

Waukewan and Winona Watershed Protective Association

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An Environmental Organization Protecting the Waukewan and Winona Watershed

Message from Dave and Deb

Volume 7, Issue 1: Early Autumn 2018

Our Mission

“The mission of the Waukewan and Winona Watershed Protective Association is to encourage and support long range planning, responsible lake level management and sound conservation techniques to preserve the ecology, environment and natural beauty of the Waukewan and Winona Watershed. It serves as a voice for its members in matters of group concern with regard to the environment and seeks to assist with scientific studies, education programs and the preparation and dissemination of educational materials”

Welcome to a new season in the watershed!

This past season brought news of the Chinese Mystery Snail invasion on Lake Waukewan, failed or troubled loon nesting attempts on all of our water bodies, an invasive Water Chestnut found on a fishing boat on Lake Waukewan by one of the lake hosts and, most recently, a toxic Cyanobacteria bloom on Lake Winona. Oh, and don't forget the “swimming” squirrels! There were days when good news for our watershed was hard to find!

Climate change is definitely having an impact on us. Shorter, milder winters and the endless sunny, hot days this past summer, though delightful for those of us who love to swim and boat, are actually hard on the environment. These early fall days with cooler temperatures and occasional rain have come as a relief.

The good news is that more people are becoming aware of just how fragile an ecosystem the watershed is. There are active Lake Host Programs

on both Winona and Waukewan, with new volunteers signed up for next season on Waukewan. Neighbors on Winona have found a way to help stabilize the level of Snake River, in spite of the beavers, so that the lake's water level doesn't change so dramatically with every rainfall, and more and more septic systems around our lakes have been voluntarily upgraded or replaced. These are all good developments.

We are always looking for new members. If you are interested, please contact one of our Board members. Our contact information is on the bottom of page 4.

We hope you have an enjoyable fall and healthy winter.

Dave Reilly and Deb Corr
Co-Chairmen

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NH Lakes Conference 2018 by Sharon O'Donnell

The 25th NH Lakes Conference was held at Church Landing in Meredith on June 1 and was sold out with over 200 people in attendance from all over the state of NH. Fifteen workshops related to environmental issues were offered in addition to lunch table discussions focusing on how to keep our lakes clean and healthy.

Dr. Ken Wagner, who served as president of the North American Lake Management Society, gave the keynote address. He focused on climate change and our lakes and discussed steps that need to be taken to help our lakes adapt to the negative impacts of climate change, especially phosphorus. Climate change is ongoing, and the causes are debatable. Dr. Wagner pointed out that the changes are not rapidly reversible, and we have to learn to adjust. Not all areas of the US are affected equally. In the

Sharon O'Donnell at the NH Lakes Conference, June, 2018



well. Dr. Wagner suggested that in order to counter the effects of climate change, we need to increase protective watershed management, runoff storage capacity and weed control efforts.

Northeast region we will see a slight increase in precipitation, warm winters, shorter periods of ice cover, warmer summers, warmer water, and fewer but more intense storms. Dr. Wagner said that a warming trend began in the post World War II era, and he suggested that since 1960, our lakes, on average, experience ice out two weeks earlier. He suspects impervious surfaces and increased development are contributing factors. Increasing temperatures have led to a subsequent increase in cyanobacteria blooms as

This event was well worth the effort to attend, and I would suggest that anyone who cares deeply about the future of our lakes make an effort to attend next year.

The next NH Lakes Conference will be held again at Church Landing in Meredith on May 31, 2019. Please plan to attend.

Swimming Squirrels by Andrea Siani (Chapman Island Resident)

Have you seen the grey squirrels crisscrossing Lake Waukewan this late summer? In early September while boating across the lake we spotted something small swimming in the water. When we got closer, expecting a mink or otter, we were surprised to see a grey squirrel. We assumed it was lost and struggling and were hesitant to assist it in case it was sick. It was swimming between Chapman Point and Chapman Island. We spent a day worrying about the possibly struggling squirrel. Then the next afternoon we saw another one and the next day 2 more. We realized they were going to and from the islands on the lake. We spoke with others marveling about this new phenomenon on the lake. A canoeist said he has been canoeing on this lake for over 50 years and has never seen a swimming squirrel. I consulted Ms. Google and found on NHPR's Ask Sam segment, this phenomenon was addressed on September 17, 2018. See link at far right to learn more.

Every other Friday Sam Evans-Brown “tracks down answers to questions about the environment and outdoors” for NHPR listeners. Lucky for us our question was already asked. What is going on?...is this a sign of Apocalypse? Sam has recently also been asked about the increased squirrel road kill being reported. He answered both questions, “because last year was a “mast year” for our local oak trees, meaning there were more acorns than usual in the forest. More acorns last year means



more squirrels this year. Simple.” He went on to say that many well-fed squirrels had 2 litters, which leads to more squirrels looking for new home territory and food. And yes, squirrels do swim and “they do so because they are hungry.”

Sam’s research led to reports in 1920 of squirrels swimming in large bodies of water and many reports way before that in the 1800’s. Both nature’s food and animal populations experience “boom-bust” cycles. So squirrels swimming in Lake Waukewan are just part of the evolutionary dance that has been going on since long before we were in the picture”.

Here’s to a beautiful fall ahead with additional creatures sharing Waukewan’s lovely waters.

<http://www.nhpr.org/post/ask-sam-i-saw-squirrel-swimming-was-it-sign-apocalypse#stream/0>

Photo by Andrea Siani

Water Chestnuts, Invasive Snails—What to Do? by Deb Corr

By now you’ve probably heard about the Chinese Mystery Snail present in Lake Waukewan.

Last year a few of the snails were found at the Waukewan Boat Launch at the Meredith end of the lake, so this year several volunteers gathered a few times to collect them. One of our member families gathered well over 200 of them near the boat launch and by the town beach, and Monkey Pond area, and other volunteers had similar results.

What does this mean for Lake Waukewan—and for the rest of our watershed?

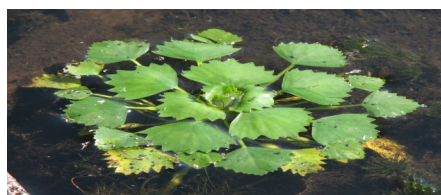
According to the NHDES the Chinese Mystery Snail has been present in NH’s waters for many years. They can compete with native species for food and space and eat both organic and inorganic substances. Because of the unique way that they can close the opening of their shells, it is hard to control them. **Collecting them by hand** seems to be the only effective way to reduce their numbers once they have taken up residence in a waterbody, and because of their small size when they are first born, they spread easily to other bodies of water by attaching to

boats, bait buckets, plants or in the wells of boats. In winter they head for deeper water to avoid the cold. Females live about 5 years and can each produce about 170 young, so it is easy to see that a population explosion is possible.

If you find any, you can report your findings to the NH DES Exotic Species Program (603) 271-2248 or the NH Fish and Game Department (603) 271-3421.

As far as we know the invasive Water Chestnut has not been found anywhere in our watershed. However, they have been found in NH’s waters. A lake host on Waukewan found a seed on a fishing boat before it entered the lake and removed it. These are truly horrible invasives. We need to keep them out of our watershed!

(File Photo: WC Plant Cluster)



(File photo: WC Seed Pods)



Mystery Snails Collected on July 6 in Waukewan by one of our member families.. (Photo by Deb Corr)



A Beaver Solution for Lake Winona by Dave Reilly

The Snake River connects Lakes Winona and Waukewan, and for as long as anyone can remember beavers have built dams across it to hold back water. The result has often been severe flooding on Lake Winona.

Groups of shorefront property owners on Winona (and sometimes good friends on Waukewan) have struggled to clear the dams to keep water flowing steadily along the waterway and restore normal flows.

Periodically, beaver trappers have come in to relieve the situation, but the beavers have always come back because they are attracted to running water and instinctively try to dam it up for

Snake River and Lake Waukewan cir 1910

Photo from the collection of Dave Reilly.

their safety.

In June 2017 a committee was formed by the Lake Winona Improvement Association to try to address the problem. That committee reported back to the group in August of 2017 with a plan to install what is called a “Beaver Deceiver”—an environmentally low impact solution that also does no harm to the beavers.

The beaver dam pipe chosen by the LWIA committee has the effect of allowing water

to flow down through a pipe on the upstream side of the beaver dam down below the dam and out on the other side.

The beaver committee was given a small amount of money by the LWIA to purchase materials, and then volunteers installed the flow device and piping before last winter.

At this point in time there has been no new beaver activity at the dam site up Snake River near Lake Winona so the Beaver Deceiver appears to be working.

For the first time in many years, Lakes Winona and Waukewan are basically at the same level—a welcome result.



2018 Update on Our Watershed's Loons

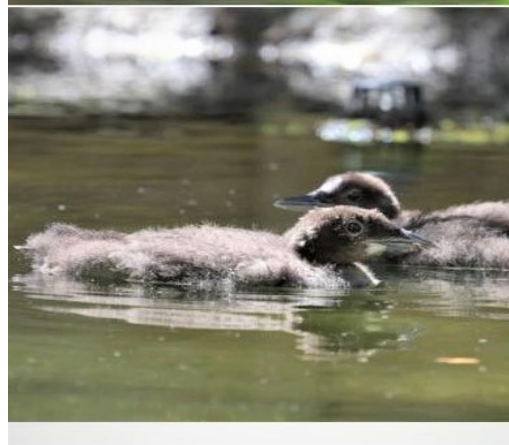
Spring began in 2018 with great hope with the return of the breeding loon pairs on Hawkins Pond, Lake Winona and Lake Waukewan.

The pair on Hawkins Pond were first to hatch two fluffy chicks, but almost as soon as they appeared, they disappeared—probably taken by snapping turtles or even an eagle.

The pair on Lake Winona once again used the Loon Nesting Raft, and by July 6, there was one little one on the water and soon, number 2 made its appearance. Sadly, however, one of the two chicks disappeared shortly thereafter.

Then, during a banding effort on July 23, the remaining chick was found to have suffered a terrible injury. Almost half of its lower beak was broken off.

The little chick was taken to Avian Haven in Maine with guarded hope for its survival. Linda Heminway from Winona reports that, fortunately, it has been able to feed itself, but the concern



has been that it might not ever be able to oil its feathers. However, John Cooley, LPC Senior Biologist, has just informed us that it seems to be doing very well, preening and oiling its feathers. They plan to release it on the Maine coast on 9/26 or 27.

The Jenness Cove loon pair on Waukewan laid two eggs but abandoned their nest. It's possible that human encroachment, extreme heat or black flies drove the parents from the nest. Bald eagles have also been problematic in recent years. We hope this pair has better luck next summer. The Snake River pair did not nest this year.

Top Photo: Winona Loon Chick with its injured bill.

Bottom Photo: Winona Loon Chick in the foreground with a recovering Chick from Pea Porridge Pond.

Photos Courtesy of Avian Haven

Harry Vogel, Chairman of the LPC, Returns as Summer's Guest Speaker

We were fortunate once again to be able to host Harry Vogel, Chairman of the Loon Preservation Committee, on August 15 as our summer speaker.

Harry reviewed the history of the LPC for those people in attendance who were unfamiliar with their work, and then he spoke about the work that has taken place over the past year.

Climate change is on the minds of most people who care about the environment. Through their studies, LPC has been able to track the effects of weather on loon nesting success. They believe that warmer or wetter weather during attempted nestings results in a higher number of nest failures. Loons are cool weather creatures, and LPC's scientists are looking at ways to help protect loons from temperature extremes such as those we experienced this past summer.

Caroline Hughes, LPC Staff Biologist, is using her Master's thesis to investigate different raft covering materials that can shade the nesting raft, making it a cooler environment for the loons and their eggs. The rafts are equipped



with sensors to measure temperature, and game cameras are used to monitor the rafts.

At the time of Harry's presentation, results from this year's loon census had not been confirmed. Since then, however, we have received preliminary results.

In summary: 513 observers covered 126 of NH's lakes during the census. A total of 469 adult loons were tallied, 5 immature loons (1-2 years old) and 86 loon chicks. Preliminary numbers saw an increase in the number of nesting pairs, chicks hatched and chicks surviving but more chicks were lost at a higher rate than usual. There is still high mortality in adult loons from ingested lead fishing tackle.

Lake Winona nesting raft, with 2 eggs. June 2018.
Photo by Linda Heminway

Proposed Changes to NH's Wetland Rules

In case you missed it the NHDES has been in the process of rewriting the Wetland Regulations for the State.

The Wetland Regulations govern development around wetlands-granting of building permits, etc.- which means they directly affect development of our watershed.

This is the first complete rewrite of the code since the 1990s and has been in the works since 2014.

At this point the NHDES has held many meetings around the state to get input from groups and citizens about potential impacts from new regu-

lations. Two of our members attended a couple of hearings to try to gather information, and one important piece is that anything affecting docks has been sent to a legislative committee for study.

In our research on this topic we have found that many conservation groups, lake organizations and individuals from around the State are asking good questions and making suggestions.

There are many, many concerns about this rewrite, and anyone interested in how the Wetland Regulations might affect them should make an effort to become educated about it. The process is

lengthy, but the time to respond to changes is before they happen—not after.

We encourage everyone in our watershed with shorefront property to learn about this subject.

Just google NHDES. The draft wetland regulations are under Hot Topics at the bottom of the Home Page.

Who Are The Members of Our Board?

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A Last Look at Summer (Early Boat Parade on Lake Waukewan, Cir. 1954)
Old Photo by Bill Fairbanks