

MAKING NEW DISCOVERIES



North Lakeland
Discovery Center

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**STAYING TRUE TO
OUR MISSION WHILE
PIVOTING, INNOVATING,
AND GROWING DURING
A REMARKABLE YEAR**



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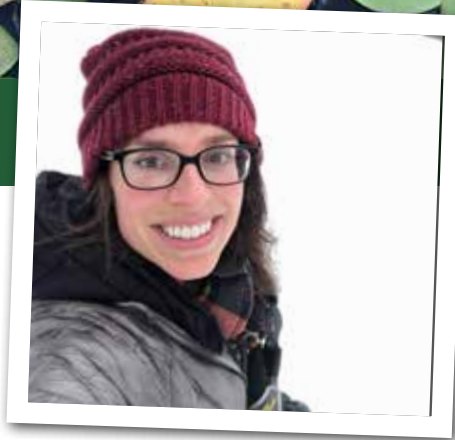
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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We celebrated our 24th anniversary in 2020. And what a remarkable year that it was!

As always, it is important to look beyond the mere numbers to understand that in spite of absolutely unprecedented circumstances, we never stopped providing the authentic nature-based experiences so important to our understanding and appreciation of the Northwoods. While COVID-19 brought about the unfortunate demise of many non-profits across the Northwoods and the United States, the North Lakeland Discovery Center and it's amazingly talented staff pivoted almost on a dime to reinvent ourselves as a digital presence with "Discover at Home", "Discover on Demand", and individual school-based online interactions. Staff continued to work remotely, and people around the globe discovered that although they might live, for example, in New Zealand, that they could still appreciate wonderful information about Wisconsin Loons (true story).

Our many volunteers also adapted to still help us as they could. We reviewed all of our programs on a monthly basis to determine what programs we could safely offer in light of COVID-19 safety protocols. In this fashion we could still conduct socially distant masked snowshoe hikes, and then eventually maskless canoe trips and hikes that we have gradually been able to return to this summer. And our trails and "Nature Playscape" have received record attendance, roughly a 30% increase. So we remained a vital service and opportunity for our members and the community throughout the pandemic, just as we were reminded what an important role nature plays in our quality of life.

As fate happens, for all appropriate reasons we had two vacancies develop in our staff just as COVID-19 arrived, and we were in retrospect wise to pause in their rehiring. It was very hard, but the staff and I all stepped up to the plate to help cover those lost workers' duties. That crucial savings, along with receiving a forgivable \$95,000 federal Paycheck Protection Program



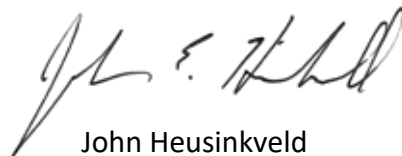


LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR *CONTINUED*

(PPP) loan (plus a second \$80,000 in the following fiscal year), plus winning a competitive State of Wisconsin Cultural grant of \$44,000 signifying our importance historically and within the community, allowed us to withstand the estimated \$154,000 revenue loss in programs, grants, and facilities we incurred from COVID-19. We were even able to place some funds back into our reserve account, leaving the most healthy reserve balance in our history.

COVID-19 also coincided with the Capital Campaign we had but recently embarked upon to realize an all-season, winterized facility, bathrooms between cabins, and a brand-new nature center to help us better achieve our mission. As COVID-19 shut down many campaigns across the county, our members realized what an important measure this represented and stepped up with amazing and generous support. We have had to make an adjustment to the original budget based on the effect COVID-19 has had on construction prices, but we are just around the corner from having fully realized our financial goals to complete this dream. The lodge and meeting room are almost completely renovated already, and our total dream will be realized by the end of 2022.

So, we emerged healthy and strong from the most serious threat we could have faced. And we could not have done so without the outpouring of support from our community and our members. We are new and improved with exciting programs and growth to come. We are in this with you, and for you, together. Thanks for all you have done to make us who we are. We are your Northwoods nature center.



John Heusinkveld





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Sara Muender and Tom Folsom
Lawrence and Joni Petrillo

IN HONOR OF
Brenda and Doug Arndt
Cindy and Chris Wills
Carol and Richard Phillips
James McGinness



ENDOWMENTS

The Discovery Center and our generous donors created four endowments in 2020:

- **Dorothy Rose Baker Endowment Supporting NLDC Citizen Science**
- **NLDC Endowment**
- **The Ilg Endowment Supporting Youth Environmental Education**
- **Tom and Barbara Olson Endowment in Support of NLDC Nature Education**

Our endowments are managed by the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin: wisconservation.org, a Wisconsin nonprofit specializing in providing support to Wisconsin-based nature and conservancy non-profits.

You can establish an endowment or contribute to an existing endowment to provide permanent support of Discovery Center work important to you. An endowment is a gift that is invested for long term growth and earnings. The earnings permit annual distributions that are directed each year to whatever aspect of Discovery Center you have named in your endowment. Endowments can be set up to support any activity within the mission of the Discovery Center. The amount necessary to establish a named endowment is \$15,000.

Please contact Executive Director John Heusinkveld for more information or to start your own endowment fund.





VOLUNTEERS *IN 2020*

Colonel John Aldridge
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 Becky Arndt
 Mike Bartling
 Barb Bartling
 Ann Benn
 Eric Benn
 Carla Biwan
 Jim Blum
 Jim Bokern
 Emily Bokern
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**THANK YOU
 VOLUNTEERS!**



DISCOVERY CENTER WATER PROGRAM

The Water Program serves as a pinnacle resource in Vilas County for aquatic invasive species (AIS) monitoring, education, and management. NLDC partners with the lake associations of Manitowish Waters, Big Lake, Presque Isle Lake, and Van Vliet Lake, as well as the Winchester Town Lakes Committee, and Towns of Manitowish Waters, Boulder Junction, and Winchester. Together, we fight the introduction, establishment, and spread of AIS in western Vilas County.

AIS MONITORING

Our Water Team (about 150 volunteers, 1 seasonal assistant in 2020, and one water program coordinator) works to monitor over 25 lakes in Vilas County, as well as several wetlands and sections of rivers.

NLDC also coordinates the Town Aquatic Invasive Species Partnership, which consists of the NLDC, the Winchester Town Lakes Committee, the Manitowish Waters Lakes Association, and the Towns of Manitowish Waters, Winchester, and Boulder Junction.

YELLOW IRIS REMOVAL PROJECT

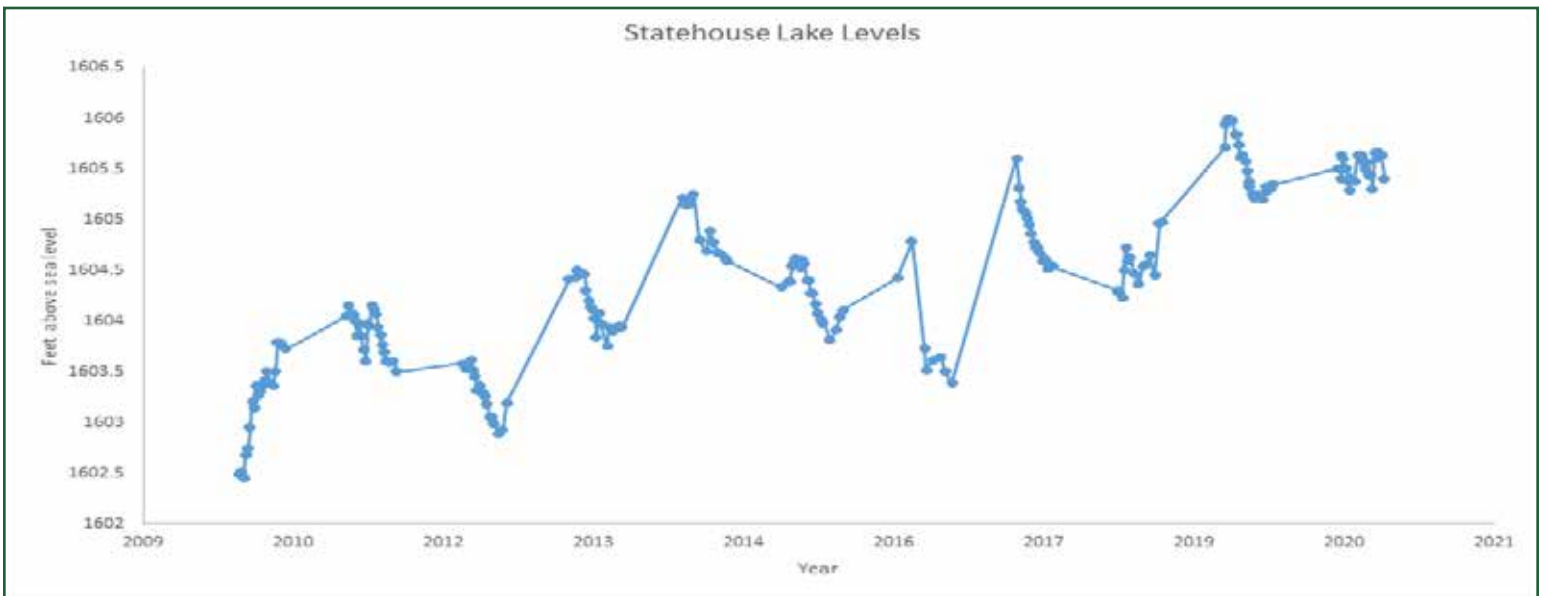
Yellow iris is considered an invasive species because it disrupts native vegetation and can even dry up wetlands. Originally from the Eurasian continent, gardeners brought yellow iris to America for its beauty, but it quickly began to dominate surrounding wetlands. The removal of this invasive species is important to allow native vegetation to re-establish on the shoreline.

Yellow iris is especially widespread on the Turtle Chain of Lakes in Winchester. In 2020, we partnered



with the Turtle Lakes Chain Association to contact thirty property owners who had yellow iris growing on their shorelines and received return postcard responses from twenty-five, an 83% response rate. Eight of the respondents indicated that they would remove the Iris themselves while seventeen owners requested assistance in removal of the plants.

The process began on 6/10/2020 and was completed on 8/7/2020. Days that our seasonal assistant Jarod was on the water actively removing the iris were sprinkled throughout the summer, but the project took 61 hours to complete. Jarod removed thousands of pounds of yellow iris.



DISCOVERY CENTER WATER PROGRAM *CONTINUED*

The most challenging portion of the removal process was ensuring the entire rhizome was removed from the soil to reduce the probability of resprouting in the future. Yellow iris grows by sending out a thick red/orange rhizome into the soil, and multiple plants sprout off a single rhizome.

LAKE LEVELS

Since 2010, the North Lakeland Discovery Center (NLDC) has coordinated a lake level monitoring project on 22 lakes in Vilas County. The project formed as a partnership between UW Trout Lake Station, the Wisconsin DNR, and NLDC after concerned citizens and scientists began noticing very low lake levels around 2008 in northern Wisconsin. Our program collects long-term data required to compare how different lake types respond to precipitation events spatially and temporally.

Most of the lakes we monitor here in Vilas County are in Winchester and Presque Isle, but we do have a

few “out east” in Phelps. We have big lakes (maximum 1,165 acres) and small lakes (minimum 21 acres), seepage lakes and drainage/drained lakes, lakes with and without public landings, and deep lakes (maximum max depth 105 feet) and shallow lakes (minimum max depth 16 feet). Each lake has a citizen scientist volunteer to record the lake level weekly during the ice free season.

Our volunteers also share their lake level data with their lake associations for discussion. Lake monitoring enhances volunteers’ knowledge of their lake, and often encourages participation in other citizen science programs such as water clarity and chemistry, loon activity, and aquatic invasive species monitoring. This connection of people to the nature world is invaluable to the program, as well as the ecology of the entire region. In this way, we believe this program is not only an asset to scientific research, but also a fabulous avenue to spread our mission of connecting people to the natural world.

This year we partnered with the DNR and researchers with UW Trout Lake Station to install an evaporation pan (measures how much water evaporates from the lake every 30 minutes), a lake level sensor (measures change in lake level every 30 minutes), and a rain gauge.

- Statehouse Lake received about 550mm (21.7in) of rain from 6/2-10/5
- About 250mm (45%) of that evaporated
- About 250mm (45%) of that seeped out of the lake into the groundwater
- About 50mm (10%) stayed in the lake and appeared as an increase in lake water level

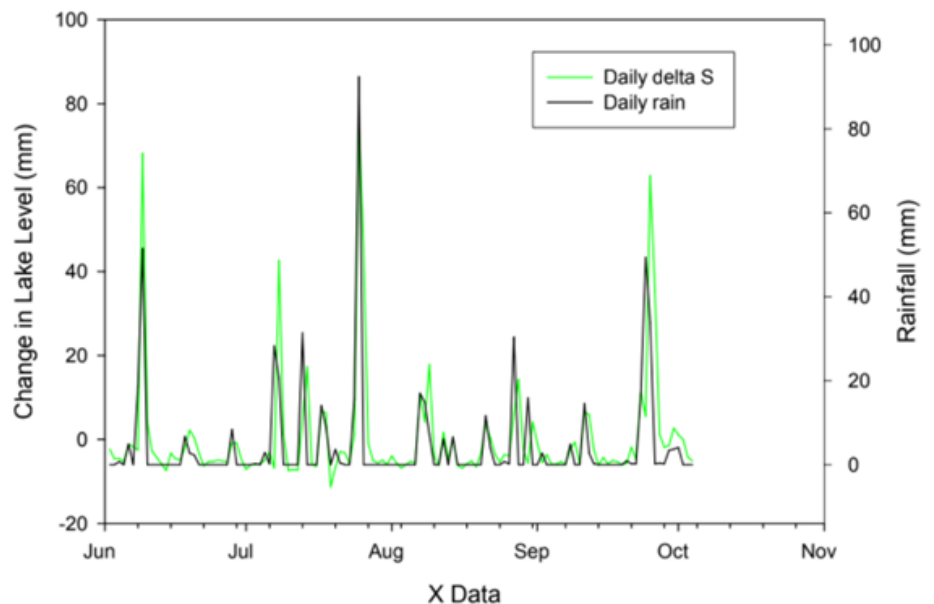
So, 10% of the precipitation that came into Statehouse Lake between 6/2 and 10/5 stayed in the lake. The remaining 90% seeped out or evaporated. They also found that more water flowed out than in. Which could indicate that we are sitting above the water table. Make sense? Because, gravity.



DISCOVERY CENTER WATER PROGRAM *CONTINUED*

The lake responds quickly to rain storms (typical of a seepage lake), but sometimes the water level rises more than the rainfall amount. That could indicate a secondary source of water into the lake during rainstorms (groundwater, if the water table raised), or maybe from the bog. When rain stops, the level quickly declines due to evaporation and seepage. It's a dynamic little system!

Here's a fun graph. Delta S is change in lake stage aka change in lake level (green line) as it responds to daily rain (black line).



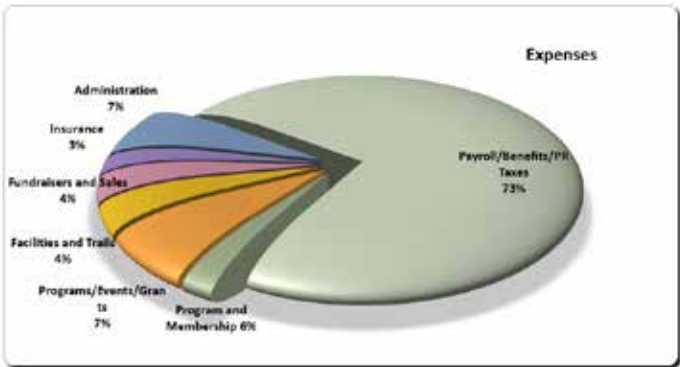
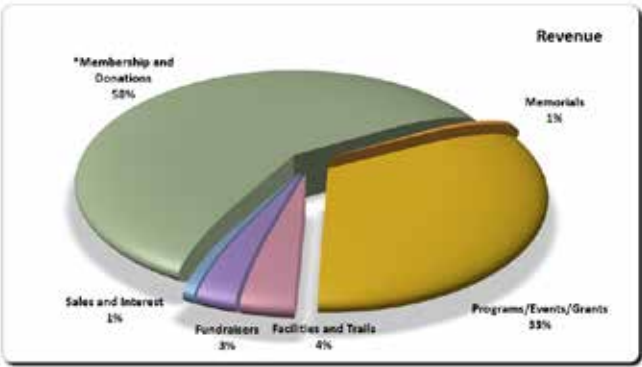
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Nature Nook Discovery Guide
- Education and Programming Assistance
- Office Assistance
- Clean Boats Clean Waters
- Fundraising and Event Assistance
- Grounds and Maintenance
 - Lawn cleanup and grass seeding
 - Garden work
 - Flower planting
 - Painting
 - Playscape maintenance
- Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring
- Lake Level Monitoring
- Citizen Science



FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020 OPERATIONS INCOME AND EXPENSE *10-01-2019 to 09-30-2020*

Revenue in fiscal year 2019/20 was strongly impacted by COVID-19. However, our financials have emerged brighter than these numbers indicate. For example, not reflected in Revenue is a \$95k Federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan that was forgiven after the close of the fiscal year.



Revenue

Membership and Donations	\$312,058
Programs/Events/Grants	\$177,117
Facilities and Trails	\$20,355
Fundraisers	\$15,362
Sales and Interest	\$4,750
Memorials	\$3,770
Total	\$533,412

Expenses

Payroll/Benefits/Payroll Taxes	\$399,919
Programs/Events/Grants	\$40,323
Administration	\$36,349
Facilities and Trails	\$22,189
Fundraisers and Sales	\$19,760
Insurance	\$13,719
Program and Membership	\$13,201
Total	\$545,460

AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS



The Discovery Center Bird Club maintains the Discovery Center Birding Trail, consisting of unique bird species signs set along the Discovery Center's 12-mile trail system, along with a map and habitat descriptions. Bird Club exists to connect people to birds and birding.

Bird Club Outings

- Weekly bird hikes throughout Vilas, Oneida, and Iron Counties
- Day trips to Ashland, Wausau, and Birds in Art at Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum
- Field trip to Sax-Zim Bog in Toivola, Minnesota

Bird Club Supports

- Northwoods Birding Festival
- Annual Midwest Crane Count
- Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas II
- Kirtland Warbler Research Project
- Minocqua and Manitowish Waters Christmas Bird Counts
- Great Wisconsin Birdathon
- Discovery Center Big Event
- Bird Feeding Station
- Birding Trail
- Several local and state wildlife and conservation efforts

For more information about the Bird Club please contact the Discovery Center.



- The Van Vliet Hemlocks State Natural Area seems to be getting increased use during the past year. It is certainly a great place to safely get out and about and see some of the great wooded terrain and shoreline that makes the North Lakeland area so appealing.
- New signage has been installed on the West Unit to welcome visitors. It appears that more use is occurring from apparent foot traffic on the trails.
- A potential risk is the likely opening of Presque Isle Township roads to ATV/UTV traffic. Signs have been installed at key locations indicating that ATVs and UTVs are prohibited.
- We continue to sponsor Discovery Center naturalist-led field trips for adults and school children at the Van Vliet Hemlocks. These are well attended.
- DNR is continuing its efforts in managing the hemp nettle invasives.

We thank our supporters for their continued efforts to keep our organization strong.