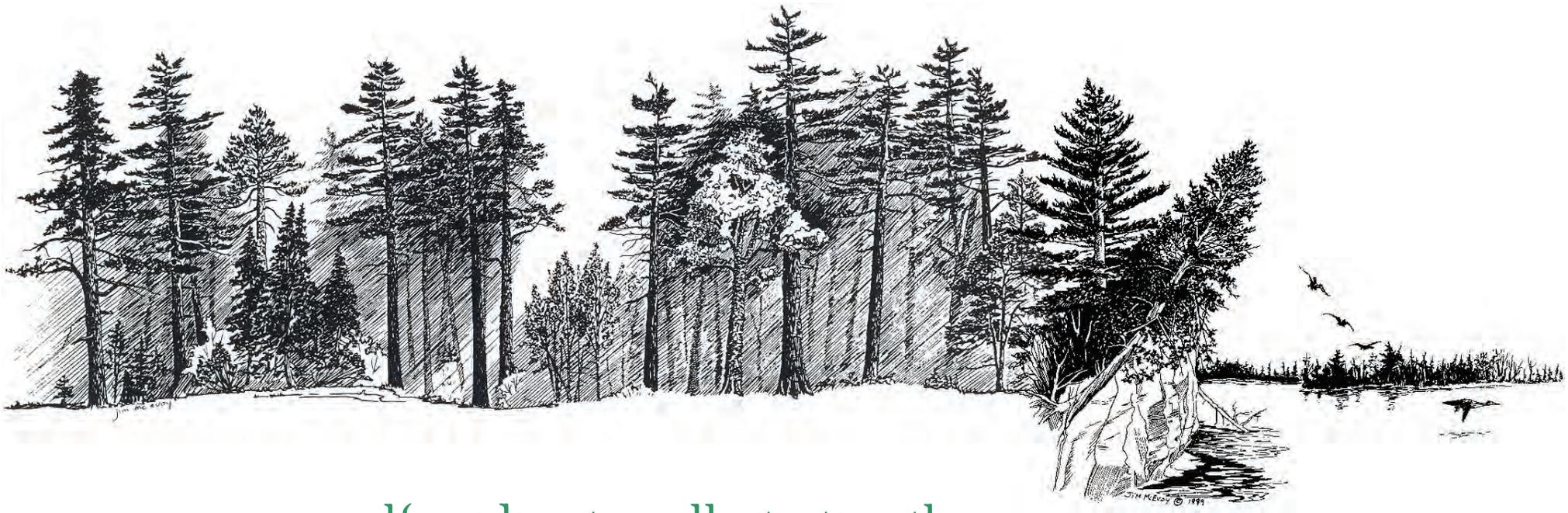
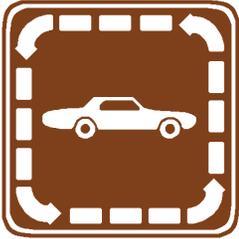


# Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area Auto Tour



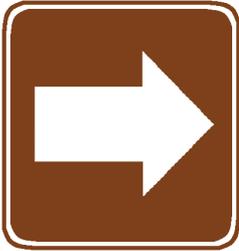
. . . a self guiding tour illustrating the interactions of humans with our native flora and fauna.

# Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area Auto Tour

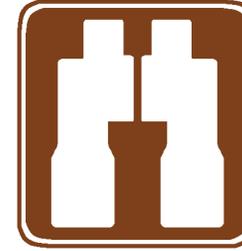


This tour will give you a glimpse of the spectacular resources of the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area. Management programs that will insure the future of these resources are explained. The tour is twenty-four miles long and has fifteen stops.

Tour directions are given in shaded boxes in this guide and a tour map is located on the next page. All stops are identified by a brown “auto tour” logo and a number. Departures from the main roadway are clearly marked with similar signs and arrows. If you have a camera or binoculars bring them along.



**To begin the tour proceed north of Mercer 1.2 miles on U.S. Highway 51 to County Highway FF. Turn left onto County Highway FF and proceed 0.9 miles to Popko Circle East. Turn left onto this paved town road and proceed 1.2 miles to Joe Shack’s Road. Turn left on this roadway 0.8 miles and follow the additional arrowed signs to a spectacular vista!**



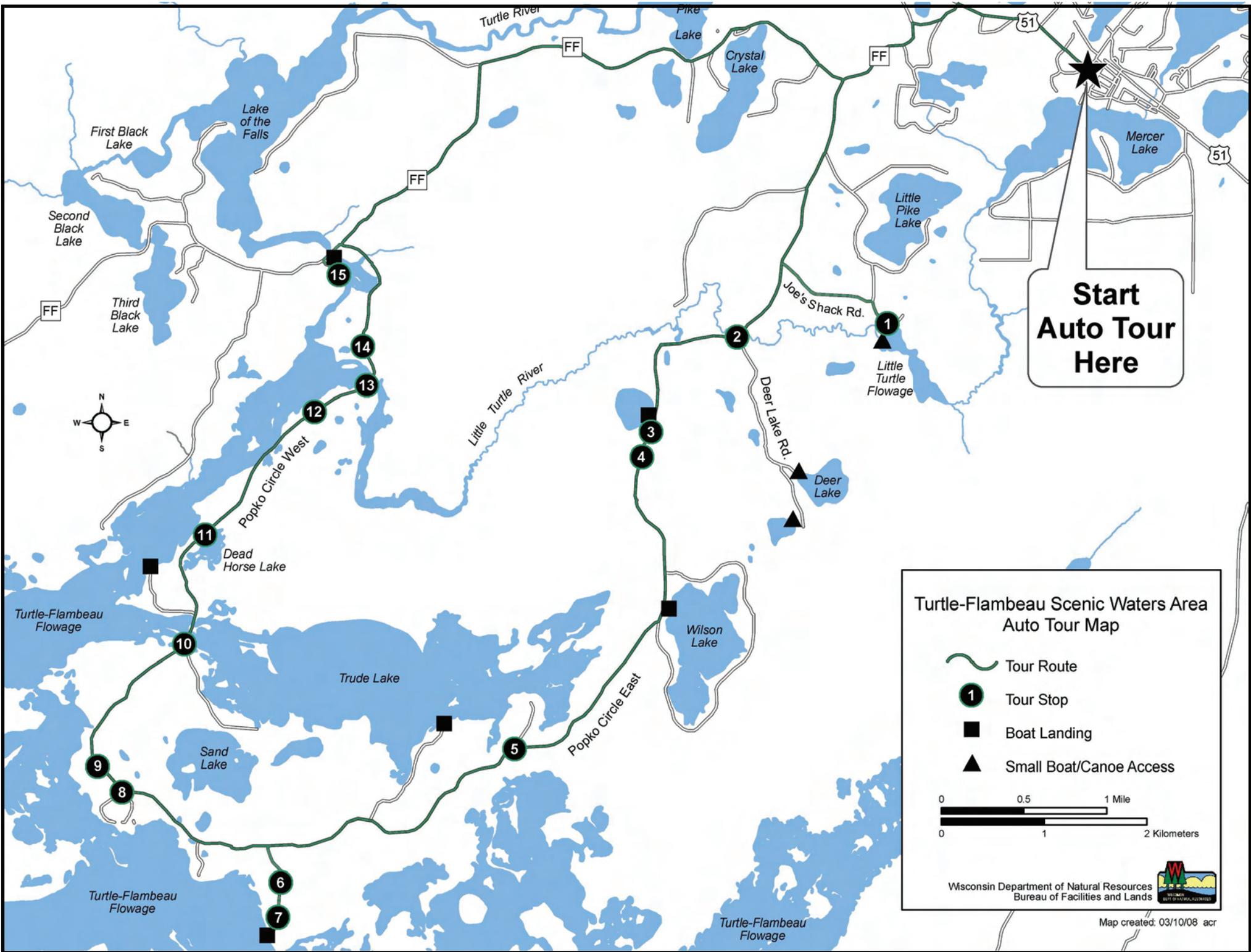
The brown binocular logo you see at some locations along this tour route denotes that it is part of the Wisconsin Watchable Wildlife Program. The Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area is one of the 76 premier viewing sites across Wisconsin that are featured in the Wisconsin Wildlife Viewing Guide.

*The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.*

*This publication is available in alternate format (large print, Braille, audiotape, etc.) upon request. Please call 608-266-2135 for more information.*



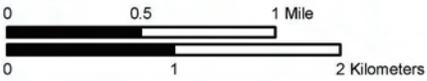
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Facilities and Lands  
PUBL-LF-016 2008



**Start  
Auto Tour  
Here**

**Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area Auto Tour Map**

-  Tour Route
-  1 Tour Stop
-  Boat Landing
-  Small Boat/Canoe Access



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Facilities and Lands



Map created: 03/10/08 acr

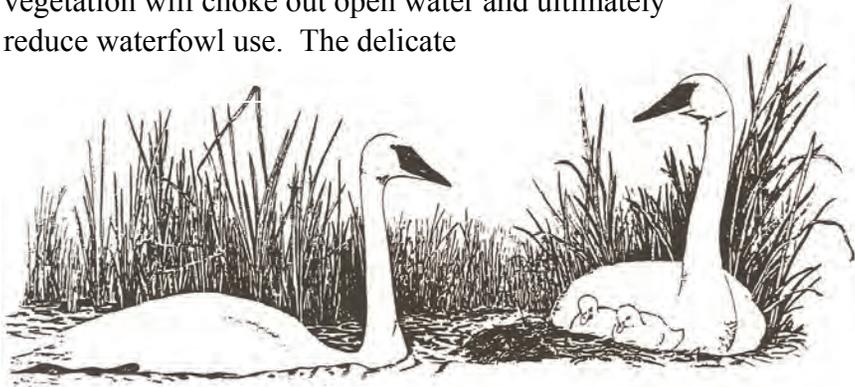
# 1

## Little Turtle Waterfowl Management Area

This is the Little Turtle Waterfowl Management Area, which includes over 350 acres of water, 450 acres of wetlands and 80 acres of open grasslands; the balance of this 1100 acre special management unit is upland forest. The area is managed for waterfowl, grassland birds, and forest wildlife. The main 260-acre impoundment is the Little Turtle Flowage in front of you. A smaller sub-impoundment is to your immediate left. In addition, 65 small ponds are scattered throughout the area to attract breeding ducks and geese.

Periodically, the main flowage is drained for durations up to one-half year, exposing the mud flats to encourage vegetative growth. The smaller ponds provide habitat for waterfowl during these drawdowns.

The flowage was constructed to increase waterfowl populations by maintaining a balance of shallow water and wetland plants. Wild rice, cattails and other emergents provide excellent cover and forage habitat for both young and adult waterfowl. Too much vegetation will choke out open water and ultimately reduce waterfowl use. The delicate



“balance” is maintained by another inhabitant of the area that eats cattail, the muskrat!

Twenty five nest boxes were put up for cavity nesting wildlife, primarily wood ducks and mergansers. In some years American kestrels and tree swallows have used the boxes. Osprey and bald eagles have nested on man-made platforms on the flowage.

When developed, the Little Turtle Flowage was designated as a high priority site in northwestern Wisconsin for the restoration of giant Canada geese. The flowage was stocked with goslings for four consecutive years. These young birds imprinted on this site and as adults, return to nest in the area.

Trumpeter swans have found the Little Turtle Flowage and now raise a brood of cygnets here every year. These large white birds can be hard to see when hiding in vegetation.

Upland areas adjacent to water have been cleared of trees, and controlled burning discourages regrowth of woody vegetation. We do this to keep the flowage area vegetated with grasses and sedges—good nesting habitat for ducks and certain songbirds. Timbered lands away from the water are being managed for forest wildlife through aspen management and grassy openings development and maintenance. Wild turkeys now nest in the grasslands and forest edges around the Little Turtle Flowage.

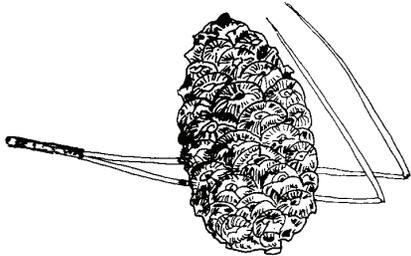
**Return to the paved road, turn left and drive 0.6 miles to the next gravel town road (Deer Lake Road) on your left just past the creek. Turn left on Deer Lake Road and you will immediately see stop number 2 on your right.**

# 2

## Red Pine Plantation

Notice the red, platy bark of these trees; hence the name red pine. Red pines are also identified by their 4-inch long needles which attach to the stem in pairs.

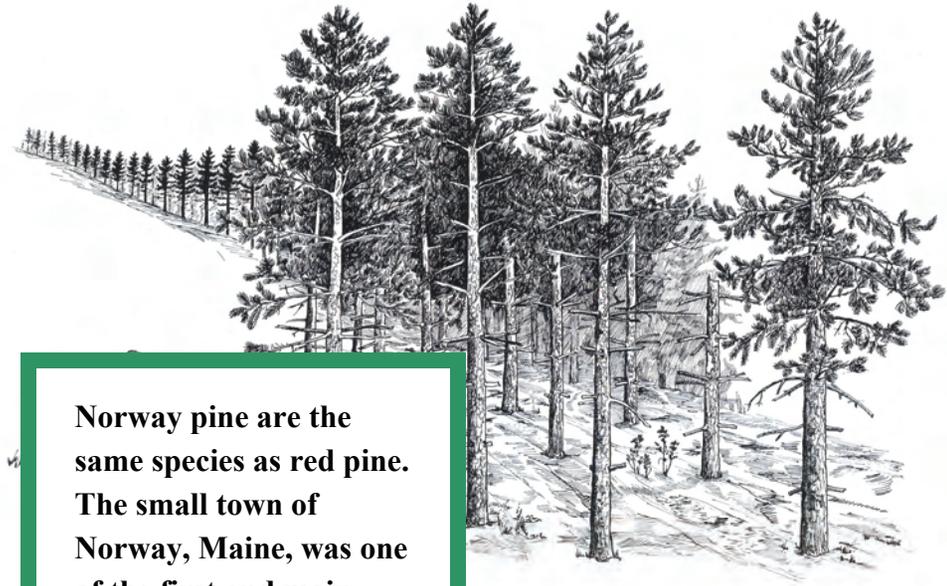
This red pine stand was planted in 1939 with the objective of producing high quality knot-free lumber. While a red pine in the open can distribute its life energy to limbs as well as the main stem, the closely set “plantation pine” puts its growth into the trunk. This produces a tall, straight, unbranched tree—ideal for sawtimber.



This plantation was selectively thinned in 1979 and again in 2008, removing approximately two out of every five trees. Thinning establishes equal spacing among remaining trees, and allows more room for growth.

Thinning also allows more sunlight to reach the forest floor. This stimulates growth of shrubs and other ground plants, improving the site for forest wildlife.

These trees will be selectively thinned two more times before reaching maturity. Since growth in red pine slows down after age 90, all remaining trees will be cut in the year 2030. At that time, planted red pine seedlings will begin the cycle over again.



**Norway pine are the same species as red pine. The small town of Norway, Maine, was one of the first and main exporters of red pine sawlogs, and red pines were often referred to as “Norway Pine”.**

Naturally occurring red pine are only found where sunlight reaches the forest floor. In our original virgin forests red pine were sparse and widely scattered; but some trees sure were big!

**Return to the main road, turn left, and continue 1.2 miles to stop number 3 on your right.**

# 3

## Bog Habitat

Bogs are a unique wetland habitat that is common in Iron County. Bogs form as open wetlands fill in with floating vegetation that prefers acidic and anaerobic (low oxygen) growing conditions. These plants are closely related to arctic plants and got their start in Iron County as the glaciers receded thousands of years ago. Bogs tend to be low areas that act as a sink for cold air. Frost can occur any month of the year, limiting the species that will grow in a bog.

This bog is relatively dry and you can usually walk around in it without getting too wet. Jump in and find out for yourself. Blueberries are common. You might find some wild cranberries. The hummocks are a combination of sphagnum moss, leatherleaf, Labrador tea, bog laurel, and sedges. This bog also has cotton grass that is visible from the road. Pitcher plants and sundews, both carnivorous plants, should be present but may be hard to find.

The sparse trees you see are mostly slow-growing black spruce and tamarack. Because this bog is relatively dry, there are other tree species in it, including several birch trees near the road. As bogs “age” more trees will establish themselves and eventually a bog forest occurs. From that standpoint, this is a young bog.

Wildlife that like open areas will use bogs. Sandhill cranes will nest here. Berry-eaters will visit bogs when the blueberries or cranberries are ripe. Few amphibians can tolerate the acidic water of a bog but you may find mink frogs here. Arctic shrews will occur here. They feed on insects, snails, and earthworms. The southern bog lemming probably exists here, being another tie to the arctic. Hawks and owls hunt bogs for prey. The open

characteristic of the bog aids the raptors in spotting their prey. The great gray owl, sometimes called the ghost of the north, occasionally comes south from the tundra when food is scarce and will use our bogs in the winter. As bogs fill in with trees, species like black-backed woodpeckers will move in.

Look closely at each hummock and you will see a tiny plant community separate from other hummocks. Micro-climate differences between hummock and other areas of the bog will cause different plant communities to develop.



**Continue on Popko Circle for 0.2 miles to stop number 4. Watch for the sign in a small open area on your left.**

# 4

## Aspen Management

Aspen (commonly referred to as “popple”) is identified by its green or yellowish-green, somewhat smooth bark.. If you pick a leaf, notice its triangular shape and its flat petiole (leaf stem). This flat petiole causes the leaves to shake even in the slightest breeze.



Aspen is a prolific seed producer, which makes it a valuable “pioneer” tree. Many of today's aspen stands originated from natural seeding in the aftermath of forest fires in the early 1900's. On breezy June days in good seed years, the air is often so filled with the downy seeds that it appears to be snowing.

Aspen is extremely intolerant of shade and does not survive without direct sunlight. In fact, aspen is so intolerant to shade that the leaf canopy of mature trees causes seedlings growing underneath them to die!

Proper aspen management requires the cutting of all trees in the stand. This insures a shade free environment for the best survival of the new stems or “suckers”. Growth of these suckers begins in the root system only after a disturbance to the parent trees such as

cutting or fire. It is important that aspen is harvested when mature and in good condition, so the stand can reestablish itself. If left uncut most of these aspen will be dead by their 70<sup>th</sup> year.

Following a regeneration cut (clearcut), aspen suckers can number over 30,000 per acre! The stand develops quickly, with growth of 3 feet per year for the first ten years. In 30 years, the canopy begins to open, and shade tolerant trees such as white pine, balsam fir, and red and sugar maple begin to establish themselves under the aspen. Eventually, competition will cause natural thinning until 200 or fewer aspen trees per acre are left at maturity (about age forty-five). A 150 acre aspen regeneration cut was completed here in 1972.

Dense stands of aspen suckers and saplings provide escape cover for grouse, snowshoe hare and deer. Grouse broods prefer 2 to 10 year old dense aspen. Ten to 25 year old stands are used for overwinter and breeding cover. In older aspen, catkins and buds are used for food by grouse and bear and, when within reach, by deer and hare. Leaves and twigs of young aspen are very important food for deer. Aspen is also a favorite food of beaver. Beaver will generally only eat other tree species if aspen are absent.

**Continue 2.0 miles to stop number 5. The stop is on the left side of the road. You will see a grassy opening in the woods.**

# 5

## Wildlife Openings

Wildlife openings add diversity within a mostly forested region. These grassy openings provide nutritious food in the form of grasses, sedges, and forbs early in the spring when other foods are scarce. These plants are also a preferred fall food for deer, bear, and grouse.

Insects are abundant in openings, providing food for ruffed grouse chicks, wild turkeys, other birds and snakes. Black bear feed on grubs and ants found here. Hawks and owls like to hunt for small mammals and birds in openings. Woodcock will perform their courtship flight in openings and white-tailed does often leave their fawns hidden in the grass and ferns of an opening.

Openings allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor under trees along the edge and a shrub community develops. Many of these shrubs produce berries and seed that wildlife utilize. “Edges” tend to have more species than large open or wooded areas.

Natural grass openings in a forest are created by several means including fire started by lightning, tornados, or other high wind events. Old beaver flowages that have dried up may also revegetate with a grass-sedge mix. Still other openings result from “frost pockets” where trapped cold air prevents trees and shrubs from establishing.

Nature is always trying to grow trees on our northern landscape. In the absence of natural fire we have to actively manage openings to keep them in grass. This involves periodic mowing or hand cutting to keep out woody vegetation.



**Now continue 1.7 miles to Fisherman's Landing Road. Turn left and proceed down the landing road 0.2 miles to stop number 6. Watch for the sign on your left.**

# 6

## Northern Hardwoods



Northern hardwoods include sugar maple, basswood, white ash, red oak, elms, ironwood, and birches. They occur throughout northern Wisconsin.

The young trees of this group have the ability to grow in moderate to heavy shade. Poke around a bit to see which tree species are reproducing. This way you can see what the future may hold for this stand. Surprised at the number of sugar maples patiently waiting their opportunity to reach the sky? No other tree in Wisconsin can withstand having its growth suppressed by shade like the sugar maple.

Because of the shade tolerance, we can manage northern hardwoods so that all ages are present; from seedlings to older, large diameter trees. This all-aged management practice uses selection thinning. Removing diseased trees, poorly formed trees and poor quality trees allows the remaining trees to increase their growth by limiting competition.

Selection thinning also allows seedlings an opportunity to grow, increases the quality of remaining trees and provides a valuable wood product. Selection thinning is done every 12-20 years. This stand was last thinned in 2008.



Thinning benefits wildlife as well. The young seedlings provide food for deer, and cover for small mammals and birds. Leaving 1 or 2 trees per acre

which are past maturity and in poor condition provides “snag” trees. These snag trees are necessary sites for a host of cavity nesting birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches, wood ducks, mergansers, owls and chickadees. At least 85 different species of birds benefit from the presence of snag trees! Mammals like squirrels, raccoons, black bear, chipmunks, fishers and pine marten also use hollow trees or logs for den sites.

All-aged management of northern hardwoods insures the future of the forest and forest wildlife.

**In early spring, before the leaf canopy has filled out, the floor of this forest is thick with wild flowers. Patches of the ground are literally covered with various wild flowers – a single footstep might affect up to 15 individuals and 3 or 4 species. Wood anemones, Canada mayflowers, bluebead lilies, trilliums and starflowers all race to bloom while the sun can still reach them. By mid-June, the forest floor is deep in shade, and these spring ephemerals must wait again for their brief moment in the sun – next year.**

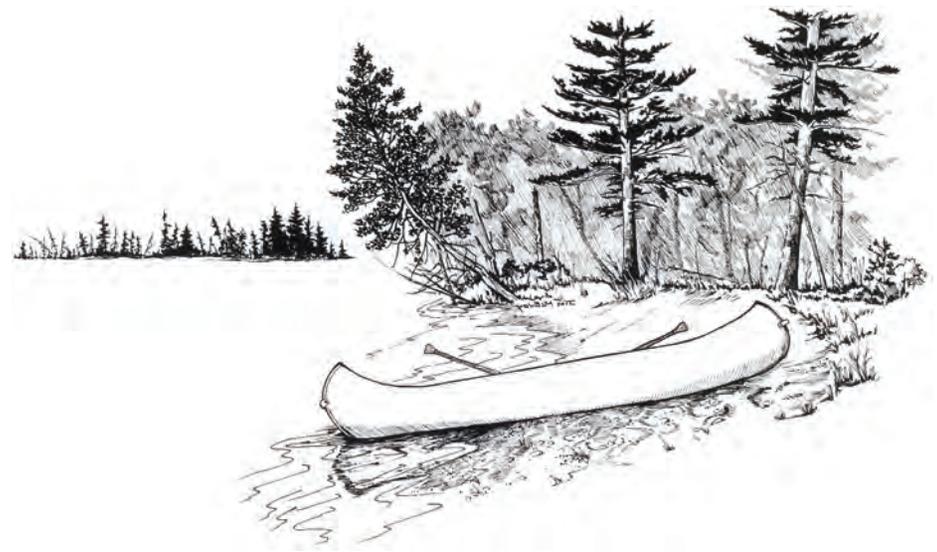
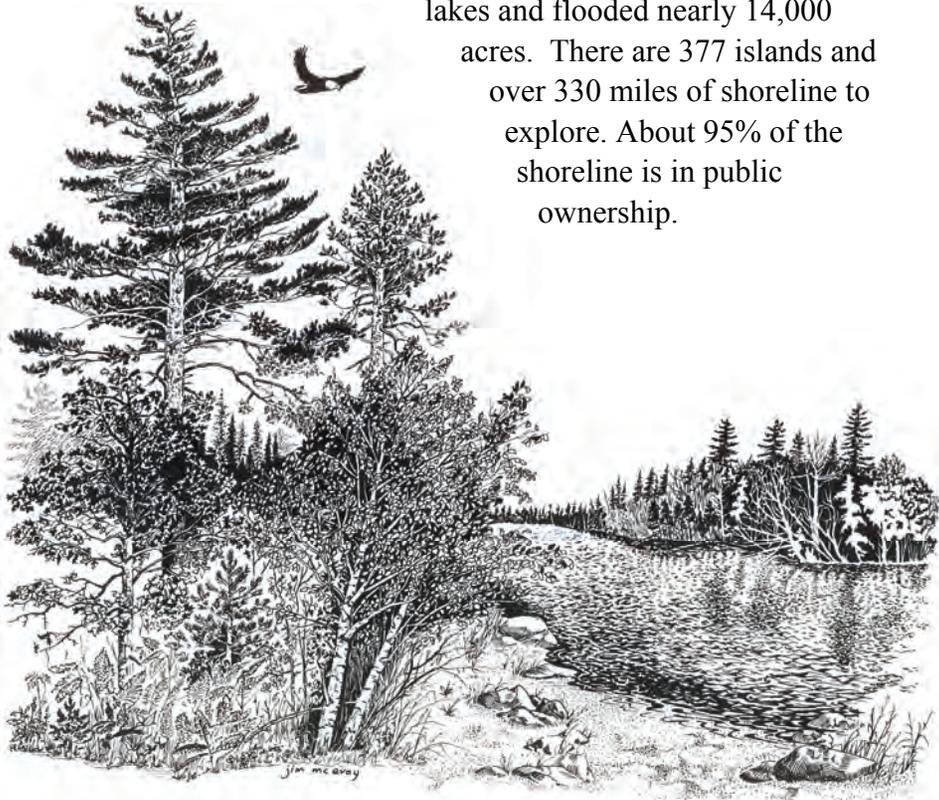
**Now continue on to the end of Fisherman’s Landing Road to the boat landing. This is stop number 7. Enjoy the view!**

# 7

## Turtle-Flambeau Flowage

This is the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage! If you have a boat, slip it into the water; venture out far enough to lose sight of the landing, and look around. You are treated to a view of nature—of wild beauty and all its splendor.

The Flowage was created in 1926 when Chippewa and Flambeau Improvement Company built a dam on the Flambeau River which topped 16 small lakes and flooded nearly 14,000 acres. There are 377 islands and over 330 miles of shoreline to explore. About 95% of the shoreline is in public ownership.



The land around the Flowage varies from level terrain to steeply rolling hills. The woodlands consist primarily of aspen, northern hardwoods and white birch. Scattered large hemlock and pine provide nesting habitat for eagles and osprey.

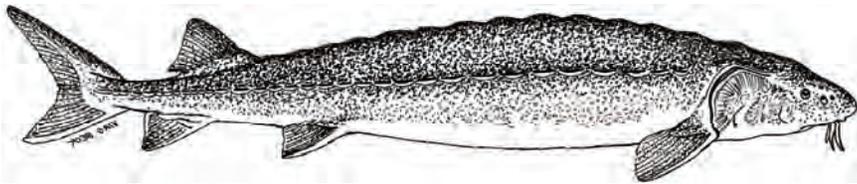
The Flowage, known for its high density of bald eagles, osprey and common loons is also home to herons, black terns, merlins, trumpeter swans and over 150 other bird species. In addition a variety of reptiles, amphibians and mammals, including deer, bear, bobcat and timber wolves are found here. There have even been occasional sightings of moose.

There are many opportunities to observe and enjoy wildlife in a remote and wild setting. Observations are best made by getting out on the water in a boat or canoe. Both season and time of day affect the kinds of wildlife you will see. Early morning and early evening are the best times to observe wildlife. Binoculars and field guides are helpful tools. Visitors are asked to approach wildlife slowly and quietly and to be particularly careful not to disturb nesting birds, or animals with small young.

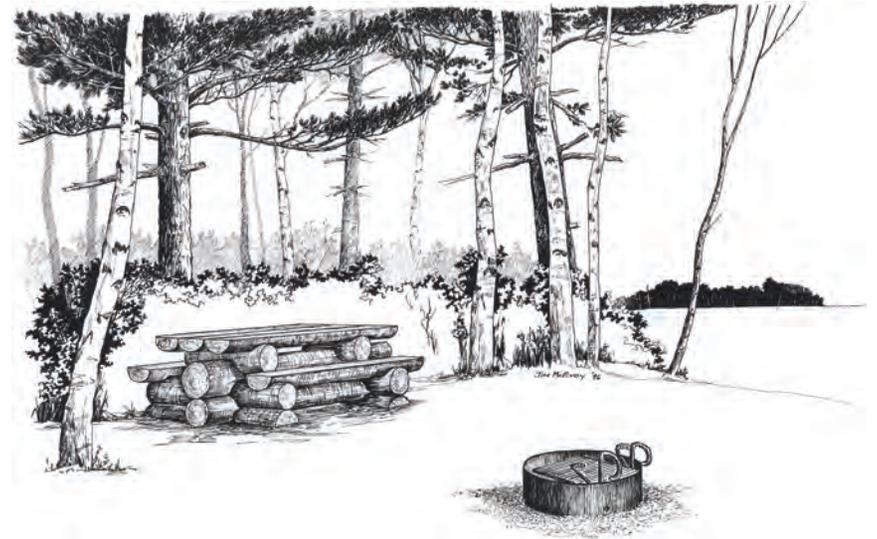
The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage also supports a diversity of native warm water fish species including walleye, muskellunge, northern pike, smallmouth and largemouth bass, lake sturgeon, black crappie, bluegill, and rock bass. Walleye are by far the most abundant gamefish and provide the majority of sport fish harvest. Muskies, smallmouth bass and panfish are also popular with anglers.

Because of its unique character and outstanding fishery potential special size and bag limits are in effect on the Flowage that will help assure its continued status as one of the best fisheries in the State. If you plan to head out fishing, please consult the Wisconsin fishing regulation pamphlet for complete regulations and observe the special regulations posted here.

The lake sturgeon is one species that experienced significant changes when the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage was constructed. Large old fish dominate the population; these fish were present before dam construction. If you are lucky you may be able to see one of these large old fish jump straight up out of the water and flop on their side with a huge splash.



Sturgeon recruitment in the Flowage most likely ended when traditional spawning areas were flooded or because the Turtle Dam blocked migration to suitable spawning areas; perhaps there are other factors such as changes in flow regimes in the system due to dam construction. Ongoing studies are looking for ways to restore natural reproduction. In the mean time stocking is being used to rebuild the population.



There are 60 designated campsites scattered on some of the islands if you want to stay and enjoy the wild setting. These remote rustic campsites are accessible by water only and are available at no charge on a first come-first serve basis. Please review the camping rules posted here if you want to take in this experience.

The trail head for the Hidden Rivers Nature Trail is off the “upper” parking lot that you passed on your left as you approached Fisherman’s Landing. If you have time to take a short hike, you can learn more about the history of the Flowage, human influences that shaped the resource you see today, and current management practices. All the interpretive signs are found along the first trail loop that is about one mile long. The second loop adds an additional mile to your hike and includes a spur out to Turtle Point where you will be treated to a spectacular view.

**Return to the paved road, turn left, and go 1.0 miles to stop number 8 at the corner of Popko Circle and Tutt Road. These lands and those at the next stop are privately owned. Please respect private property by viewing from your vehicle.**

# 8

## Eastern Hemlock Management

Eastern Hemlock is a medium sized tree, reaching a diameter of two to three feet and a height of 100 feet. Hemlock can live up to 600 years; however, the trees in this stand are between 150-200 years old.

Due to exacting requirements for seed germination, and heavy browsing by deer and rabbits, hemlock is very difficult to reproduce. Unless strict guidelines are followed and nature cooperates, logging can result in a conversion to other tree species.



Crown structure, tree height, and longevity of the stand combine to make hemlock an important species for wintering deer. The thick green tops prevent snow and wind from reaching the forest floor,

thus providing deer with easy travel and protection from the elements.

Various songbirds nest in hemlock, including the veery, black-throated blue warbler, black-throated green warbler, and the dark-eyed junco. The tiny seeds provide food for pine siskins, red and white-winged crossbills, and black-capped and boreal chickadees. In addition tree bats like the red bat will nest and roost in the bark of older hemlock trees.

Very large hemlock trees make perfect “nursery trees” for black bear. The easily climbed bark and thick branches make it easy for female bear to send their cubs up to spend the night or when danger is present.

Dead hemlock trees on the forest floor persist in various stages of decomposition for a long time. During this period, they are home to a wide variety of fungi, ferns, and lichens, due to the most, rich micro-habitat present. The decaying log also provides a nursery for young hemlock and yellow birch.

**Now proceed down Popko Circle 0.2 miles to stop number 9. You will see the sign on your right. These lands are privately owned. Please respect the land owner by viewing from your vehicle.**

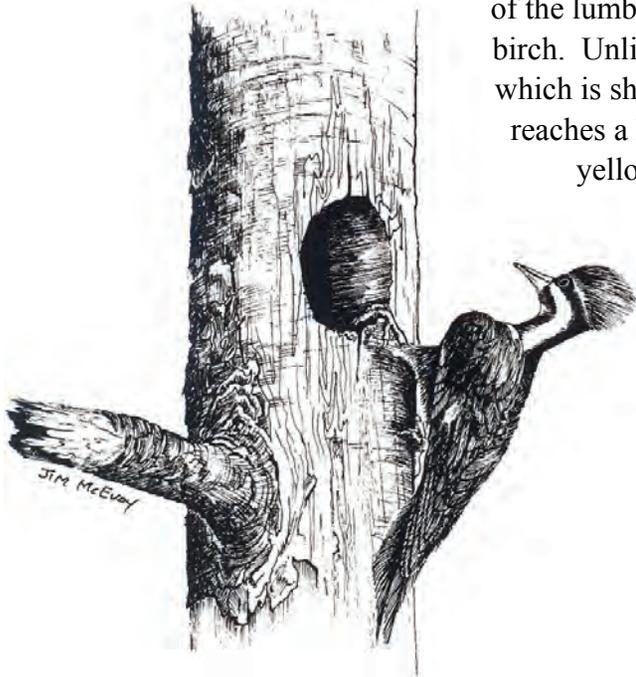
# 9

## Yellow Birch

We have two types of birch in the northwoods—yellow birch and white birch (also known as “paper birch”). Their differences are most noticeable in their bark color. Ecologically, the two birches have very different adaptations and uses.

Yellow birch is a climax species (like sugar maple, hemlock, and basswood), which means that it comes in at the end of the successional process. It is shade tolerant, and therefore, grows under the canopy of “pioneer” and “intermediate” stage trees, such as aspen and white birch.

Yellow birch is the most economically important birch. It provides  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the lumber and veneer sold as birch. Unlike white birch, which is short-lived and only reaches a height of 60 feet, yellow birch grows to 70 feet tall with a



diameter of 2 to 2 ½ feet. It reaches maturity at 120 years, and many trees live to be 300 years old!

This hemlock-yellow birch stand contains a higher percentage of hardwood than the hemlock stand at the last stop. As a result, this stand is managed for the more valuable yellow birch.

Yellow birch’s shade, soil, and moisture requirements are very similar to hemlock’s. The main difference is in the selection of trees to harvest. In this case large healthy yellow birch must be left as a seed source; Poor quality trees are removed until the required amount of shade is attained.

Management steps include: scarification of the soil; thinning to stimulate seedling production, and, subsequent thinnings to remove mature trees and allow the new trees to grow.

Yellow birch is a cavity-nesters dream! Because yellow birch grow so big and live so long, they make excellent denning sites for black bears, raccoons, porcupines, pine martins and fishers. Due to their large and branching structure near their tops they make excellent sites for large raptor nests. In the sapling stage, yellow birch is a fine winter browse for white-tailed deer.

**Continue 1.1 miles to stop number 10 at the intersection of Popko Circle and Camp Nokomis Road. A small parking area is provided at this intersection on the bank of Trude Lake. You can walk along the shoulder of Popko Circle to the culvert which forms the outlet of Trude Lake for a better view.**

# 10

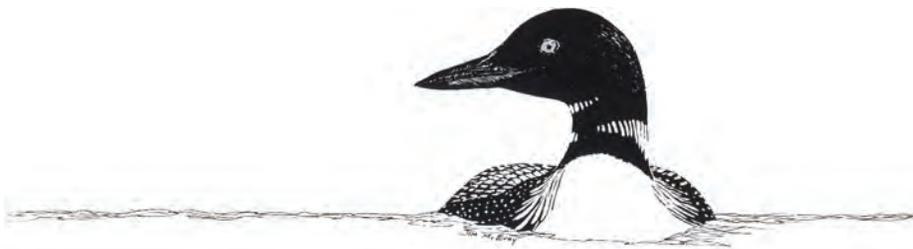
## Trude Lake

In both directions from the roadway you can see prime wildlife habitat. Low growing sedge-cattail marsh blending into upland forests and open waters is one of the most productive settings for several wildlife species. A variety of song birds, waterfowl, and furbearers, as well as several species of amphibians, reptiles, shorebirds and forest wildlife (particularly white-tailed deer and black bear) use this area.

The area is used extensively by bald eagles, osprey and common loons. On the small pine island in Trude Lake, you can see an osprey nest on the very top of a pine tree. If you are lucky and have keen eyesight, you should see common loons or bald eagles from this vantage point during the summer months.

Merlins nest in old crow nests high in pine trees along the edges of water. There are two to three pair of Merlins nesting on Trude Lake.

Eagles, ospreys, merlins and loons are unique residents of our northern landscape. Their presence characterizes the virtually undisturbed, pristine waters found in this area. Their continued



presence, although threatened throughout much of their original range, is carefully watched and probably secure in northern Wisconsin.

Management practices that will brighten their future are currently in place for these species in the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area. A 300 foot buffer strip along all shorelines, where no logging will occur, will assure future “super canopy” trees for nest sites.

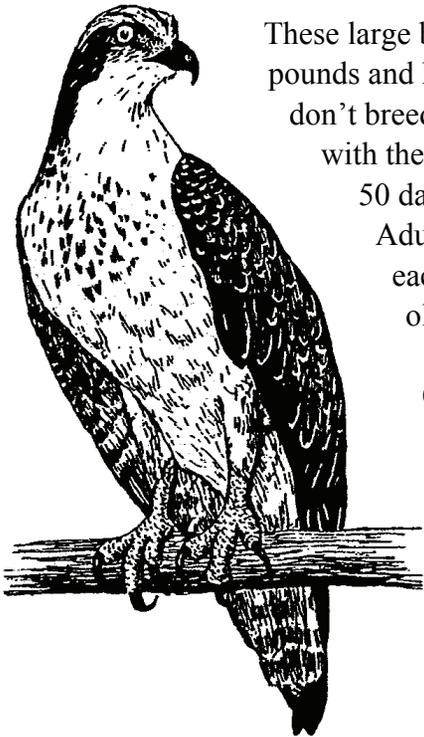
**From this point, continue 0.7 miles to stop number 11; you will see Dead Horse Lake to your right.**

# 11

## Osprey Management

If you look directly across Dead Horse Lake you will see an Osprey nest atop a pine tree on the far shore. This active nest site is on a man-made platform of lumber and metal securely fastened to the tree. It was developed as an alternate nest site for a natural nest that was severely damaged.

Tall, dead-topped trees over water, natural osprey nest sites, have virtually disappeared from the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. The platform program has been a remarkable success in securing a future for the osprey in this part of northern Wisconsin.



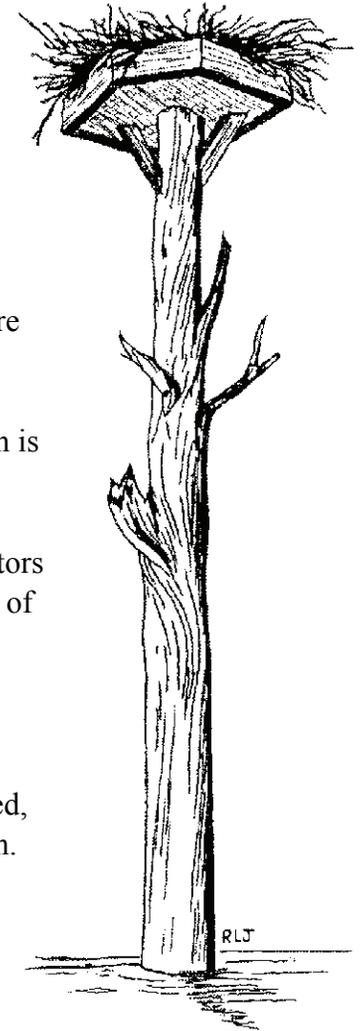
These large brown and white birds weigh 2 to 4 pounds and have a wing span of 5 feet. Osprey don't breed until they are at least 3 years old, with the female laying 2-3 eggs. Young fly 50 days or so from the time of hatching. Adults usually return to the same nest each year, and may live to be 20 years old or older.

Osprey are fish eaters, and there are few more magnificent sights than watching an osprey hover in mid-air and then dive with its wings swept back and tail feathers spread. It may hit the water feet first with a tremendous impact and even go under the water momentarily. Or it may just

skim the surface and snatch a fish with its talon-equipped feet. As it flies to a perch site or nest, it "rearranges" a fish so the head points forward to reduce air drag.

Presently, osprey are listed on the Wisconsin threatened species list, and are being watched closely. Locally, reproduction has declined the last few years; however statewide, the population is doing very well.

A last thought -- large, long-lived predators are good biological indicators. Because of their position in the food chain, their physical condition and nest success is a strong indicator of the health of our environment. Certain chemicals are "biologically magnified", or concentrated, as they work their way up the food chain. These toxins are concentrated in fatty tissues, and an osprey gets the accumulated toxins of several animals below it on the food chain. By closely watching certain predators, we can get an overall picture of the health of our resource.



**Continue on Popko Circle 0.4 miles to stop number 12 on your right. This is the Deadhorse Ruffed Grouse Management Demonstration Area.**

# 12

## Ruffed Grouse Management

Intensive wildlife management is carried out on this part of the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area to enhance the habitat for ruffed grouse and other wildlife. The emphasis is to provide a diversity of habitat types of various age classes. A relatively young, highly productive forest ecosystem is desirable for the management of ruffed grouse. Mast (acorns) and berry crops are encouraged.

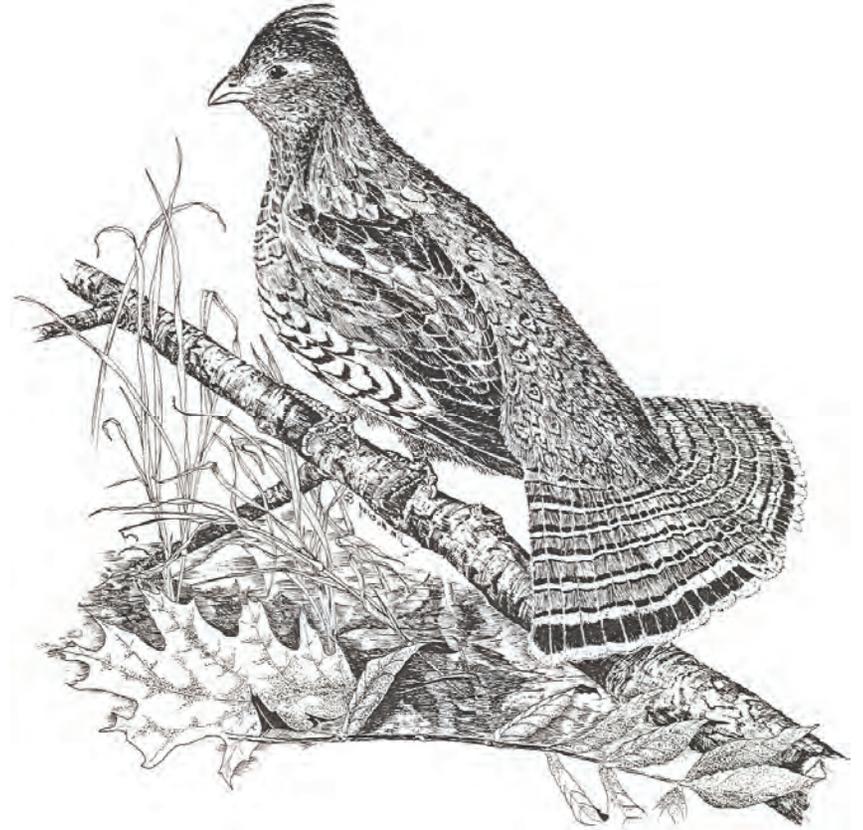
Because of the importance of this type of intensive management to a healthy ruffed grouse population, the Ruffed Grouse Society is cooperating with the Department of Natural Resources on this project. Since the majority of grouse habitat in the State is on privately owned land, this cooperative site is intended as a demonstration to showcase state of the art habitat management for ruffed grouse. It is hoped that you will learn from this example and practice some of these techniques on your own property.

The nucleus of this management is the aspen tree. If you walk this trail, the first stand you walk through is young aspen. As this aspen stand continues to grow, the structure and understory will slowly change, affecting the wildlife species that use the area. Throughout our northern forests a mixture of different aged aspen provides excellent forestry, economic and wildlife values.

The trail system maintained here is also a form of management. The trails themselves along with man-made grassy openings provide valuable food for many species of wildlife. The openings and different aged stands create “edge” which benefits species like deer, grouse, certain hawks, and many other species of wildlife. A

wider diversity of trees and shrubs grow along this “edge” providing more cover and food for wildlife.

Typically, trails in good grouse habitat receive plenty of use from hunters in the fall. In the spring and summer they are great for bird watching and berry picking.



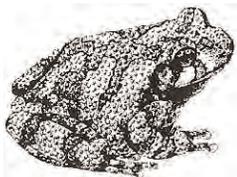
**Continue on Popko Circle 0.9 miles to stop number 13 on your right, just before the Little Turtle River. Take a walk along Popko Circle to the river crossing.**

# 13

## Little Turtle River

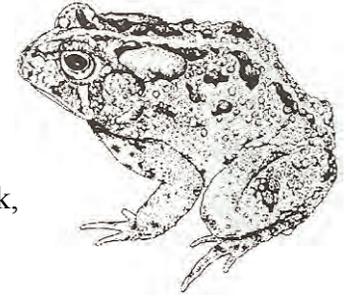
There are eleven frog and one toad species found in Wisconsin, with nine of the “anurans” found along this tour route. All nine have been heard at this stop. Springs peepers, chorus frogs, and wood frogs will start calling in the spring as soon as the ice leaves small wooded wetlands, usually by April 15.

Leopard frogs, gray tree frogs and American toads, start calling when the water temperature reaches 60 degrees Fahrenheit, usually by the middle of May. Different wetlands warm up at different rates, so frog calling can be quite variable and you may hear different species calling outside their normal breeding periods. The last group of frogs to “sing” require water temperatures about 70 degrees Fahrenheit and include mink frogs, green frogs, and bull frogs; They may not start to call until after July 1. These last three species also require deep year-round water as they remain in the tadpole stage for over one year.



The best time to hear frogs is in the evening on warm damp nights with very little wind. However many will call during the day, especially the chorus frog. Some frogs, like spring peepers and chorus frogs,

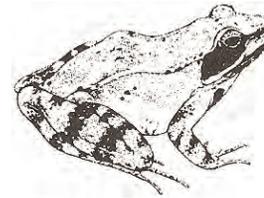
call so loud and continuous that you won't be able to hear the soft wood frog calls that occur at the same time.



Many species of wildlife eat frogs or the tadpoles of frogs. This includes fish, mink, otter, great blue herons, broad-winged hawks, barred owls and even other frogs.

Frogs are a good indicator of the health of an ecosystem and unfortunately their numbers are declining worldwide. Around the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage their numbers appear healthy, although we do not have comparative data from the 1930's and 1940's, before modern pesticides and acid rain entered the picture. Leopard frogs and bull frogs are species we are concerned about here in northern Wisconsin.

Have fun listening for the peep, peep, peep of the spring peepers, soft cluck of the wood frog, “crreeek” of the chorus frogs, rattling snore of leopard frogs, musical trill of toads, short and loud trill of treefrogs, cobblestone clapping of mink frogs, banjo call of green frogs and the bass fiddle “jug-o-rum” of the bull frog.



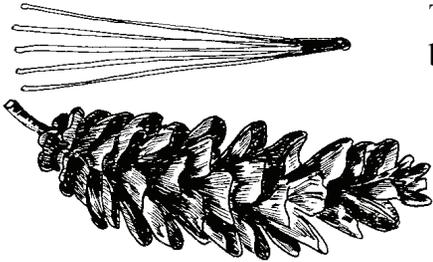
**Now proceed 0.2 miles to stop number 14;  
a stand of very large pines on your left.**

# 14

## White Pine

This is a natural stand of eastern white pine. Historically, white pine was one of the most significant trees found in

Wisconsin. When explorers first came to Wisconsin they discovered tremendous stands of tall, straight pine trees. Some of these “virgin” white pine were even cut for use as mast poles on ships in the Queens Navy.



The real assault on the white pine began shortly after the Civil War.

This wealth of pine was cut and floated down the Wisconsin, Black, Chippewa, and St. Croix Rivers into the Mississippi. White Pine was used as an excellent and cheap

building material by settlers on the treeless western prairies.

Natural stands of white pine are normally grown to about 130 years of age for lumber; however, white pine can grow much older. Three Hundred year old white pine were probably not uncommon in pre-settlement stands and some individuals have been known to reach 500 to 700 years old.

Owens-Illinois crews (prior landowners) conducted a thinning operation in this pine stand from 1970-72. At that time almost 12,000 board feet of lumber per acre was removed. Because of their unusually large size, some of the logs taken from here were displayed in 4<sup>th</sup> of July parades in Tomahawk and Butternut in 1971.

The tallest trees that you see at this stop reach over 125 feet in height and started growing in the 1850's. This stand is now designated a State Natural Area and no future harvest is planned.

White pine cones are eaten by red squirrels, white-winged and red crossbills and grosbeaks. Bats live in bark crevices. Pileated woodpeckers prefer the larger old pine to drill nest cavities. Large pine along waterways host the majority of our bald eagle nests. Other wildlife also use white pine for shelter and denning sites; the largest pine could have a cavity big enough for a black bear to use as a den.



**Now proceed 0.8 miles to County Highway FF. At the stop sign turn left, cross the Turtle River and immediately turn left. This road will take you 0.1 miles to our final stop in Lake-of-the-Falls Campground. Watch for the sign near a viewing platform on your left.**

# 15

## The Falls



There are two major river systems that flow into the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage; the Flambeau River which enters from the east side of the flowage and the Turtle River and falls that you see here. The abundance of rock and gravel found below the falls provides exceptional walleye spawning habitat. Each year in late April the largest concentration of spawning walleye in the flowage are found here. Past survey information suggests about 30% of all adult walleye spawn on the Turtle River side of the flowage.

During the great depression of the 30's, the State of Wisconsin built a fish hatchery with the Civilian Conservation Corps labor on this site. When the hatchery was closed in the late 40's, the hatchery buildings became property of Iron County. The observation platform over the river was built on the remains of one of the hatchery buildings. From this viewing platform, each spring visitors can watch thousands of walleye while they go through their spawning rituals.



Because of this heavy concentration of spawning fish, a fish refuge was established many years ago. No fishing is allowed from April 1<sup>st</sup> through May 14<sup>th</sup> each year in this area to protect walleyes from over-harvest. Furthermore, law enforcement personal have created a

“Walleye Watch” program whereby a group of citizens volunteer their time to maintain a presence during the spawning period. This presence helps deter illegal harvest of these vulnerable fish.

This area now occupied by Lake of the Falls Campground has been used for camping since the early 1900's. In 1957 development of the west side campground as part of Iron County's park system began. More progress came in 1967 with the development of campsites on the east side, including a well and electrical hookups.

Please feel free to visit the falls and old fish hatchery site on the west side of the park. Also, you are welcome to picnic, camp or just enjoy the park if you like. Daily park use and camping permits are available from a park caretaker.

**The Turtle River was one of the travel routes used by the Indians for many years prior to arrival of the fur traders. It was also used by French voyageurs as a secondary route to Lac du Flambeau. The main fur trading route into the region followed a combination overland and water trail from the mouth of the Montreal River on Lake Superior through present day Mercer, down the Manitowish River to the Bear River and then upstream to Lac du Flambeau.**

**From this point you may return to Mercer by turning right on County Highway FF. Enjoy the five mile drive back to town. On this return route you will be able to view a mixture of upland forests and small lakes.**



Thanks for taking time for this tour.  
We hope you have enjoyed our  
northern Wisconsin. May your  
visit to the northwoods  
continue to be a safe  
and memorable one.

**For additional information about the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area please contact:**

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
5291 N. Statehouse Circle  
Mercer, Wisconsin 54547  
(715)-476-7846**