because there is plenty of food available.
- At night, raccoons hunt along the water's edge for tadpoles, crawfish, and fish.
- Mink search the shoreline for crawfish, snakes, fish, and frogs, while muskrats dine on cattails and bulrushes.
- ! Muskrats are the most common mammal on Rice Lake. Look for them swimming in the lake from the wildlife observation blind.

Muskrat



Mink



Raccoon



9.

# JEWELWEED

(IMPATIENS CAMPENSIS)

- **Jewelweed grows along wet shorelines throughout the state.**
- It was named “jewel” because its leaves are covered with a waxy coating that causes water to bead and glisten in the sun.
- The name “weed” comes from the fact that this plant can dominate an area if wet condition prevail.
- **Jewelweed has orange, trumpet-like flowers that bloom in late July and August and are a hummingbird favorite.**
- **!** When the seeds ripen in early September, pinch one of these flowerheads between your fingers and watch the seeds propel themselves 3-4 feet ahead of you!

*Jewelweed*



\*Impatiens Campensis

10.

# DRAGONFLIES & DAMSELFIES

(ODONATES)

- **Dragonflies are big, fast, and harmless, to you that is.** To other insects, dragonflies are truly “dragons” of the insect world. Watch how dragonflies patrol the shoreline, scoop up mosquitoes, and other flying insects, and chew them to pieces with their powerful jaws.
- Depending on the species, dragonfly nymphs live underwater for a few weeks, or up to 3 years until ready to emerge as flying adults!
- **!** **Another member of the Odonates family is the damselfly.** Dragonflies are stouter and will zip and dart about, and the smaller, daintier damselfies will flutter about at a much more leisurely pace. You can tell them apart by their wing position when resting. Dragonflies keep their wings flattened like aircraft, while damselfies hold their wings together over their backs.

*Damselfies*

\*wings held together



\*wings kept fanned

*Dragonflies*

11.

# QUAKING ASPEN (BEAVER FOOD)

(POPULUS TREMULOIDES)

- Though there are no beaver dams on Rice Lake, beaver do visit Rice Lake to feed on Aspen.
- Quaking Aspen grow all around this signpost. They are identified by their white bark and leaves that flutter in very slight breezes. They grow in many soil types and are fast growing and short-lived trees.
- One beaver can easily cut down a large tree and feed upon it over a long period of time. In fall, beaver increase their tree cutting activity and store them in deep water for food during winter.

*Quaking Aspen*



\*Populus Tremuloides

*Visiting Beaver in Search of Aspen*



# THANKS FOR VISITING RICE LAKE NATURE TRAIL!

*We hope you enjoyed your visit to the Rice Lake Nature Trail.*

To learn more about the cultural and natural history of the Kettle Moraine State Forest - Southern Unit, visit the museum at the State Forest Visitor Center located on Hwy 59, 3 miles west of Eagle.

Visitor Center and Museum | Kettle Moraine State Forst - Southern Unit  
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