

Lake Waves

A Quarterly Newsletter

Fall-Winter 2011

Volume 26, Number 4

Q: *What's the best season to fish?*



A: *Invalid question, there are no bad seasons for fishing.*

What's on Tap

President's Message [page 3]

Crappie Fishing [page 4]

Ice Fishing Safety [page 6]

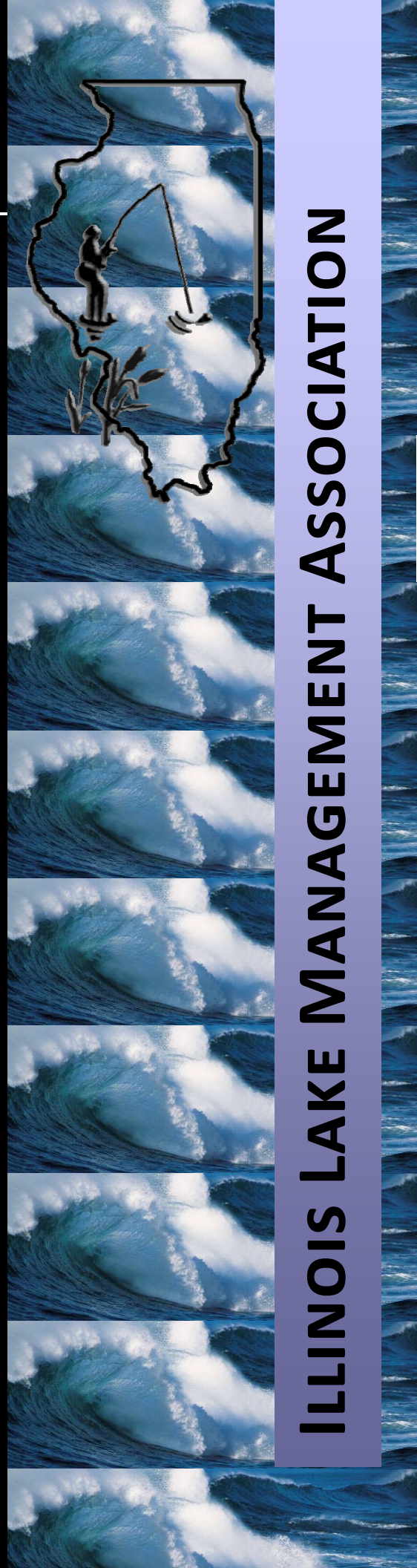
Conference Information [page 9]

Fish Cribs [page 10]

Odds & Ends [page 11]



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Editor's Notes..



We have not talked about fish simply for the sake of fishing for a while so I thought we would devote this issue to you, a fishing pole, and bait. I poked around a few of our members to gather some information on several aspects of fishing through the seasons. I figured we could round the year out on a relaxing note. I will encourage you all to share your fishing stories with us. Let us know some of them by posting on our FaceBook page or send me an email; if it is a good one I can include it in an upcoming newsletter.

The 2012 conference is nearly upon us so I have included some directional advice on getting there. This is going to be a good one again this year. We are celebrating the formation of the student chapter of ILMA at Northern Illinois University, which helps explain how we ended up in DeKalb this year. We here at ILMA are delighted at the accomplishments of the student chapter this past year. Part of what makes ILMA such

a strong organization is the ability to keep a wide diversity in both age and career background in our membership. Being able to draw on the enthusiasm of the young and the wisdom of the mature (I'll refrain from saying old) allows us to continue on our mission after more than 25 years.

I would like to add a word of caution though. Having the conference on a university campus may bring back memories from years past; however, we will be asking each of you attending to be on a strict buddy policy. If somebody decides to have an 'Old School' moment and calls out to go streaking across the main hall, the buddy policy means you talk them out of it (not encourage it).

Enjoy and we hope to see you all at the conference!

- Bryan Cross

The Illinois Lakes Management Association is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote understanding and comprehensive management of lake and watershed ecosystems. Membership is open to all.

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President's Message

Fall is my favorite time of year and I have joked with friends that the weather could stay fall-like year around and I wouldn't care. However, this recent run of fall has changed my thoughts. Looking outside it is hard to believe that it is January, where is winter? There is no snow and the lakes have not completely frozen over yet. This is hard for me because I enjoy spending as much time as possible sitting on a bucket watching tip-ups with hopes that the flag will pop up. Sitting on the couch and watching it on the television just isn't the same.

Ice-fishermen aren't the only ones lying in wait for winter to arrive. Cross-country skiers, snowshoers, snow-boarders, down-hill skiers, and snowmobilers are all biting at the bit to get out and enjoy their favorite wintertime activities. Not only does the lack of snow and ice covered lakes frustrate the winter enthusiast, but it also affects lakes.

The impacts of reduced ice cover can be ecologically significant for lakes and their aquatic residents. Ice cover regulates the temperature, dissolved oxygen, light penetration, and many other parameters of lakes that determine growth and reproduction of species and interspecies relationships. Ice cover also reduces wintertime evaporation which in turn helps to maintain the lake's water level. A lack of ice cover allows winter winds to make contact with lake waters, disturbing fish nesting sites, and impacting the way lakes stratify. No ice cover also means there is no snow cover which allows sunlight to penetrate the water and increase the temperature. In turn, warmer water temperatures may make lakes more hospitable to non-native species.

The impacts of this late ice-up won't be known until next summer and beyond, so I am calling on you lake owners and managers to monitor any changes that occur on your lake. It is important that we know what issues are affecting our members and what topics we need to stay focused on in the coming years. In the meantime, let's hope the weatherman forecasts some colder weather so we can enjoy some "winter wonderland" yet this year.

As a final note, I would like to thank ILMA for allowing me to be president over this past year. It has been a great experience and I am pleased with all that ILMA was able to accomplish from a successful conference last March to the launch of the ILMA POD series. This March it will have gone full circle with the 27th annual conference. Although there are still a few "i's" to dot and "t's" to cross, I have confidence that this conference will be filled with interesting talks and abundant camaraderie. See you in DeKalb. I am looking forward to sharing some fish stories with you at the conference.

- Leonard Dane

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So You Want to Catch Crappie?

By: Tim Edison



Crappie is a great tasting fish that can offer action packed fishing for the whole family regardless of the time of the year. One of the tricks of being a successful crappie angler is to understand how and where to target these fish as tactics and locations change throughout the year. Hopefully this article will serve to provide some helpful tips for where and how to target these fish in lakes and reservoirs.

Crappies begin to increase their feeding activity after ice out in early spring as the water warms. During this time they will tend to congregate in two types of habitat in a lake: broad, deep flats and river channels. Although still sluggish, they can be easily enticed with the right presentation. One of the most productive techniques is to use a small slip bobber and live minnow. Typically having 4-6 lb test line with no more than a quarter of the float sticking out of the water will result in the most success. This time of year it is critical to have very little resistance when a fish inhales the bait (remember fish don't bite!) and the right float set up is key. Once crappie are located an area, begin fishing at half the depth of the water, in other words if its 10 feet deep start fishing at five feet. While searching for the best spot regularly adjust the depth of the bait in one-foot increments and keep the float in an area for no more than five minutes until you start bringing them in.

When the water warms to about 14 Celsius / 57 Fahrenheit crappie will begin to enter their spawning period. The fish will move from the deeper waters to more shallow flats, usually to area with depths less than eight feet. This is the time to focus on your time along secondary creek channels. Concentrate your efforts in or at the mouths of the smaller coves in the main lake, but any rocky or gravelly banks along the lake are good to check if they are not nibbling in the coves. They have a tendency to migrate to these rocky

banks on and off throughout the day so if you are there at the right time you will be rewarded with some nice fish. During the spawning period it is beneficial to switch presentations from solely live bait rigs to both live bait and tube jigs.

A tube jig attached to a weighted float allows an angler to cover a greater area in a shorter amount of time. Be sure to slowly retrieve with a series of short twitches after casting out when using a tube jig and a weighted float. The twitching will mimic the swimming motion of a prey item and stimulate the crappie to strike. If you want to know what this movement should look like just watch some zooplankton (daphnia) swimming in the water. Crappie feed on zooplankton shortly after hatching and when a tube jig mimics the movement of a daphnia they can't help but strike! Once the bigger fish are found don't be afraid to continue to experiment. Switching to larger live minnows can help to target the biggest crappie in the bunch. While in these shallow areas, be sure to target locations

Continued on page 5...

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...continued from page 4

with good woody structures under water (either artificial or natural). A long pole (up to 16 feet) will allow a tube jig to be dropped in next to woody structure without spooking fish.

Crappie will move from the shallow areas of a lake back out to the deeper water as the spawn comes to an end and the summer approaches. Trolling is an effective way to locate crappie during the summer. Two trolling methods I have found proven effective through the years are using twister tails and trolling crankbaits. With a twister tail rig, place a half ounce weight on the bottom and tandem 1/16 ounce jigs at one foot intervals above the weight. Speed can be a key to enticing the bite. Troll at a speed between one and one and a half miles per hour, making sure the tail has the proper twirling action (a hand held GPS device can give accurate speeds while trolling). With a small crankbait you can cover more ground than twister tails. Use a lure that will reach a depth approximately one foot above any creek channels and maintain a troll speed of two miles per hour. Travel in an S-shaped pattern along the deepest part of the creek channel. Once you have found a location that is consistently productive, throw out a marker buoy or two and switch to the slip float and minnow method.

As summer wanes and fall approaches the crappie will move back into areas of shallow water. Try to focus on spots with larger pieces of wood or big rocks in 3-6 feet of water close to the main body of the lake. Tube jigs are still a classic favorite when fishing shallow but don't hesitate to switch over to minnows when the bite slows. Crappie seem to move in and out with the weather in the fall, retreating to deeper cover after cold fronts then moving back in as the weather stabilizes. Remember to keep moving if you are not catching fish! Don't spend more than 15 minutes in a spot without nibbles. Don't be afraid to change up your baits as well. If you have fished an area without a bite for 10 minutes using a tube jig change colors and see what happens. Hopefully, these tips can provide the information you need for a successful outing of crappie fishing either by yourself or with your family. Good Luck!

Tim is a large river ecologist for the Illinois Natural History Survey stationed at the Prairie Research Institute in Champaign, IL.



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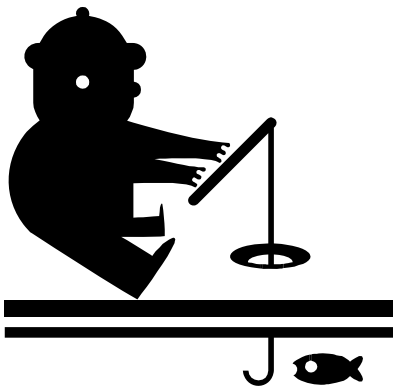
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Fishing on

ICE

By: Leonard Dane

A lot of people probably think it is crazy to walk out onto a frozen lake, drill holes in it, and sit around those holes waiting for a flag to go up. This may be true, but as they say, the treasure is always in the eye of the beholder. Whether you believe in the sanity of an ice fisherman, safety is an important and serious consideration while practicing this endeavor.



Ice-fishing has been a winter routine since I have been two years old. I have had my share of minor mishaps, but safety is always on the forefront on my mind and a critical component of ice fishing is to always let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be home. It may seem obvious, but be sure to dress for the weather. Your

clothing should keep you warm, protect you from the wind, and still allow you to be mobile. Before you leave the house make sure you run through your equipment list. The last thing you want to do is get to your fishing spot and find out you forgot to pack something. Items to include on your checklist are:

- Ice auger (either hand or power to create your holes)
- Jig poles and tip-ups (to link to the fish)
- Ice skimmer (cleans the ice shaving from the hole after it is drilled)
- Ice cleats (traction, especially if there is no snow)
- Various tackle (such as hooks, sinkers, and jigs)
- Bait (the basics are wax worms and minnows)
- Sled (to drag all your equipment out onto the ice)
- Ice shanty (will provide you with protection from the weather should it turn cold and windy)

The second obvious but important safety tip, never venture out on the ice before it is thick enough. I recommend making sure the ice is at least 3 inches thick before walking out and check the thickness of the ice as you go. Ice conditions are not always consistent and the thickness can change due to water depth, flow, and/or inlets. During early season and late season ice-fishing carry a pair of ice spikes. These can be picked up at just about any sporting goods

Continued on page 7...



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store or bait shop that sells ice-fishing equipment. The ice spikes thread through your coat sleeves similar to children's mittens and are immediately available to pull yourself out of the water if you were to fall through.

We are ready to discuss ice fishing now that we have covered the most important aspects of ice fishing, which are to be sure people know where you are, you have dressed properly, and have checked the ice conditions (I am being repetitive but it's for the sake of safety). Your best success in picking a location is always going to come from firsthand experience of the lake. You should know generally where you want to set up before you get to the lake from trolling the lake in other seasons and/or having detailed contour maps. The best spots are going to be around a drop off or an area that had abundant aquatic vegetation.

Ok, so we have made it out to our spot (and there is plenty of ice to support us). My preference is to set up two tip-ups and use a jig pole. On the tip-ups I will use either a sucker or golden shiner that is three to four inches long. The bait will be suspended on a treble hook ~18-24 inches off of the lake bottom. The jig pole allows you to be more mobile and having several holes scattered around the area improves your odds, you can bounce from hole to hole in search of a bite. I favor a tear drop jig tipped with a wax worm or a small treble hook baited with a small fathead minnow. Generally the tip-up sets will pick up northern pike, largemouth bass, or walleye. The jig pole technique works great for bluegill, crappie, and yellow perch.

Lastly, be sure to check if the lake you are going to has any special regulations. Some lakes are catch and release only while others will have different size and bag limits for various species. Some lakes only allow one or two lines to be used. If you haven't been out on the ice before I hope this brief but informative description of ice-fishing will spark your interest. If we ever get any fishable ice this year, try your luck and see what the lakes have to offer during the winter!



Leonard Dane is an avid ice fisherman and a fisheries biologist at Deuchler Environmental



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A few simple notes on helping children fish

By: Herb Dreier



Fishing is a sport that can be a lifelong hobby. It is also a creative option for parents wanting an outdoor activity to share with their children; however, as one might expect fishing is more fun when fish are being caught. Not all parents learned to fish when they were young and don't have much in the way of skills for catching the 'big one', but it is far from an insurmountable task to learn the basics for catching fish. One little bluegill can spark the interest of a child and be the memory they carry with them the rest of their life.

A few simple but important recommendations that will help a child to be successful every time are:

- 1) Use a small hook-- size 8 or smaller, a small piece of bait and a bobber one inch or smaller in diameter or smaller,
- 2) Teach them to set the hook,
- 3) Don't be too patient--if the fish are not biting, move to a different spot, and
- 4) Fish in the lake where the fish hide (along rocky areas, brush, weed lines, tree stumps, etc)--not way out in the middle where many children like to cast.

It is important to remember that it is the adults that focus on catching the biggest fish in the lake. To a child, catching any size fish creates a level of excitement.

Herb Dreier is the Region 3 Urban Fishing Coordinator for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources



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Observations of Winter

By: Brian Valleskey

We often think of winter as a time of year when lakes and watersheds remain stagnant, that snow and ice freeze everything in place, and there is little to do but stay close to the fireplace. If you find yourself on the ice during these winter months you can take the opportunity perhaps to observe the aquatic ecosystem in a different way. At ILMA, through PODS, newsletters, annual conference discussions and workshops, we have tried to preach the importance of understanding and trying to predict effects of environmental response to manmade activities. Potentially less obvious in winter months, but the same rules apply.

Impoundments comprise a substantial portion of the waters we rely on for recreational activities. Try to keep note of late season water levels. Many lakes and ponds have regulated water surface elevations controlled by a home owners association or local municipality. Lower than usual water levels could be a result of drought or purposeful overdraw. If water levels are down even a small amount relative to the entire lake, old shallow spots may no longer hold fish. Fishing for pike in a

favorite spot where the water is typically 24-30 inches deep may not provide the expected results if the water is 12 inches lower than usual.

As winter continues and nears springtime, fish can sometimes edge towards bays or tributary inlets. I always like to fish these areas as they are natural congregating areas in mid-late February. If winter is long and we are still experiencing consistent snow, road salts can be making their way in. Tributary areas with urban watersheds or with proximity to well traveled roads will see bigger potential for these problems. If you are not having luck in one of these spots that have usually provided results, consider if this is a potential problem. Fish generally don't take well to salt until they are in the frying pan.

Have a safe and fun winter on your lakes and don't forget to keep your eyes open to all the little details surrounding us!





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Somehow another year has flown by and the annual conference is upon us again. This year we are in DeKalb on the Northern Illinois University Campus at the Holmes Student Center.

The campus is conveniently located just off Interstate 88. Once you get off the interstate you are only two turns away from the conference. From I-88 exit north onto Annie Glidden Rd and follow until you reach Lincoln Highway (Rte 38). Take a right (east) onto Lincoln Highway and you only have a short way to go until you reach Carroll Avenue on your left (north). The sign for Carroll Avenue is not that big but all you have to look for is the Pizza Hut and know you have to turn there. Follow Carroll Ave a few blocks and you'll come to a T-intersection with a gated parking lot on your left. Enter the parking lot and the fun is almost ready to begin.

Visit our website for additional conference details and registration. NIU has provided conference rates of \$60 per night, so be sure to mention ILMA when you make your hotel reservations.

We look forward to seeing you there!



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Fish Cribs: Habitat Sweet Habitat



By: Leonard Dane

[photos courtesy Brice Prairie Conservation Association]

Fish cribs can serve as an important tool for attracting fish and improving your fishing skills. Fish cribs provide habitat for both forage fish seeking shelter and predator fish seeking prey. These structures diversify relatively sterile areas (habitat wise) within a lake and serve to provide a larger food base that can improve survival conditions and productivity. Fish cribs can be built from any number of materials and in all different shapes and sizes, but this article will just outline one of these: **the log crib**.

The construction material begins with roughly twenty, five to seven inch diameter logs that are approximately eight feet in length, enough small saplings poles to cover the base of the crib (varies depending on your desired spacing), four pieces of three-eighths or half inch rebar approximately eight feet long with a large washer welded on one end (if you don't have access to a welder you can bend the rebar over at a 90 degree angle with a hammer), and some ring shank pole barn nails. The last components you will need are some rocks or concrete blocks and brush to use as fill inside the structure.

To construct the crib first drill a five-eighths inch hole approximately twelve inches in from each end of the logs (the point is that the holes line up as they are stacked so be sure to drill the pieces next to each other as you go in order to keep track, your poles are probably not all exactly the same length). Place the four pieces of rebar through the holes in two of the eight foot logs, lay them out parallel to each other, and then begin stacking the logs. Once the first couple rows are started, the base can be tacked in by laying the saplings across the bottom pair between the two logs (nail them in place with the pole barn nails). Continue stacking the logs in alternating rows "log cabin" style until the structure is about five feet tall. When you reach the desired height, or are out of logs, bend over the remaining rebar exposed from the top of the logs to lock them together. With the outer structure built, the next step is to place the rock or concrete on the bottom of the structure and weave in the brush. The brush can be wired or zip-tied to the structure to keep it from coming loose. Be sure to have enough rock or concrete on the bottom of the structure to allow it to sink. It is best to use green hardwood as your fish crib structure as that will require less weight to sink it.

The log crib is big and heavy, preferably not something you want to try to make in your garage and carry out to the lake. It is best to build these during the winter on the ice in the location you would like them to end up once the ice melts. Ideally cribs should be placed in water that is greater than 15 feet in depth to reduce the chance that it will become a navigational hazard. Also, the crib shouldn't be placed in an area where the bottom consists of soft sediment or muck that is greater than 12 inches deep.

One last reminder. Since you went through all the trouble to make these, don't forget to mark the location of each crib with a GPS. This will allow you to return to this newly created habitat and reap the benefits of your labor.



Step 1: Cut



Step 2: Set the base



Step 3: Stack



Step 4: Weave in brush

Step 5: Go fishing in the spring

EPA Nitrogen and Phosphorus Mapping ←

EPA has developed a new and improved website about nitrogen and phosphorus pollution to provide the public with information about this type of pollution-- where it comes from, its impacts on human health and aquatic ecosystems, and actions that people can take to help reduce it.

EPA's new website also includes updated information on states' progress in developing numeric water quality criteria for nutrients as part of their water quality standards regulations. EPA recognizes that states and local communities are best positioned to restore and protect their waters, and the agency is providing technical guidance and tools to help states develop numeric nutrient criteria for their water bodies. To facilitate state and local efforts to reduce nutrient pollution, EPA released a new Nitrogen and Phosphorus Pollution Data Access Tool:

http://owpubauthor.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/standards/criteria/nutrients/npdat_index.cfm

While logs are a good way to make fish cribs, they are not the only material to use. Don't forget that giving material a second life is a good and cheap way to add fish structure to the underwater areas of your lake.

Palettes: Used palettes that may otherwise end up in a landfill can be used to construct a triangle or box shape. Simply zip-tie together (or attach in some other fashion) along with a cinderblock to anchor and ta-da.

Pipes: Used pipes can be plugged at one end with concrete and tied together. Not all the pipes need to be plugged at one end but some need to be to encourage catfish to take up residency. The weight of the concrete will hold the pipes in the lakebed.

Get creative, but be sure to use biodegradable/non-toxic building material. Before you undertake any sort of artificial fish structure project, get permission. Find out who has jurisdiction over your lake and obtain the necessary permits/permission. Have fun with it. Building fish cribs is a great reason to get together with friends or family for a weekend!

→ **No more E-trash** ←

Public Act 97-0287 - Electronic Products Recycling & Reuse Act

On January 1, 2012 (yea, that is this January) it becomes illegal to dispose of most electronic equipment in the trash. The law establishes a statewide system for recycling and/or reusing computers, monitors, televisions, and printers discarded from residences by requiring electronic manufacturers to participate in the management of discarded and unwanted electronic products.

So what do we do now when we want to get rid of that cell phone, TV, or broken printer? If you don't know where a local drop-off is, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency posts a listing of registered recyclers on its website:

www.epa.state.il.us/land/electronic-waste-recycling/index.html

This law will help to keep extremely toxic chemicals out of our landfills while promoting recycling of materials. If you haven't created any new year resolutions yet, add recycling e-waste to your list.

Editor's Note; this one was in the last issue but I left this in for another round as so many people I have spoke to are unaware of it, please spread the word.

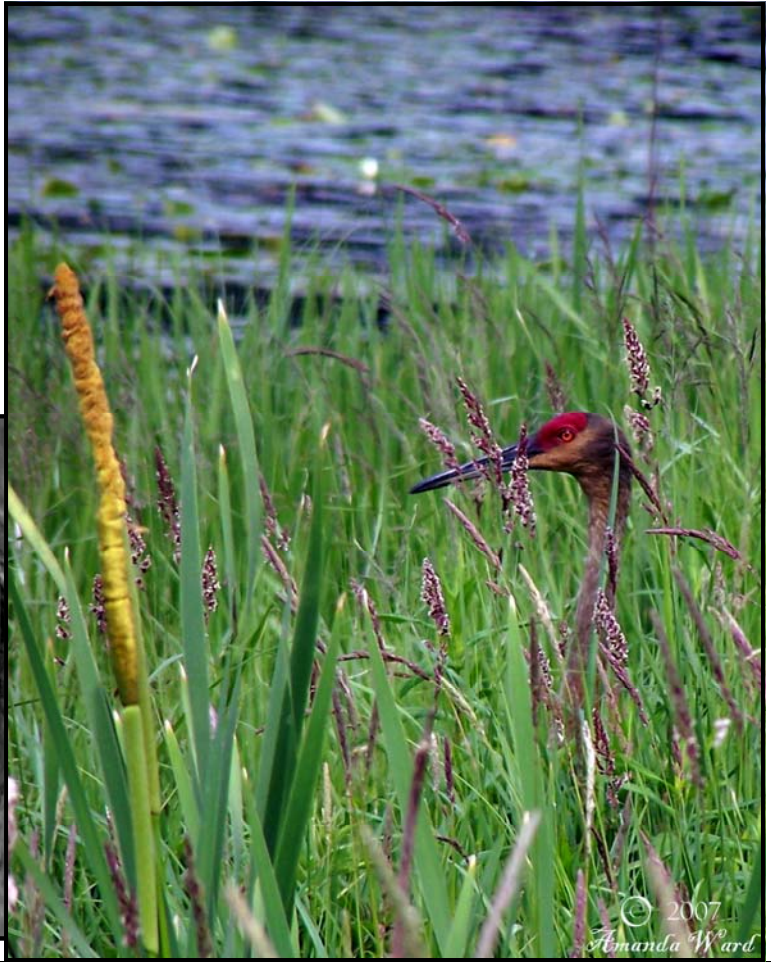
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