

From the Director

Becky Abel, WWA Executive Director

Wetlands in Color!



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With this issue of *Wisconsin Wetlands*, we roll out our new, full-color design. We have produced our quarterly newsletter using a two-color "shell" and black and white interior for many years now, mostly because it was economical. But if any organization needs a colorful newsletter, it is probably Wisconsin Wetlands Association, since vibrant photos can support our organizational goal of "increasing public understanding of wetlands in a charismatic way."

Our *Wetland Gems* program has reinforced for us the important lesson that our efforts to increase public valuation of wetlands must include positive messages about the beauty of wetlands and wetland creatures. Our newsletter is another tool for us to address this. Fortunately, the cost of color printing has come down significantly in recent years with the development of new printing technologies and we are able to make our strategic shift to color with just a minimal increase in cost.

In preparing for our newsletter's face-lift, we surveyed you, our members, to find out what you liked and didn't like about our older format. Our design was limiting our flexibility with content, so we knew that changes were in order. But we didn't have a good sense of what our most popular features were and how we should modify content while updating our design.

We were proud of the avalanche of positive responses to our survey and are delighted to learn that the majority of respondents read our newsletter from cover to cover! We will incorporate many of your smaller suggestions into our upcoming newsletters and will work to make one significant change. Many people requested more natural history articles. We agree that these have been some of our most interesting stories and have added a fascinating selection this issue—an article about leeches written by

WWA Board Chair Mary Linton, perhaps the only person I know who could make leeches seem charming (page 5). We are hoping you can assist us by providing ideas for future stories and authors, so that we can cover the diversity of interesting wetland topics with subject experts. Can you or someone you know write about freshwater sponges? Climate change and amphibians? Carnivorous plants? Any of the other myriad fascinating wetland stories? Send your suggestions to programs@wisconsinwetlands.org. Space is limited, so we can't promise to include all of your article suggestions, but we will do our best.

There were a number of comments from survey respondents about the pros and cons of switching to an electronic newsletter format. By

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far the majority of you prefer the paper copy, and we do feel that this format is important for us, since it also allows us to distribute newsletters at events and to targeted individuals. There was, however, some confusion about the

differences between our member newsletter, *Wisconsin Wetlands*, and our electronic *Wetland News* and *Wetland Alerts*. See page 7 for an explanation of the content and audience for our print versus electronic reporting.

We are grateful to WWA member (and artist) Birgit Bach for her assistance with our newsletter re-design and to WWA Outreach Programs Director Katie Beilfuss for her oversight of the re-design and her commitment to producing and editing a high-quality, informative newsletter. We hope you will share our excitement over our new look as we step up our efforts to change public perception of wetlands as places worthy of exploration, inspiration and protection.

Becky