

Aspenhof Lakes – the Good the Bad and the Ugly

The Good

The main lake is a very healthy and extremely fertile body of water. For a lake of its age with very little natural structure remaining this is pleasantly surprising. The mere fact that the water is gin clear in early August should indicate otherwise. Phytoplankton is at the bottom of the food chain and that which ensures the health of all on top of it – and it's green. Generally speaking, water with a slight greenish tint is indicative of health. Contrary to this, I believe that the pristine water we are so fortunate to enjoy is actually quite healthy.

From my observations the main lake is home to the following:

Countless insects • Freshwater shrimp • Crayfish • Salamanders • Frogs • Muscles • Snails • Largemouth Bass • Bluegill • Redear sunfish • Green sunfish • White crappie • Channel catfish • Grass carp • Hybrid bluegill • Muskrat • Mink • Various snakes • Kingfishers • Turtles

This list was off the cuff but the point is as clear as the water itself - the lake is providing – it is healthy. The fact that the feeder creeks contain huge populations of freshwater shrimp – often called “scuds” was an indication to me that we have a mineral rich body of water.

What this means to lake management is that we are in a very strong position. We can focus on nurturing what is provided as opposed to trying to make up for that which is not - to a large degree, anyway - which brings me to my next observation...

The Bad

Unlike cheese, bodies of water don't improve with age. Much like people they start an empty slate full of vigor but with little to offer. Over time they blossom and provide – mature and sustain themselves. But then... they grown old and wither. All lakes face this fate. Even our mighty reservoirs in the rocky hills of the Ozarks were once home to abundant plant life – watercress, lily pads, and acres of willow. As lakes age, the water – and in particular the soil in that water – simply can't support the kind of habitat it once did. The early plant life did its part in growing the young lake's inhabitants and now the mature lake is on its own. The difference between these large reservoirs and our own small lake is that when the latter was constructed a plan was in place to deal with the inevitable loss of plant life. Other long-term habitat was left in place to maintain a healthy balance in the underwater ecosystem. Large chunk rock and boulders would last forever and timber left standing would hold on for almost a century. Our lake is largely a barren body of water. This does not bode well for its inhabitants and a proposal to enhance the lake's structural habitat will be presented in a formal document.

The Ugly

Black, leafy, slimy, slowly-decomposing, sandal-stealing “muck”. Anyone who has ventured to wade-fish the shallows knows what I'm talking about. I have spent quite a bit of time researching what this nasty stuff means to our lake and after conferring with biologists, professional pond managers, and fisheries consultants I've come to determine that this phenomenon is a natural part of the aging process, is not harmful to the lake, and is duly listed - not under “The Bad” but merely “the Ugly” as that's all it is. That being said – I have discovered that there are benefits to dredging it out. That will be presented in a formal proposal as well.