

The Sheboygan River Explorer

Summer 2014

Volume 3, Issue 2



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The goal for the Sheboygan River is to reduce the contamination and improve habitat enough so as to raise its "grade" as a Great Lakes river from an "F" to a "C".

Take the Restoration Further!

The Sheboygan River may be in what we are calling the "healing phase", but that does not mean that the work is done. The river will always need help, especially from those who live, work, or play in it, along it, or on land that drains to it (the watershed).

Native plants provide so much more benefit to wild creatures than domestic varieties we need to plant more! Invasive species will always be a threat and need control. Pollution from stormwater runoff is a constant threat and something we all should address in our daily lives to reduce our contributions.

The Sheboygan River Basin Partnership (SRBP) is an organization interested in helping local landowners and businesses that want to help the river heal by controlling invasive species, establishing native plantings, and reducing stormwater pollution.

Contact SRBP President, John Nelson, at 920-980-2539 or jnelson@tnc.org today to see how you might partner to restore the river further!

Debbie Beyer
Natural Resource Educator
UW-Extension
Regional Natural Resources Program



"Look for these Sheboygan River photos in the 2014-2015 Wisconsin Great Lakes calendar!"

Upcoming Changes

Due to funding changes, UW-Extension natural resources education here will begin to focus on other projects and focus less time on the Sheboygan River. To stretch remaining funds this will be the last "Sheboygan River Explorer" in print. Future issues will be available and distributed electronically only. Also, we will ask for community partners to carry on education, monitoring, and restoration activities. It is time to take back your river!

Friday Morning Bird Walks

Join Dave Kuckuk, Debbie Beyer, and other local birders, for a morning walk to identify birds along the **Sheboygan River. We'll start at Esslingen Park and** drive to other project sites and eBird hotspots as time allows. Drop in for just a short excursion before work, or stay for several hours. Our observations will be submitted to eBird. Bring your binoculars and field guide. Water-proof boots suggested.

July 11, 7:30am

August 8, 7:30am

September 12, 7:30am



Bat Monitoring Training

Join director of the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory, Bill Mueller, to learn about the biology of Wisconsin bats and how to detect them as they hunt for insects in the night sky. Learn to use a fun gadget **called the "Ana-Bat" detector. The training consists of** one hour indoor training and one hour outdoor training, **so dress for the weather. We're looking for a few** dedicated volunteers to make bat monitoring in Sheboygan their hobby! Come just to learn or come to volunteer, but please register by August 15.

August 18, 7:30-9:30pm

UW-Extension office



Invasive Plant Pulls

Enjoy fresh air and exercise along the river cutting or pulling garlic mustard, buckthorn and other invaders. Then take a break to enjoy ice cream and socialize with your fellow river-enthusiasts. Long sleeves, insect repellent, gloves and sturdy shoes encouraged. Meet on University Drive along the Sheboygan River. For possible weather cancellations call 920-459-5918 two hours prior to the program start.



July 14, 6:00-8:00pm

August 11, 6:00-8:00pm

August 25, 5:30-7:30pm

September 8, 5:30-7:30pm

September 22, 5:30-7:30pm



Contact Amy Kretlow at 920-459-5918 or akretlow@uwm.edu to register for programs

Sheboygan River Canoe/Kayak Trips

Spring and early summer is a great time to float the river! Stretch your paddling muscles, and learn about the clean-up and restoration work on a free guided trip with Camp Y-Koda! Contact Camp Y-Koda at 920-467-6882 or yeducation@sheboygancountyyymca.org to register.



Registrants will be contacted by Camp Y-Koda a few days in advance of the trip with final details. River section featured on each trip determined by water conditions.

Wednesday June 18, noon-2:00pm

Saturday June 21, 9:00-11:00am

Sunday June 22, noon-2:00pm

Saturday June 28, 9:00-11:00am

Sunday June 29, noon-2:00pm

Wednesday July 2, noon-2:00pm

Saturday July 12, 9:00am-11:00am

Sunday July 13, noon-2:00pm

Bat Survey Canoe Trips

Help us navigate the night-time waters and survey for bats in the lower portion of the Sheboygan River. Registration is required to reserve a free canoe. Contact Camp Y-Koda at 920-467-6882 or yeducation@sheboygancountyyymca.org for reservations.

June 25, 8:00pm

July 9, 8:00pm



Native Plant Walks

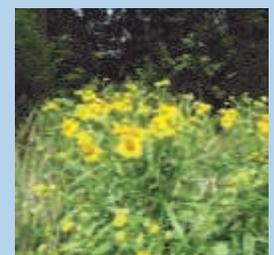
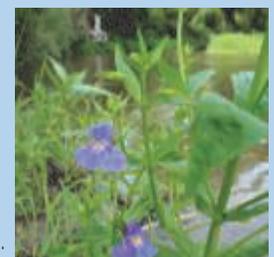
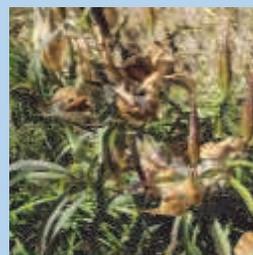
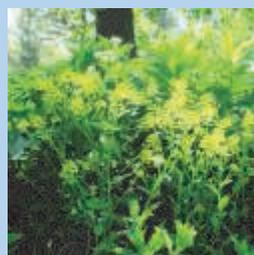
Join local ecologist and Sheboygan River project contractor, Scott Horzen, to see and identify some of the native trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges and wildflowers planted at the **habitat projects**. **Discuss their ecological importance and get ideas for "going native"** with your own landscaping. Park along University Drive and begin with a walk in the wetlands across from Lutheran High School. Travel to other sites if time allows. For possible weather cancellations call 920-459-5918 two hours prior to the program start.

June 25, 6:00-7:00pm

July 23, 6:00-7:00pm

August 20, 6:00-7:00pm

September 17, 5:30-6:30pm



Citizen Updates

Nest Boxes Monitoring Updates

Written by: Brenda Woveras, Wisconsin Master Naturalist

Early Sunday mornings, my husband and I head out to check the thirteen bluebird nest boxes along the Sheboygan River. The boxes are located at Esslingen Park, Roy Sebold Sheboygan River Natural Area, and Kiwanis Park. We carefully open the box doors



and peek inside. The Bluebird Restoration Association of Wisconsin (BRAW) has guidelines to follow for checking these boxes. We need to record our weekly findings and at the end of the season we will submit our field records to BRAW. So far, our main job has been removing nests that don't seem to be bluebird nests. We are removing a lot of sparrow nests!

We've been lucky because the weather has been cooperating. Most mornings it's sunny and warm. It is so peaceful to walk along the river and listen. Almost every week we see people fishing. They usually visit with us. Happily, for the last three weeks, we've been seeing bluebirds at Esslingen Park! Although, we haven't seen any sign that they are using the nest boxes. We've also seen ducks, tree swallows, and chickadees. The chickadees are so enjoyable to hear! It's so nice being out early in the morning, seeing and hearing all the birds and activity of the river. It is, by far, my favorite part of this project.



Frog and Toad Survey Update

Written and photographed by: Jim Ellis, Wisconsin Master Naturalist

Despite the persistence of cold nights, our resident frogs are making themselves heard on wetlands in and around Sheboygan. A group of volunteers from the community recently surveyed 13 separate sites in Eastern Sheboygan County including 5 in the Sheboygan River Area of Concern. With the wind blowing in from Lake Michigan, it was so cold that the survey team was tempted to give up and go home. But, in the hopes of hearing the magical sounds of spring, we stayed the course.

Perseverance paid off. By the end of our survey we had heard Spring Peepers, Chorus Frogs, Wood Frogs and a Leopard Frog and were assured that spring really had arrived. Frog mating calls signal that the ice is gone and summer is just around the corner. They are also indicators of the health of our wetlands – the more frogs calling the better the health of the river and surrounding wetlands. And, the better for us!



In the coming weeks, the volunteer survey team will conduct several more surveys and report the results to the Wisconsin Frog and Toad Survey, a Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Endangered Resources. We **expect to hear several more of Wisconsin's 12 native species of frogs and toads.**

Get out for an evening walk on a wetland near you and perhaps you too will hear the magical sounds of our amphibian friends.

Citizen Updates Continued

Morning Bird Walks

Written by: Anne Ritter, local resident

It feels so good to receive the visit of our most conspicuous backyard birds, the robins, mourning doves and finches. They are prominent messengers of spring. But if I leave my own backyard and make

Photo credit: Nigel



myself a guest into a **bird's better home** the small pockets of natural habitat we still have left in Sheboygan, there is the promise of some remarkable encounters, which will give the new season its full measure of life.

This spring, thanks to the bird walks led by UW-Extension Natural Resource Educator Debbie Beyer, I have been ushered into the fascinating community of migratory birds. The bird walks are conducted in the restored natural areas of Esslingen Park and Wildwood Islands. It does not seem to matter that those areas are small in size and in the vicinity of continuous traffic. The Sheboygan River banks, the wetlands, the mature trees and the recent plantings of native shrubs and grasses, lure many dazzling species of birds.

I never anticipated that catching elusive glimpses of wild birds doing their thing in their natural home could be so gratifying. Red-breasted mergansers casually swim on the river, ruffling their crests. A great blue heron glides over the flowing water, his long neck coiled against his back. One tiny ruby-crowned kinglet and one equally small

Photo credit: <http://boognielisen.com>



golden-crowned kinglet flutter daintily in and out a thick tangle of twigs. Two ospreys rest side by side perched on their pole towering above the wetlands. And what do you believe a

pair of eastern bluebirds would be doing in Esslingen Park at this time of year? Why, building a nest, of course in one of the boxes. The list is far from complete. One thing I know: on my next walk, there will be another bird, perhaps a warbler or a thrush that I have never seen before.



The Ospreys Have Landed!

Exciting news! In late April, a pair of ospreys began to set up house at the nesting platform installed last year at the University Drive wetland. They have added sticks to the platform and perch there frequently, however, they do not appear to be sitting on eggs. Keep your fingers crossed for next year! Stop on University Drive and take a look, but please watch from a distance! Too much disturbance could make this site unappealing to them.

Written by Debbie Beyer



Photo credit: George DeCamp

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers



Do you kayak, jet-ski, fish, ski, wake board or simply cruise our lakes? Any type of water sports equipment provides an opportunity to move aquatic invasive species from one water body to another. Lake/river water in your live well,

motor, bilge or fish bucket can easily carry tiny zebra mussels or spiny water fleas and potentially VHS to the very next lake you use. Plants hanging on the trailer or motor prop can begin a new crop of **invasive plants and animals in a 'clean lake'**. To greatly reduce the chances of spreading invasive species avoid using another lake within a 5-day **period. If this isn't possible here are some important steps you can take that will help:** a) wash b) power wash c) power wash with hot water or d) spray your boat and trailer with a 2% bleach solution.

Boaters: Know and Follow the 'Stop Aquatic Hitchhiker' Laws

Listed are the rules we need to take every time we use a lake that will greatly reduce the chances of moving any invasive species. Make these steps part of your inspection routine.

- Inspect and Remove all attached plants, animals and mud before launching and before leaving the lake (I recommend having a long-handled brush in your boat).
- Drain all water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells, bait containers and equipment before leaving the lake.

- Never Move plants or live fish away from a waterbody (I recommend using ice to keep your fish fresh).

Opportunities To Get Involved

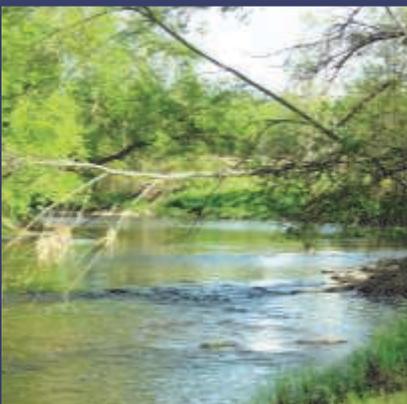
- Become a Clean Boats/Clean Waters (CB/CW) volunteer on any of our local lakes. Training, materials and a CB/CW t-shirt will be provided. Our mission is to keep our local lakes as invasive species free as possible by educating all boaters **to know and follow the 'Stop Aquatic Hitchhiker' laws.** We ask only for 15-20 hours of your time for the summer. We feel this is a very important community service.
- **We are looking for a 'few good people'** to become lake or river monitors to help us keep track of aquatic invasive species. Training and needed materials are provided and we just need people to paddle, walk or motor around a part of the lake looking for several invasive species. Only a few hours each summer will help supply us with needed information.

If you want more information, want to 'sign-on' or would like to become active with invasive species control work, contact the local Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator:

Steve Klock 920 946 5921 or
steve.klock@sheboygancounty.com

Be safe out there and have a wonderful boating season! Thank you!!

Community Photo Contest



Calling all photographers to focus their lenses on the Sheboygan River, anywhere from Sheboygan Falls to the Sheboygan Harbor, in 2014. We have an on-line photo album at <https://sheboyganrivercleanupproject.shutterfly.com/> so your photos will be added to that collection for public viewing and possible use in exhibits and publications, plus winners will be on display at locations in the Sheboygan area. Submit your photos electronically to Debbie Beyer at deb.beyer@ces.uwex.edu by September 1, 2014. Include your name, address, phone number, photo name, camera and lens description, and category: youth (18 and younger), adult amateur, or adult professional.

Habitat Project Update

Written by Debbie Beyer

Scott Horzen, Sheboygan resident and ecologist for Oneida Total Integrated Enterprises (OTIE, Inc.), has been involved with the planning, implementation and monitoring of the Sheboygan River habitat projects from the start.

This year, Scott and other contractors have monitored the plantings to determine **plant survival and mortality**. If plants appear to have died from **“planting error”**, rather than natural causes, they will be replaced. The crew will also seek out and treat invasive plants at the project sites.

The crew has noticed unusually heavy signs of browse (twigs nibbled by critters). This might not be the best situation for establishing the plants, but it does indicate that the projects are providing HABITAT! Exactly what we wanted.

Note the Native Plant Walks schedule in this newsletter and join Scott this summer for a closer look at the variety of plants becoming established! See if you can find all 104 species!



Award-winning Sheboygan River Work

Work done in the Sheboygan River Area of Concern has been recognized in recent months nationally and in Wisconsin:

- The American Public Works Association **gave “Public Works Project of the Year Award” for the Sheboygan River habitat restoration projects** to consultants Short Elliot Hendrickson, contractors Lee & Ryan and agency project managers, the City of Sheboygan/Wisconsin DNR.



- The Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals gave Debbie Beyer, Amy Kretlow and Sarah Traaholt a Silver Award in the newsletter category **for “The Sheboygan River Explorer” newsletter**.

- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Office of Great Lakes, **selected Debbie Beyer’s before/after photos of Wildwood Island restoration for First Place in the Lake Protection Activities category**. The photos are on the front page of this newsletter and will be featured in the 2014-2015 **“Wisconsin Great Lakes” calendar**.

Congratulations everyone!

Habitat Partners Wanted!

With a rain garden project at the Cellcom & Glas Coffeehouse building, the Sheboygan River Basin Partnership (SRBP) is kicking off an initiative to restore habitat and reduce stormwater runoff on private lands along the Sheboygan River urban area.

The program is in the early stages of planning. If you are interested in partnering with SRBP to control non-native invasive plants and replace them with a wonderful variety of Wisconsin natives, contact John Nelson at 920-980-2539 or jnelson@tnc.org.

Make the contact today! This new initiative connects you with technical assistance and possible cost-share dollars.





Sheboygan River Area of Concern

For programs, volunteering,
or materials requests contact:

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Email: deb.beyer@ces.uwex.edu



University of Wisconsin,
U.S. Department of Agriculture
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cooperating. An EEO/AA
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Extension provides equal
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requirements.



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Explore the Sheboygan River at your leisure:

Wisconsin AOCs info & resources for citizens:
<http://fyi.uwex.edu/aocs>

Wisconsin AOCs official maps, records and reports:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/greatlakes>

Sheboygan River canoe and kayak trips:
<http://sheboygancountymmca.org/camp-y-koda>

Sheboygan River Basin Partnership:
<http://www.sheboyganrivers.org>

All Great Lakes AOCs information:
<http://www.epa.gov/es/aoc>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird:
<http://ebird.org/content/ebird/>

IPAW: Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin:
<http://ipaw.org/>

Wisconsin Bat Monitoring Program:
<http://wiatri.net/inventory/bats/>

Wisconsin Frog & Toad Monitoring Program:
<http://wiatri.net/inventory/frogtoadsurvey/secure/welcome.cfm>