

Lake Koshkonong residents shore up the shore

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By Brian E. Clark/Gazette Staff

LAKE KOSHKONONG-It was cleanup time along Cow Path Lane on Sunday, thanks to high water and a strong westerly wind that was pushing all kinds of jetsam and flotsam onto residents' lawns.

"We've got bottles, plastic jugs, telephone poles, tree limbs, big honkin' logs and just about anything else that might be floating free around the lake," said Linda Kent of Fort Atkinson as she raked the small lawn in front of her parents' cottage on Lake Koshkonong.

"Some of it is really gross," she said. "But once we get it picked up, the yard will look just fine."

A spot where waves eroded five feet of lawn will take a little longer to fix, said her husband, Vince.

"We'll have to rock it in to stop future erosion," he said.

Vince said neighbors were also pulling all kinds of debris from their property.

"In fact, our rowboat ended up on a neighbor's lawn," he said. "If your stuff isn't tied down well and above the water line, chances are good it will get carried away."

Terry Condon, who has a vacation home on Vinne Ha-Ha Lane, said he had picked up a jar of peanut butter, dead fish, firewood and plastic toys from his lawn.

But it's nothing like 10 years ago when a whole front porch floated up on his waterfront property during flooding.

"No one claimed it, so after a while we just burned it," explained Condon, who lives in Geneva, Ill., when he's not at his lake house.

Denis Murray, whose home is on Lake Shore Drive, said he and his wife were mystified when they looked out their living room window Tuesday and saw what appeared to be a Salvador Dali painting on the water covering their front yard.

"It was about 50-feet wide and 40-feet long, with fine curves and swirls," he said.

Later that night, waves broke apart the creation, leaving what Murray said were globs of paint on his porch steps.

Don Bush, a fisheries supervisor for the south central region of the state Department of Natural Resources, said that the artwork in the Murray's yard probably was a natural phenomenon rather than a paint dumping.

"I didn't see it, but it was probably blue-green algae," he said. "It's a sign of summer, and people always thinks it's paint because it looks just like it because it has a iridescent sheen and can actually be a variety of colors."

Bush said Lake Koshkonong comes by many of the rich nutrients that help create the algae naturally. Add to that a score of sewer plants in the Rock River watershed, construction activity and thousands of people who

overfertilize their lawns and you have ideal conditions for algae blooms, he said.

Bush is not surprised that lakeshore property owners are finding all sorts of debris on their lawns.

"About the only thing we haven't found is Jimmy Hoffa," he quipped. "You get people's piers, garbage, boats and even floating bogs of cattail marsh that break off and float around the lake."

Bush said people should stay away from the algae because it is believed to contain neurotoxins that can be harmful.

In Dane County , authorities believe a dog died after swimming in the algae in Lake Kegonsa .

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