

# OUTDOORS



Tom Mahachek (driving the boat) herded the injured loon toward the shoreline while James Verch (left) and Tom Horness combined their efforts utilizing muskie nets to capture the loon. — Contributed Photos

## Loon rescue is a combined effort

BY STEPHANIE DYE  
LIFESTYLE EDITOR

Hearing and seeing loons on lakes in the North Woods is a common occurrence for residents and visitors. However, having the opportunity to have an intimate and up-close experience with a loon is rare.

Tom Horness, who was visiting his family cottage on Big Fork Lake, near Three Lakes was fortunate to have such an experience recently.

While down by the shoreline, Horness noticed a loon that was staying approximately 15 feet from the shore for an extended amount of time. The loon was acting particularly odd, stretching its left wing and not swimming away when there were humans so close. After closer observation, he noticed that there was a bright green object stuck to the side of the loon, fishing line extending from the loon's mouth to the left wing and the bird had bands on his legs.

"I called the Three Lakes Police Department who directed me to a local animal rescue facility, Wild Instincts in Rhinelander," said Horness. "They advised me to carefully net the loon if possible and safely contain it for transport."

That's when the adventure began. Horness, with the help of his neighbors Richard and James Verch and Tom Mahachek, began the rescue attempt.

The individuals gathered their fishing nets and went to work. On first attempt of approaching the loon, it dove down away from the net and surfaced approxi-

mately 30 feet out. The crew all boarded a pontoon boat and began herding it closer to shore.

Eventually, Horness and Verch were able to use two nets and enclose the loon within them. They transferred the loon to the enclosed bed of the truck where it was safely transported to the facility.

After arriving at Wild Instincts, Horness recounted the details to the facility caregivers and the loon was taken into quarantine and examined to determine treatment and care.

Before Horness could make it home from dropping the loon off, he received a text from caregivers that an x-ray revealed three hooks in its stomach and they would be keeping the bird until these were dissolving.

"The male loon arrived with a three-hook setup line swallowed internally and the fishing line was exiting throughout his mouth and wrapped around his left wing," said Mark Nanoit, director of rehabilitation and owner of Wild Instincts. "We removed the line, confirmed there was no risk of lead poisoning from a sinker or jig head and began care for the bird."

Wild birds swallowing hooks is not an uncommon occurrence, according to rehab specialists at Wild Instincts. Wild fowl, like the loon, are capable of dissolving hooks with their stomach acid, as the acid is strong enough to dissolve fish bones that they regularly ingest as part of their diet.

The next morning, Horness called for an update on the loon. The center reported that it was doing well,



Horness holds the netted loon before transporting the bird to Wild Instincts rehabilitation center in Rhinelander.

eating minnows, was of good weight and there was no concern of damage or visible blood in the loon's stool.

Horness, that evening, had researched that loons were the type of bird that mates for life. He knew, from being at the cottage several times during the summer, that there had been two pair of loons on the lake and requested that the loon be released again in the same area so that it could return to his mate.

Nanoit agreed this would be the best option and after the loon was rehabilitated and cleared to be released, he would contact Horness.

Average time for rehabil-

itation for a medical situation like this is two to three weeks. Horness was happy to receive a call less than a week later, as the loon was doing so well that Wild Instincts was confident that it was ready to be released.

Caregivers from the organization met with Horness and the group brought the loon to the shore of the lake. After being released into the water, the loon spent a few moments orientating himself and swam away.

"This definitely was an effort of many to help this loon," said Horness. "I'm happy that he is home and has the opportunity to spend his life with his mate."

## Ducks Unlimited plans fundraiser for next month

The Headwaters Chapter of Ducks Unlimited (DU) in Eagle River will host its annual fundraising banquet Thursday, Sept. 15, at 5:30 p.m. at Eagle Waters Resort.

Proceeds from the event will help further conservation efforts in Wisconsin.

According to Headwaters Chapter Chairman Jim Kauzlaric, last year DU completed 49 projects and protected 6,152 acres of habitat in Wisconsin, investing \$4.1 million. The projects directly benefit not only waterfowl but thousands of other species of wildlife. These projects also have immense benefits to people by providing clean water, flood storage, and significant economic impacts to local communities.

"The work we do is large scale, and every acre is designed to leave a legacy where future generations will always be able to enjoy wild places," said Kauzlaric.

"Our efforts are not possible without the support of our volunteers and members that attend our banquets."

For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [widucks.org](http://widucks.org).

### About DU

Ducks Unlimited Inc. is the world's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving North America's continually disappearing waterfowl habitats.

Established in 1937, Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 15 million acres thanks to contributions from more than a million supporters across the continent.

Guided by science and dedicated to program efficiency, DU works toward the vision of wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow and forever.

For more information, visit [itducks.org](http://itducks.org).

## Wilderness navigation topic for Aug. 20 adventure program

Trees For Tomorrow will be holding a Nature Adventures Wilderness Navigation program Saturday, Aug. 20, from 1 to 4 p.m.

Participants will learn introductory map and compass reading and apply those new skills to completing an orienteering course. Traveling to each marked tree on the course, students collect words to unscramble a sentence that's the course motto.

Compasses will be provided for use during the program, and participants are

encouraged to wear closed-toed shoes and bring bug repellent.

Nature adventure programs will run an average of 3 hours and are offered on the third Saturday of each month with seasonally-appropriate topics.

Activities are family friendly and all participants under 18 years must be accompanied by a paying adult. Cost per person is \$15.

For more information, visit [treesfortomorrow.com](http://treesfortomorrow.com) or call (715) 479-6456.

## Lake biology program slated in St. Germain

The St. Germain Fish and Wildlife Club will host local author Ted Rulseh Thursday, Aug. 25, at 7 p.m. at the St. Germain Community Center.

He will speak on the biology, chemistry and physics of lake life with a program entitled "What Makes a Lake Tick."

Rulseh, an advocate for lake protection, resides on Birch Lake in Oneida County. He is a graduate of the Wisconsin Lake Leaders

Institute and a board member of the Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association.

He also is the author of "A Lakeside Companion," and the soon-to-be released book "Ripple Effects: How We're Loving Our Lakes to Death."

The program is free and open to the public.

The community center is located at 545 Highway 155 in St. Germain.

For more information, contact Bob Schell at (715) 542-2321.

## Hunter safety courses announced for this fall

The Oneida County Sheriff's Office and the School District of Rhinelander Community Education Program are co-sponsoring two Department of Natural Resources (DNR) certified hunter safety courses scheduled for September and November.

All classes will be held at the Oneida County Sheriff's office located at 2000 E. Winnebago St. in Rhinelander.

Course objectives include the reduction of the potential for accidents, injuries, and fatalities; reducing the potential for conflict between participants, landowners, and other resource users; and promoting safe, responsible and ethical use of the environment and our resources.

The ideal class age range is

12 and older, but all ages are welcome. The fee for the class is \$10 per person and should be paid with cash or check at the first class.

The instructor will be Michael Baran from the Oneida County Sheriff's Office.

Students are required to obtain a DNR customer ID number for this class. If the student does not already have one, contact the DNR at 1-(888) 936-7463 prior to registering.

Registration is required and space is limited. Registration online at [rhinelander.k12.wi.us](http://rhinelander.k12.wi.us).

For more information or questions, contact Mike Cheslock at (715) 365-9745 or [cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us](mailto:cheslmik@rhinelander.k12.wi.us).



BIG SMALLIE — Tim Cross caught and released this 21-inch Smallmouth Bass while fishing a North Woods lake recently. — Contributed Photo

## RESULTS

### THREE LAKES WEDNESDAY NIGHT MUSKIE LEAGUE Results as of 8/10/22 STANDINGS

Tavern on the Loop No. 1.....	420
Spirit View Lakeside.....	349
Big Stone Golf Course.....	327
Highway 32 South.....	215
Scotty's Bait & Tackle.....	198
Hideaway.....	150
Pine Isle.....	122
American Legion.....	79
Tavern on the Loop No. 2.....	39
Caught and released: Peter Blicharz 34.5".	

### MONDAY NIGHT MUSKY LEAGUE Results as of 8/8/22 STANDINGS

Berklee's Destroyers.....	673
R&M Musky Shop.....	558
Sweetwater.....	524
Great Escape I.....	419
Sand Lake Pub.....	401
Sportsmen's Chalet.....	270
Shotskis.....	186
Great Escape II.....	181
Mud Creek Saloon.....	136
Eagle Waters.....	134
Uncle Kent's.....	119
Twelve Pines.....	76
Top three: Matt Raley 43.5", Bill Viekrandt 41.25", Clint Nagy 39.5".	
Top gun: Jared Adamovich 231.	
Big fish of the year: Rob Rottier 49".	

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