

**Kettle Moraine State Forest—Southern Unit**

# **Rice Lake**

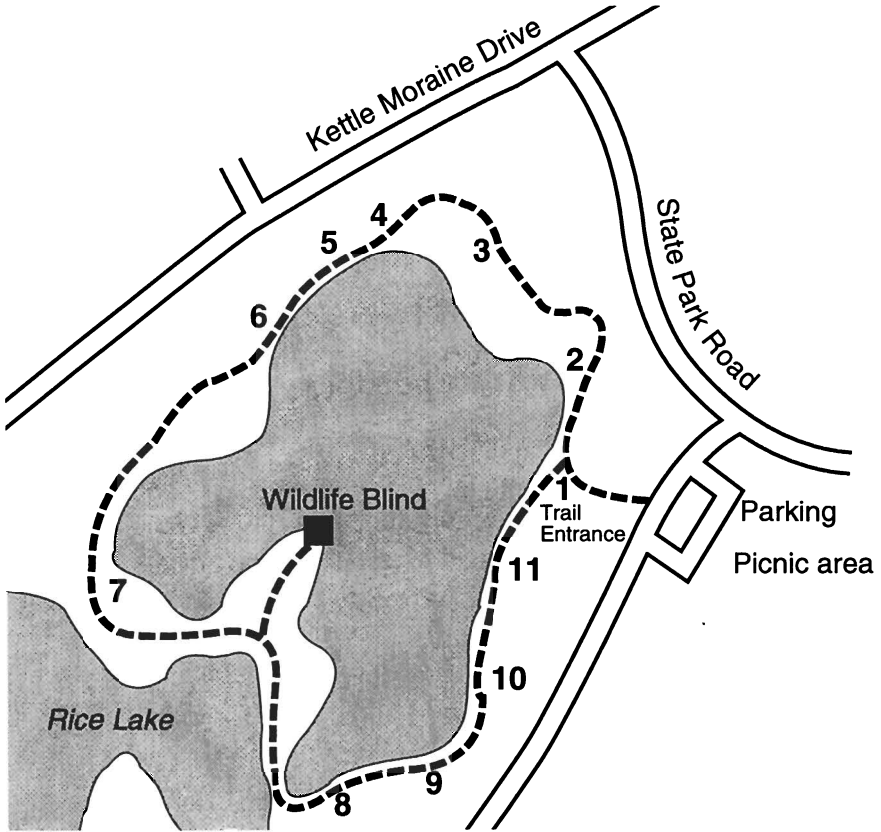
**Self-Guiding Nature Trail**



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Parks and Recreation  
PUB-PR-229 00

# Welcome to Rice Lake Nature Trail

This brochure corresponds to numbered markers along this moderately-sloping 1/2 mile trail. What kind of animals live along lakeshores? What do they eat? What kind of plants grow here? Hike along this quiet undisturbed section of Rice Lake to find out. An elevated wildlife observation blind is located along the trail. Don't forget your binoculars.



Front cover illustration by Helen Wehler.

# 1. Wetland Songs: Bull Frog

In summer and especially in June, listen for the low-pitched foghorn bellow of the male bull frog—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. Look for these giants of the frog world along the shoreline.

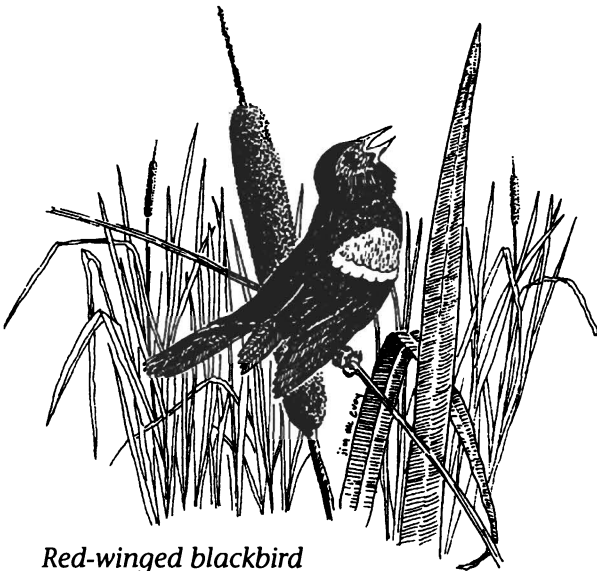


*“Jug-O-Rum Jug-O-Rum”*  
Bullfrog by Helen Wehler.

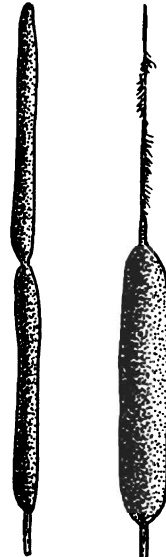
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# 2. Cattails: a Very Useful Shoreline Plant

Cattails grow abundantly in front of you. Notice their long, sword-like leaves and brown, cylindrical seed heads that look like the stiff, upright tail of a cat. Muskrats and beaver eat the rich starchy roots and lower parts of the stems, while ducks, grebes, and yellow-headed and red-winged blackbirds nest in dense cattail patches. Cattails also help stabilize the mucky bottoms of wave-washed shorelines.



*Red-winged blackbird*



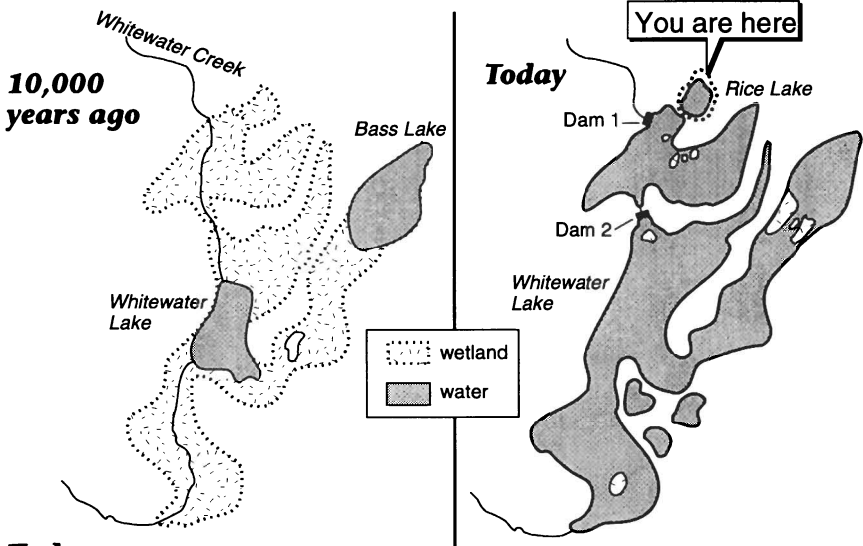
*Young spike*

*Mature spike*

### 3. The Glacier: The Beginnings of Rice Lake

#### 10,000 Years Ago

After the glaciers receded, two large isolated ice blocks remained in this area. When the ice blocks melted, they left behind two deep kettle lakes and a large wetland. These “kettles” were named Whitewater Lake and Bass Lake.



#### Today

In 1947 and 1954, two dams were built on Whitewater Creek. Rice Lake was formed from Dam 1. Whitewater Lake was formed from Dam 2.

### 4. Great Blue Heron: Shoreline Bird

Red-winged blackbirds and long-billed marsh wrens are commonly seen at Rice Lake. Less common are great blue herons which hunt along the shoreline's dense 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 great blue heron as they silently search for fish along the shoreline.



## 5. Shoreline Mammals

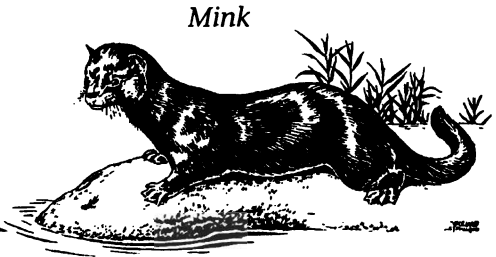
Rice Lake teems with wildlife because there is plenty of food. At night, raccoons hunt along the water's edge for tadpoles, crawfish and fish. Mink search the shoreline for crawfish, snakes, fish, frogs and muskrats, while muskrats dine on cattails and bulrushes. Muskrats are the most common mammal at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



Raccoon



Muskrat



Mink

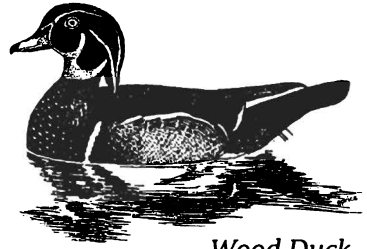
## 6. Jewelweed: Shoreline Plant

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 conditions prevail. Jewelweed has orange, trumpet-like flowers that bloom in late July and August. 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!



## 7. Waterfowl

Mallards, blue-winged teal, shovellers, ring-necked ducks, wood ducks, black ducks, and Canada geese can be seen in this area, especially during spring and fall migration. Of these, mallards, wood ducks, blue-winged teal, and Canada geese nest here. Look for their broods paddling and feeding on this lake throughout the summer.

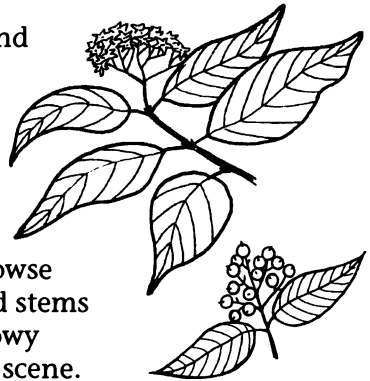


*Wood Duck*

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## 8. Red-Osier Dogwood: Wildlife Food

Red-osier dogwood has red stems and twigs and big round leaves. Can you spot this shrub in front of you? Red-osier dogwood is an important wildlife food. Songbirds, ruffed grouse and pheasants eat its berries in fall. Beaver cut its stems and eat the nutritious red bark, while deer browse on its twigs in winter. In winter, its red stems appear even more vivid against a snowy backdrop and add color to the winter scene.

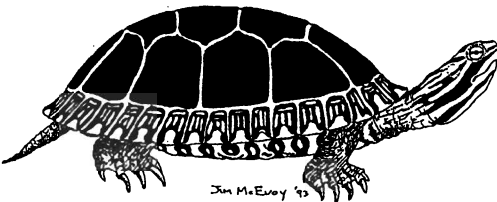


*White berries ripen in fall.*

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## 9. Painted Turtles

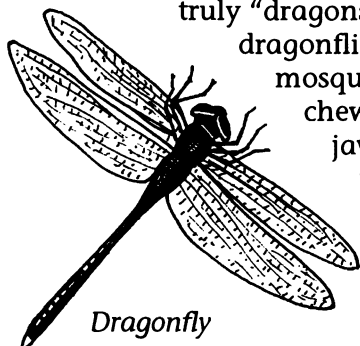
Painted turtles are common to Rice Lake. Look for them sunning themselves on logs and rocks along the shoreline. In spring, females dig a hole 4 to 5 inches deep on sunny hillsides and lay their eggs. Though you probably will not see these holes, you may see the remains of turtle eggs that have been eaten by skunks and raccoons. Eggs incubate in the warm sun and hatch in September.



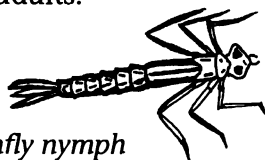
*Yellow-striped black head  
6 inches in size*

## 10. Dragonflies: Dragons of the Airways

Zzzzzzip, Bzzzzz, Zzzzzoom. Dragonflies are big, fast and harmless, to you that is. To other insects, dragonflies are truly “dragons” of the insect airwaves. Watch how dragonflies patrol the shoreline, scoop up mosquitoes and other flying insects, and chew them to pieces with their powerful jaws. Dragonfly nymphs live underwater for 3-5 years until ready to emerge as flying adults.



*Dragonfly*

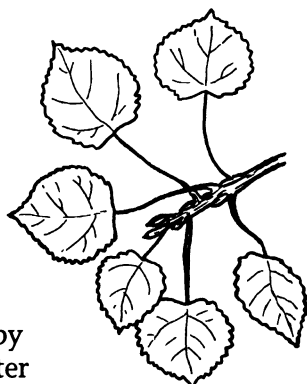


*Dragonfly nymph*

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## 11. Aspen: Beaver Food

Though there are no beaver dams on Rice Lake, beaver do visit Rice Lake to feed on aspen. Quaking aspen grow all around this sign post. Aspen is important beaver food. 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 by cutting trees and storing them in deep water for food during the winter.



*Aspen twig*



Look for beaver dams at the Scuppernong and Whitewater Creeks.

# Thanks for Coming

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, check out the exhibits at the **State Forest Visitor Center** located on Hwy 59, 3 miles west of Eagle. The complete address and phone is:

Visitor Center  
Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit  
S91 W39091 Hwy 59  
Eagle, WI 53119  
Phone: 262-594-6200



To experience the Kettle Moraine firsthand, hike another interpretive trail. Brochures are available at the trail head or at the Visitor Center.

- **Bald Bluff:** Native American and Natural History Theme  
Cty H, halfway between La Grange and Palmyra.
- **Lone Tree Bluff:** Oak Opening and Glacial Theme  
Esterly Road, north of Whitewater Lake.
- **Paradise Springs:** Cultural History Theme  
Cty N, NE of Eagle.
- **Scuppernong Springs:** Cultural History Theme  
Cty ZZ, SE of Ottawa Lake.
- **Stony Ridge:** Glacial Geology Theme  
Hwy 59, State Forest Visitor Center.
- **Stute Springs & Homestead:** Cultural History Theme  
Cty Z, one mile south of the intersection of Hwy 59.



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This brochure is available in accessible formats.