

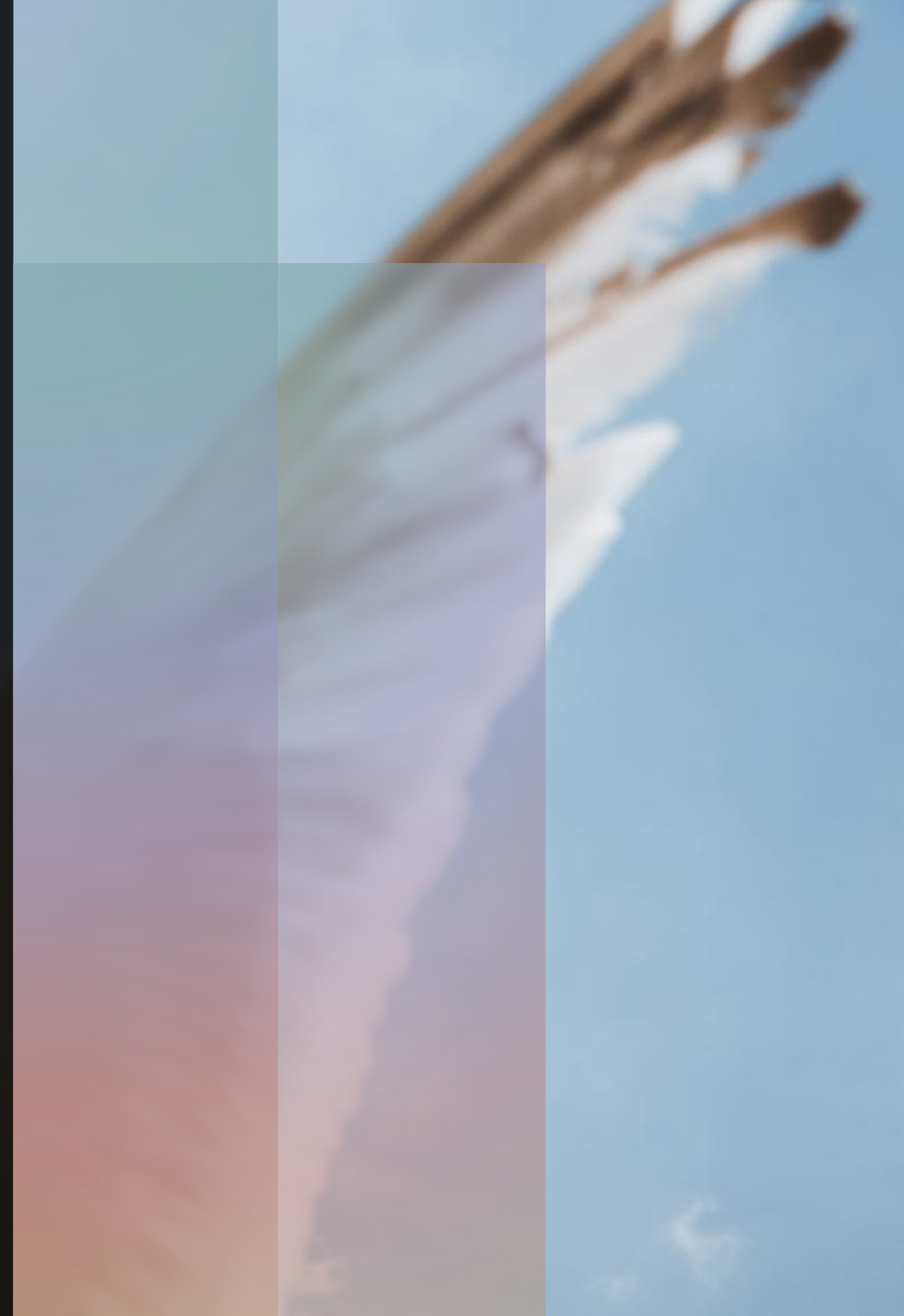
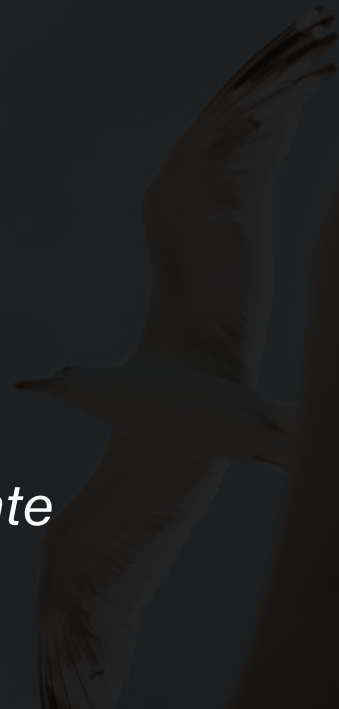
The Birds & Gulls of Fishhook Lake

Or is it Fish Hook Lake?

Sue Tomte

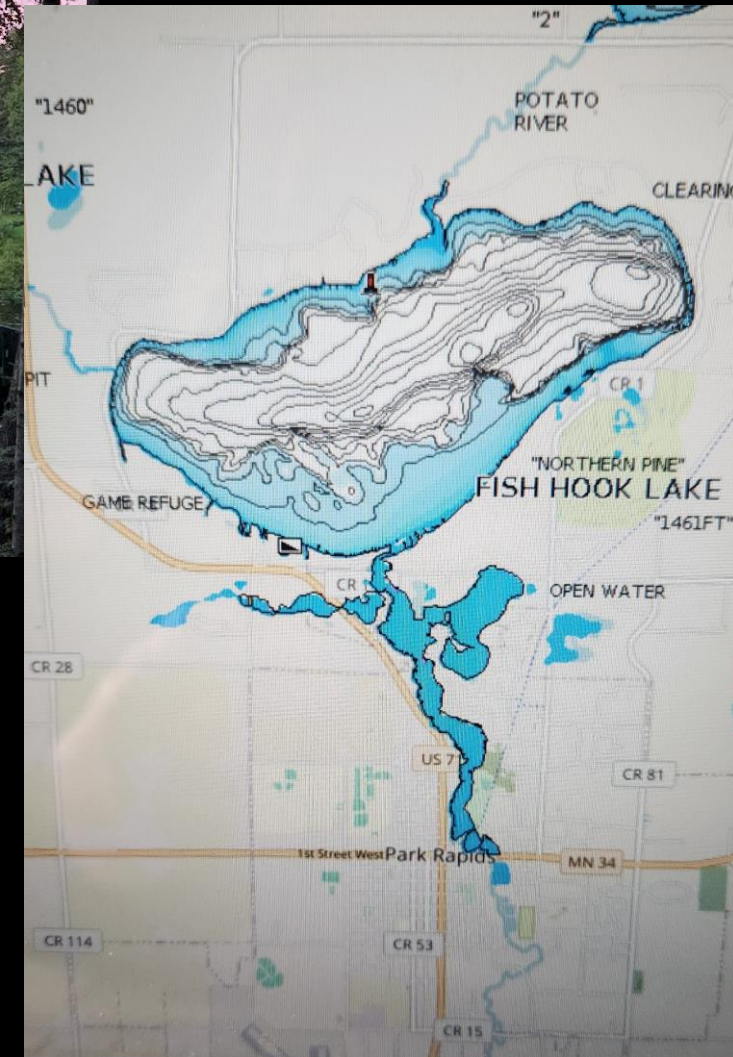
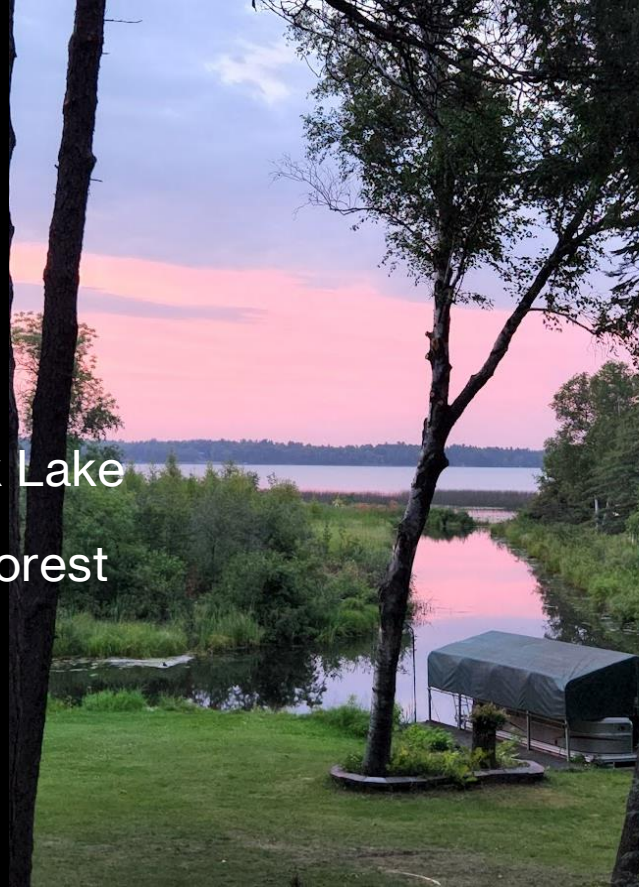
June 2025

Photos taken by Brad Lee and Sue Tomte



The Launch Site

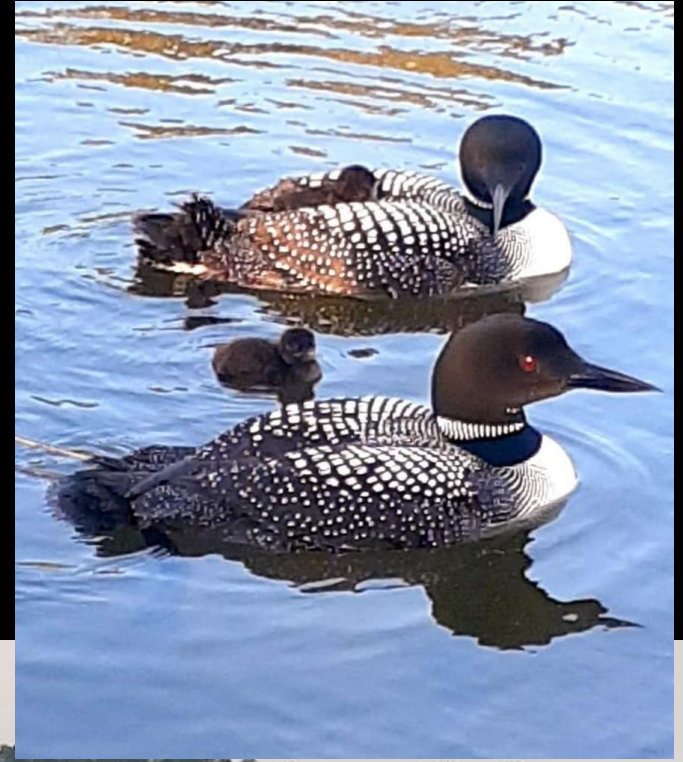
- One of several Channels on Fishhook Lake
- Bog, open water, Deciduous & Pine Forest and Prairie – 4 mini ecosystems
- Observations from pontoon
- Photos from phone
- This boat/motor has 2600+ hours – mostly on Fishhook Lake, captained by Brad Lee
- Average of 10 hours/ week on the lake between May - November



Backyard birds – 30+ species



Loons, loons, loons



Lots of birds & waterfowl around the lake



Mergansers, Pelicans, Swans, Golden Eyes & Coots!



Birding 101 – Cornell University's E-Bird & Merlin Apps

E-Bird – takes your bird counts and uses the info for tracking, looking at trends, migration info and more

- Merlin App helps you to identify birds by sight, sound and characteristics
- Bird counting basics:
 - Only count all the birds you see at one time
 - Use visual or auditory identification to count
 - Count individual type of birds or by 'species' like 'duck – sp' instead of mallard, woodduck, etc
 - Record time and location for bird counts



Cornell University Lab of Ornithology

- Offers classes & certifications
 - Gull Identification – 9 hour class
- Monitors e-bird submissions – you get emails from “Bruce” if your reports seem out of the ordinary
- Tracks bird statistics for migrations
- Performs studies by region/species

Gulls & Terns

- NO such thing as a 'Sea Gull'
- Ring Billed Gulls
- Bonaparte's Gulls
- Franklin Gulls
- Forster's Terns
- Caspian Terns
- Common Terns
- Herring Gulls

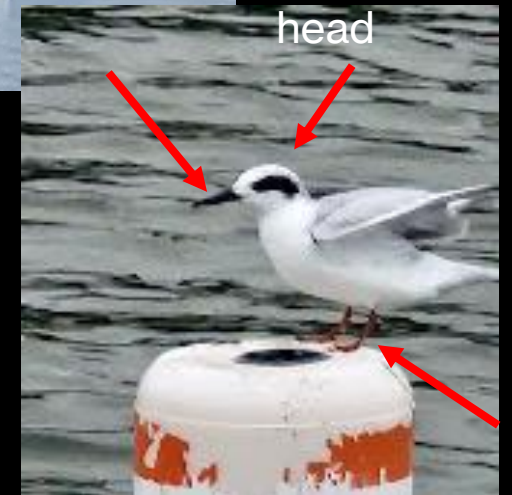
Photos: Bonaparte's Gulls, Ring Billed Gulls-mature, Ring Bill Gulls - juvenile, Forster's Tern



Majority of gulls on Fishhook are the RING BILLED GULLS



Forster's Tern Markings – bill, feet, head



Bonaparte's Gull

- Bonaparte's, Franklin Gull, and Terns represent only 10% of the gulls on the lake in the evening and can be found flying around the lake during the day
- Caspian Terns are quick and acrobatic in their flying
- Ring Billed Gulls tend to leave the lake during the day, and return in the evening to roost



Seasonal plumage





Bonaparte Gulls &
Forster's Terns



Forster's Terns,
Bonaparte Gulls
Ring Billed Gulls



May 4, 2025 --- Sunny Shores

Gulls on the lake at sunset



Photos facing West above,
facing East below at the same time



- Most evenings starting in August– you will find between 2000- 4000 gulls on the lake at sunset
- 90% are the Ring Billed Gulls
- They start flying onto the lake about 30 min before sunset
- They fly onto the lake at a rate of 75-100 per minute – and they stay there for the night
- They generally come from the south following the Fishhook River – quiet when they fly
- More and more continue onto the lake until dark and beyond
- They tend to roost on the deepest part of the lake
- Some nights they are super noisy, sometimes quiet

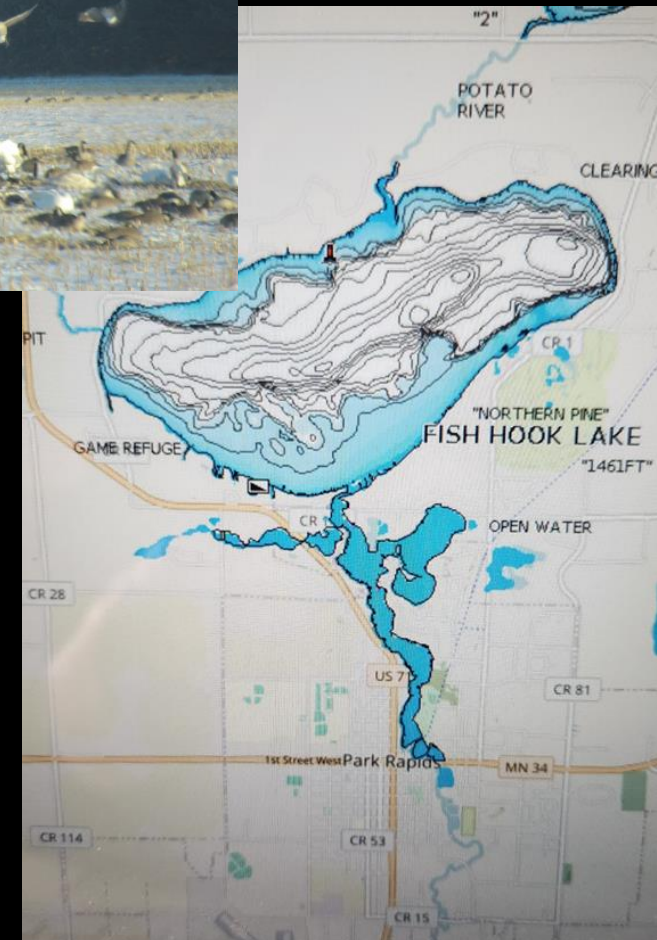
Where are they during the day?



Fishhook Lake is uniquely positioned with the river, and the agricultural fields in close proximity.

For the autumn, you can find Gulls, Geese, Swans enjoying bountiful feasts in the corn and wheat fields just south & west of Park Rapids

Then about 30 min before sunset – they head onto Fishhook for a drink and a nap!





Sept 8, 2024



Sept 15, 2024



Gulls flying off the lake (10/16/24) 7:18 am
How many do you count in 42 seconds?

Most gulls on Fri Nov 8?



Very spread out – not grouped on the deepest part of the lake
Continued to accumulate well after sunset/dark
Fairly quiet – and very spread out
Estimated – 4500-5000 gulls



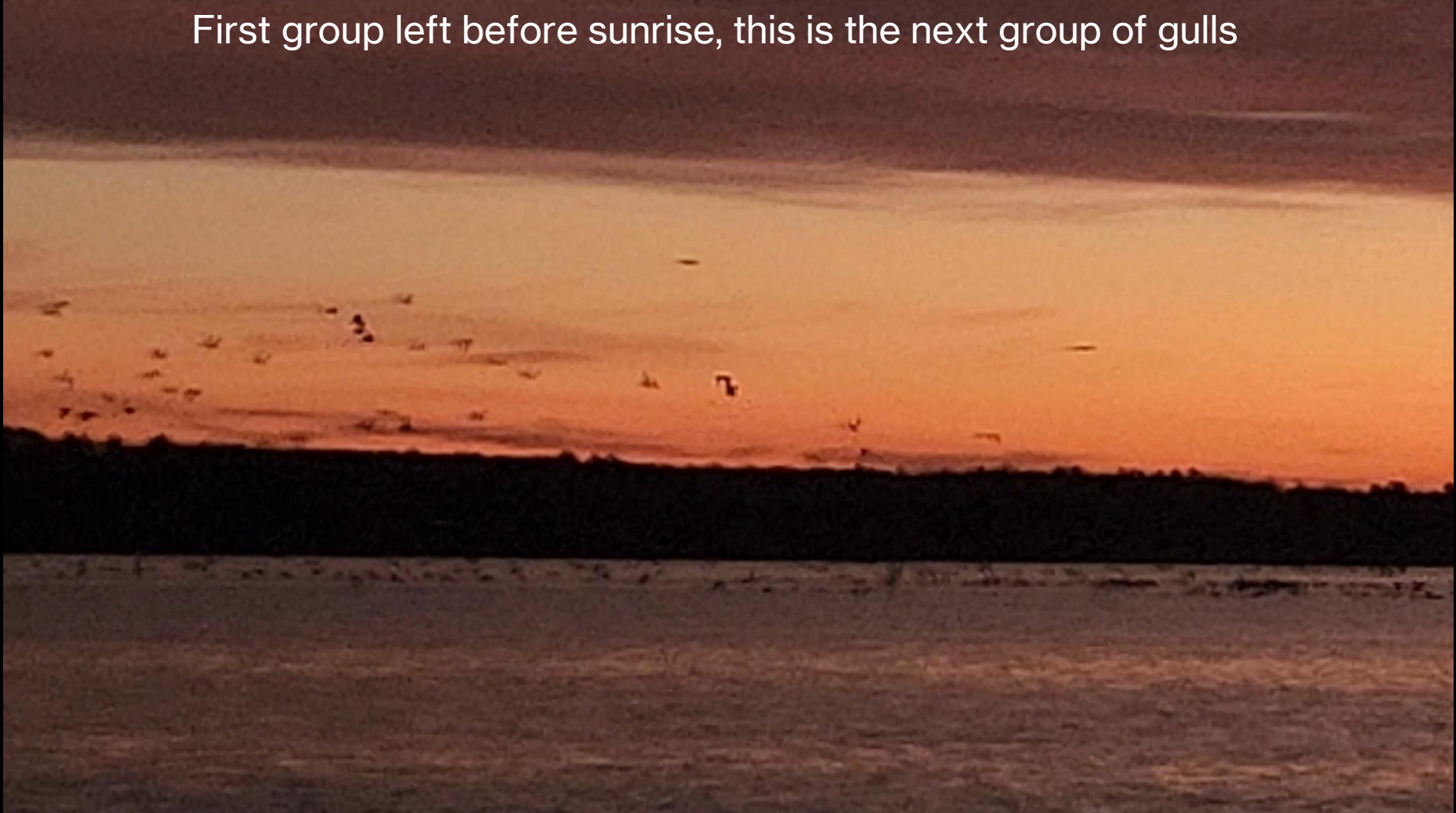
First light – Nov 9th

Gulls on Fishhook Lake – estimated 8000



Sunrise – Nov 9th

First group left before sunrise, this is the next group of gulls



Nov 19, 2024 --- gulls at sunset – last boat ride of the season





Friday, May 23, 2025 -- sunset



Next presentation will be swans or
wildlife or acrylic painting!

For more info contact:

Sue Tomte
612-327-3710

