



Meeting minutes

Project name: Lake Wausau Annual Wildlife Coordination Meeting, Article 408 Client: Domtar

Project location: Rothschild, Wisconsin Mead & Hunt manager: Perry Rossa

Project number: R2308500-140188.01 Mead & Hunt phone: (414) 935-4255

Date: March 10, 2014

Attendees

Kate Srozinski
 Ken Srozinski
 Dan Belter
 Courtney Schaefer
 Jennifer Felch
 Kathy Collins
 Becky Cushman
 Perry Rossa

Representing

Wausau Bird Club
 Wausau Bird Club
 Wausau Bird Club
 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
 Domtar
 Domtar
 Domtar
 Mead & Hunt, Inc. (Mead & Hunt)

The attached report represents this writer's interpretation of items discussed during the meeting. Any corrections or additional information should be brought to our attention for clarification.

Items discussed were as follows:

The meeting began with introductions as Kathy and Becky are new to Domtar. Perry followed with a short remembrance of Noel Cutwright, Emeritus Scientist and Ornithologist for WE Engergies, who passed away last year. He was a leading light in avian science for the region for many years and will be missed dearly.

Action items from 2013 were gone over. The WilKil staff who control pigeons were not willing to discuss purchase of trapped pigeons by the DNR. They did not return phone calls from Courtney. Kathy observed that they probably do not want to get involved due to the sensitive nature of animal trapping. Regarding a possible heron rookery north of Brokaw, Courtney said the DNR pilot did try to look during the spring eagle flight, but nothing was found. Courtney was able to get wild rice information and a contact in GLIFWC (Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission) to Russ Graveen of the Lake Wausau Association. There has been no word from Russ about the completion of the Lake Wausau aquatic plant survey. He was to attend the meeting today with results – Perry said he will follow up with Russ to determine the status or availability of the study.

The status of the wildlife enhancements was reviewed. Dan observed one female martin checking out the martin houses at DC Everest Park, although there was no nesting. The Wausau Bird Club is continuing to maintain the houses – there are 2, each with 12 nest compartments. Dan and Kate said it was just a matter of time and that we should continue to be patient. This has been the first sighting of a martin at the bird houses. It is not unusual for several years to pass before houses are used by martins.

The osprey platform near the Highway N bridge is still stable and level. Two osprey chicks were fledged from the nest in 2013.

Courtney passed out copies of heron and bald eagle/osprey survey data. The heron rookery on the island near the Highway N bridge increased sharply to 181 nests, reversing a seven-year decline. Last year, the rookery had 130 nests. There are still plenty of good live trees, so the rookery still has a good future. Regarding osprey in the central Wisconsin counties, the Wausau area had 7 nests, but there were no flights on nesting success of osprey. The 7 nests are down slightly from the 5-year central Wisconsin average. Statewide, the osprey population is up. Courtney e-mailed the final draft of the 2013 bald eagle and osprey report to Perry; he will distribute with the meeting minutes. *(Note: The survey found 1,344 occupied eagle nests and 535 occupied osprey nests, both of which were record highs in the state).* In our central Wisconsin area, 27 of the 38 recorded nests were successful, fledging a total of 38 chicks. This is a remarkably good 77% success rate. There are 14 eagle nesting territories in Marathon County.

Courtney took the opportunity to discuss two lake-related events of note around Wausau. The first is the upcoming Schofield Dam drawdown, which will start on June 1. The reservoir is being drawdown to facilitate dam repairs; the drawdown will be at a rate of 6 inches per day until a 5-foot drawdown level is reached. Lake level will be restored by September 1, well in time for the fall bird migration. Courtney hopes that the drawdown may help control shoreline loosestrife by drying them out, and she may attempt some milfoil control during the drawdown. The second event is the May 9 Wisconsin River Clean-Up Day. This is the 15th annual exercise of this event. It is coordinated by Marathon County, with the help of businesses and organizations, including Domtar. Last year, over two tons of trash was removed from the river. Perry will distribute electronic copies of the Schofield Dam drawdown letter and the WI River Cleanup notice with the meeting minutes.

Regarding Lake Wausau wild rice, Courtney noted that a few thin populations of rice persist around the lake. She has been unable to secure funding from wild rice programs for more seeding, due to money being allocated to higher priority sites.

The discussion returned to Lake Wausau bird life. Dan noted that the Schofield Island eagle nest is still active, although no chicks were produced there in 2013. There are 3 osprey nests in the area – our Highway N area platform, and nests in the downtown area and near Western Avenue. Dan passed out copies of an extensive, illustrated report on migratory birds on the lake and discussed some stand-out observations. The photos in the report were taken by digital camera attached to his spotting scope. The Arctic Tern was sighted, which is rare in the interior of North America. The tern stayed for 3 hours on the lake; it was the 30th sighting recorded in Wisconsin. Regarding waterfowl, the spring migration was fantastic last year due to the late ice break-up that caused waterfowl to linger in more southern waters of the state. The migration peaked around April 22-24. Surf- and White-winged Scoters and Long-tailed Ducks were noted. Dan saw 22 Grebes, the highest number he's ever seen on the lake. This included Red-necked Grebes, which are state-listed. White Pelicans were also seen, probably passing through to nesting areas in Green Bay, and he saw a Great Egret, which stayed only 1 day. Willets were observed, only the third Wisconsin county they have been sighted in. These are long-billed shorebirds and ours are probably the prairie race. They are more usually seen in Lake Michigan counties or Dane County. Dan also noted a Ruddy Turnstone, which nests within the Arctic Circle.

Dan concluded his summary with the Herring Gulls he saw nesting on one of the rocky islands just north of the dam. He wasn't able to determine nesting success, but was surprised by the occurrence. As these islands are seldom-visited, it may be that the gull nesting is an annual occurrence. Perry noted the very large cumulative numbers of colonial waterbirds (ducks, herons, shorebirds, gulls, tern, etc.) that Dan had summarized in the report. It appears to him that Lake Wausau may be very attractive to this guild because it has a high shoreline length to lake area ratio, as well as extensive shallows for foraging. The Madison area lakes generally do not experience the diversity or numbers of migratory waterbirds because they are rather circular in comparison and much deeper.

The meeting ended with lunch provided by Domtar. Perry will contact Russ Graveen regarding the Lake Wausau aquatic plant study and will distribute minutes with wildlife data and DNR handouts via e-mail soon.

Respectfully submitted,

MEAD & HUNT, Inc.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Perry Rossa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Perry" being more prominent than the last name "Rossa".

Perry Rossa, P.H.
Project Scientist

cc: To all attendees