

Waukewan and Winona Watershed Protective Association

P.O. Box 451, Meredith, NH 03253

Website: WWWPA.org

Email: info@wwwpa.org

An Environmental Organization Protecting the Waukewan and Winona Watershed

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Newsletter Editor : Jamie Heminway



Photo by Sharon O'Donnell

Gardening Native to Preserve the Watershed

By Catherine Greenleaf

It may be hard to believe, but everything we do on our lakefront properties has an impact on the watershed that surrounds us. The watershed is a precious resource, providing us with clean drinking water and the crystal-clear water we enjoy every summer for swimming, boating and fishing.

There is a great deal we can do to keep the watershed safe and clean. Keeping nature in balance by planting native species is surely one of the biggest. Here are a few tips:

HOLD ON TO THAT WATER

As climate change diminishes the amount of much-needed snow pack and snow melt each spring, forests are becoming drier, making them more prone to fire and disease.

It may be tempting to select a non-native ornamental tree, like a Japa-

nese maple, for your front yard. However, most trees from foreign countries develop very shallow root systems and struggle to survive in a region for which they are not suited.

Instead, consider planting native trees purchased from local native nurseries like the New Hampshire State Forest Nursery in Boscawen (buynhseedlings.com). These trees grow deep, extensive root systems, helping you to retain thousands of gallons of water on your property, which can prevent drought and fire, according to plant scientists. In addition, these roots stop and hold polluted stormwater run-off from reaching your lake and also diminish localized flooding.

The other good news: planting native prevents the transmission of exotic pest diseases from foreign countries, which are on the rise.

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Mission Statement



WAUKEWAN AND WINONA
WATERSHED PROTECTIVE ASSOCIATION

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.

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SAY 'NO THANK YOU' TO PREDATORY LANDSCAPERS

There are, unfortunately, some greedy landscaping companies that have little to no regard for your family's health, the health of the lake you reside on, or the local watershed.

Typically, they will push the sale and installation of non-sustainable turf grass as well as exotic ornamentals, and then hit you up with a costly maintenance contract to regularly apply fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides on your property, which can seep into your drinking water well and also end up as runoff into the lake, according to the EPA.

The bottom line is they know full well they are selling you trees and shrubs from foreign countries that are not suited to the climate of the New Hamp-

shire lakes region. Odds are high the trees will die within a few years, creating repeat business for them.

LAWNS BE GONE

The time has come to seriously consider killing your lawn. Lawns are water hogs, as are exotic ornamental trees and shrubs, sucking up obscene amounts of water that diminish the watershed's supply as well as your town's water supply.

You can slowly and gradually replace your lawn by planting all four edges with native bushes and plants. Each year, add another layer of natives and soon you will have a beautiful garden that supports pollinators, birds and other wildlife. The great thing about natives: after establishing them during the first year, they don't need to be watered!

DON'T GET FOOLED BY CULTIVARS

A scheme commonly employed by some conventional garden centers and nurseries is to try to sell you cultivars, which they claim are natives. Don't get fooled. There is nothing natural about these hybridized versions of native plants. They are bred to produce larger blooms and brighter colors, and provide little to no benefit to wildlife, according to plant ecologists. Worst yet, they are often treated with deadly insecticides like neonicotinoids. They look so different from their true native counterparts that pollinators like bumblebees and hummingbirds won't recognize them as a food source and will pass them by.

If the plant you are looking at has a fancy name on its ID tag like "Red Dynamite," then it is a cultivar and not a true native.

Consider joining a native plant society like [New Hampshire Pollinator Pathways](#) and start showing up at local native plant sales to find true natives.

BE AWARE OF ASIAN JUMPING WORMS

Perhaps the greatest threat to our Lakes Region watersheds is the growing presence of the Asian jumping worm.

Shipped from Asia for decades and sold as bait worms for fishing, *Amynta agrestis* voraciously consumes the vital top layer of the soil in forested areas, damaging trees and plants and leaving be-

Photo by Sharon O'Donnell



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Trout Stocking in Waukewan and Winona

By Deb Finch

Did you know that NH Fish and Game stocks our lakes on a yearly basis? This is just some of the behind-the-scenes work done to keep our lakes viable. According to John Viar, NH Fisheries Biologist, "Stocking takes place annually to provide trout fishing opportunities that otherwise would not be available to anglers. This is classic 'put, grow, and take' management, specifically managed for sportfishing."

Past stocking included Brown Trout and Eastern Brook Trout. Today, NH Fish and Game has been working to ensure Rainbow Trout are brought back to former population levels; this year, almost one million fish will be released in NH's waterways. The one-and-a-half-year-old fish for Waukewan and Winona came from Powder Mill Fish Hatchery in New Durham, NH. There are six fish hatcheries located throughout the state of NH. One is in New Hampton!

In May 2023, Waukewan was stocked with 2,000 Rainbow Trout, giving it an average of one fish per acre. Last year, Waukewan was stocked with 1,971

Rainbow Trout. Winona received 750 fish this year with an average of 3 per acre. Check [this link](#) for an interactive map of the stocking of all waterways.

As to whether NH Fish and Game tracks and monitors the fish levels, Viar said: "Unfortunately, we don't have nearly the personnel to formally net or otherwise survey these water bodies, but both lakes have a history of producing very nice hold-over rainbow trout — especially Waukewan. In the past, when both were also fall-stocked with additional rainbow trout, and retired broodstock brook trout were also stocked into Winona, admittedly, and not surprisingly, results were even more noteworthy." So, if you like fishing, know that NH Fish & Game is helping to make sure there are fish to catch!

There are lots of opportunities to learn, too. NH Fish & Game offers Learn to Fish programs on basic skills, fly fishing, fly tying, and ice fishing. There is something here for the whole family. In addition, you can visit many of the fish hatcheries to learn more about the fish-raising process. For further information, check out the [NH Fish & Game website](#).

Update on Lake Winona Lake Host Program

By Catherine Greenleaf

The Lake Winona Lake Host program has secured adequate funding to pay a Lake Host to inspect boats for invasive species during the weekends for the summer, beginning with the July 4th holiday weekend.

The funding will cover paid employment of a Lake Host to work eight hours on Saturdays and eight hours on Sundays for ten weeks until Labor Day weekend.

Lake Host coordinator Kay Anderson said she would like to see coverage at the boat launch extended to an earlier start date of Memorial Day weekend next year, and is seeking donations, which can be made directly to the [NH Lakes Association](#).

The Lake Host program was initiated by the New Hampshire Lakes Association with the goal to find, remove, and eradicate invasive plant and animal species that clog waterways and outcompete native wildlife, like the Chinese mystery snail and the green sunfish, a popular aquarium pet.



Photo by Tracey Pratt

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GROWING NATIVE — Continued from page 2...

hind a distorted soil composition that can render entire woodland areas sterile. This top layer, often referred to as the duff layer, is the highly nutritious and spongy top three inches of soil that tree seedlings need to become established.

According to Professor Josef H. Gorres, a plant and soil scientist at the University of Vermont, Asian jumping worms are a true danger to our New England woodlands. They permanently damage the soil, bring the growth of forests to a halt, and prevent everything (from insects and salamanders to turtles and birds) from finding the food they need to survive.

While scientists and state officials grapple with the best way forward on this menace, you can prevent

the spread of Asian jumping worms in your watershed by avoiding the purchase of bagged topsoil and mulch. State authorities are claiming they are often spread by infested products sold at some conventional garden centers. Be wary of any topsoil brought to your property by landscapers as well as any fill used for construction. Make your own soil with a composter and use leaves for mulch. Also, be careful at any local plant swap events.

The safest way to avoid Asian jumping worms is to buy only native plant species and to buy them from trusted local growers that raise their seedlings on-site, so they know the origin of their soil medium.

To be even safer, buy only bare-root tree and plant seedlings, since these plants have no soil attached.

For more info, go to extension.unh.edu.



Photo by Sharon O'Donnell

Guardrail Replacement on Winona Road Slated for 2025 or Later

By Catherine Greenleaf

The guardrail replacement project planned for Winona Road in the Center Harbor area may not begin until 2025 or later, according to a New Hampshire Department of Transportation engineer involved in the project.

“This will be a simple safety improvement project involving replacing the guardrail out there,” said Samantha Fifield, a chief engineer with the NH DOT.

Fifield said the project, which involves replacing 1,200 feet of safety guardrail along the eastern edge of Lake Winona, would more than likely take place in a couple of years.

She attributed the delays to both a lack of trained employees and a lack of funds within NH DOT.

“We are severely limited in human resources and we have very little money in our budget for projects,” Fifield said.

The guardrails' replacement will more than likely require repair to the shoulder of the road, which is deteriorated. NH DOT is planning to schedule a round of geotechnical exploration in order to determine how to build up the slope that leads down to the shore of Lake Winona, if the level of deterioration proves severe.

“There is the possibility stone will have to be placed in the lake in order to build it (the slope) up,” said Fifield.

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WWWPA Members support Lake Waukewan Lake Host program

by Sharon O'Donnell

On Saturday, June 24, a lake host training program was held at Tim Whiting's house in Meredith, NH for the Lake Waukewan Lake Host Program. Five WWWPA Members have volunteered to support this program with their participation. Anne Sayers, Deb Corr, Sharon O'Donnell, and Dave Marsh will serve as participants on a weekly basis, while Deborah Finch will serve as a substitute when needed. Each participant will serve a two-hour shift on a weekly basis to inspect the boats entering the lake to check for invasive species. This program has an ongoing need for volunteers and encourages concerned members of the community to consider participating.

New Hampshire passed a law requiring an out-of-state boater decal, which went into effect on July 1, 2019, requiring all motor boats registered outside of New Hampshire and are operating on New Hampshire public waters to display a New Hampshire aquatic invasive species decal from the NHDES. They can be purchased online and the cost is \$20. They expire on December 31 of the year of purchase. It is understood that Marine Patrol will stop a boat on the lake that does not display this decal, and a violation is punishable by a fine.

A message from the Loon Preservation Committee:

Save a Loon—Turn in Your Lead Fishing Tackle!

Lead poisoning resulting from the ingestion of lead fishing tackle is by far the largest known killer of adult loons in the state, and has been responsible for over 40% of documented adult loon mortalities in New Hampshire since 1989. Lead sinkers and lead-headed jigs weighing one ounce or less (the sizes most often ingested by loons) have been illegal for sale and freshwater use in New Hampshire since 2016. Help us protect the loons on Waukewan and Winona watersheds by cleaning out your tackle box and bringing any lead tackle to our annual meeting on Saturday, July 8 at 10:30 AM. The tackle will be transferred to the Loon Preservation Committee for proper disposal.

If you'd prefer to get cash for your old lead, you can participate in the Loon Preservation Committee's Lead Tackle Buyback program. As part of this program, you can turn in lead tackle at participating retail locations, where you will receive a \$10 merchandise voucher to that location. LPC will award \$100 to the person who submits the largest amount of tackle at each participating shop and \$50 to the runner-up. Visit Loon.org/loonsafe for program details.

Photo by Tracey Pratt



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Otters in Our Watershed: Things You Otter Know!

By Linda Heminway

Are otters a friend or foe? What impact do they have on other wildlife? Otters might look soft and cuddly, but they remain dangerous wild animals. Otters have strong teeth and a powerful bite. So, whether you see an otter on land or in the water, be sure to maintain a safe distance of at least five kayak lengths or 60 feet.

In recent years, we have seen otters appear actively in our watershed. They were absent for a very long time, or at least were not in significant numbers. Growing up on Winona, I had never once seen an otter until I was an adult on our lake, and only really in the last decade or so. Seeing one was a very rare sighting. However, this year, they seem to be more present than in the past.

We all love to see otters; they are cute and fun to watch. Their habits are so sweet to see as they surface and dive. They are mainly nocturnal fishers, but occasionally are out during daylight hours, or at dusk.

Otters do not hibernate. In fact, their daytime activity increases in the winter months. Otters usually feed on four-to-six inch, slowly moving fish species. They also enjoy freshwater clams, crayfish, and all sorts of other water creatures.

Who else loves fish like they do? One answer is loons. Will an increase in otter activity mean our loons will have to breed elsewhere as our fish supply is depleted? That remains unanswered.

We have also noted the return of bald eagles in our watershed, but Some in our watershed have witnessed bald eagles taking a loon chick and harassing the loons. Bald eagles' primary food is also fish.

Keeping the fish supply in mind, please be careful not to disturb the round fish nests that our sunfish make along the shore. Sunfish are valuable food for our wildlife, and a few inconvenient weeks until the fish are done with a particular place is worthwhile to protect species of fish that feed other creatures. It is a delicate balance. Please let children, especially, know that these fish nests are life-giving.

Otters have very handy pouches (think kangaroo) for carrying leftovers and tools, which they rely on to get to all that succulent goodness concealed within a hard shell. They will use a small rock or stick as a rudimentary tool to crack clam shells. They are very intelligent.

Otters can represent a threat to small pets; they can kill small do-

mestic dogs and felines. So, protect your pets, especially at dusk or dawn.

In the past, otters were trapped for their pelts, but not as much in these times. Otters are protected from trapping, hunting, and other harvest in 17 states. 27 states have seasons for trapping them, while four states and two provinces have seasons for hunting them. New Hampshire does allow trapping them; however, this practice is closely regulated by the state. Licenses are available through [Fish and Game](#). Only NH residents may have licenses to trap them, and there are [regulations](#) about the time of day and year. Otters may only be trapped during November 1 through April 10 each year. Otters are still trapped for their pelts, as are beaver, but less and less of it is happening. We can do better to protect all the species that inhabit our lakes and streams. This is why trapping is highly regulated and special classes are offered.

A nuisance animal is cause to call Fish and Game and involve them. Otters may take up residence under your cottage or a deck. Their droppings may make an unpleasant odor, as would a multitude of fish remains. So, if this unfortunate occurrence happens, that is when it is appropriate to call Fish and Game. There are wildlife control officers who are specially trained to deal with nuisance wildlife.

We shall continue to monitor the otter activity and appreciate hearing reports from you, and your neighbors, about what you see.



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Loons in Our Watershed

By Linda Heminway

There are two loon pairs on Waukewan and one pair on Winona. One of the pairs on Waukewan has hatched two chicks, and the pair on Winona has hatched one chick.

Our field biologist from the Loon Preservation Committee, Sarah Kinicki, indicates the loon pair on Hawkins Pond is "foraging," but not known to be nesting. They were foraging on the opposite side of the lake from the raft, so they may try to nest in a different location. However, loons are tricky and there could be an unknown nest in the marshy areas of Hawkins Pond. It is not likely as both of the loons were observed together, which means neither was incubating eggs.

The Jenness Cove loons hatched two chicks. According to the loon biologist, one of the Snake River loons in the other pair was apparently in a fight and may have a head injury. Until the injury has been confirmed, the Loon Preservation Committee will not make

any rescue efforts.

The Winona pair hatched one chick on June 29. At the time of writing this, we are unsure as to whether the pair has a second egg on the nest or not.

By the time this newsletter is published, there could be an update on whether more chicks have safely hatched and if the chicks have survived. Predators can find loon chicks very tasty. We do our best, as field volunteers, to protect the nesting loons, but we have no ability to protect them once they hatch and are out and about on the lakes.

Loon Safety

This is a very good time to mention contact with loons. Please remain at least 150 feet from a nesting loon, or more if a loon shows any signs of distress such as hanging its neck low over a nest. When observing a chick, also remain 150 feet away.

Loon parents have a big job to do over the course of the first 12 weeks of a chick's life. They need to constantly feed their chicks and keep an eye out for potential predators. Sometimes, the loons will come close to you if you are in a small vessel and sitting quietly, which can be the best time to observe them. I know I am always grateful for these special moments.

Additionally, do not use any lead tackle when fishing (see the blurb from the Loon Preservation Committee about lead tackle). Loons may ingest lead fishing tackle attached to a fish that escapes with your lure/sinker attached. These weaker fish are slower, which

makes loons more apt to capture and ingest them, along with the lead. The majority of loons that die from ingested lead tackle acquire it as a result of current fishing activity.

In some cases, loons may also pick up small pieces of lead tackle from a lake bottom. Loons normally ingest small pebbles (to help their digestion), and they may mistake a split shot or other piece of tackle for a pebble. Once ingested, the lead tackle goes into the loon's gizzard. The acid and grinding action of the gizzard erodes the lead, which then passes into the bloodstream and organs, poisoning the loon. Even a single small lead split shot sinker is fatal to loons, who will die within two to four weeks of ingesting a piece of lead fishing tackle.

While some might assume that the ingestion of fish hooks might cause loons to die, in fact only a small number of loons die from these injuries. Loons have evolved to swallow spiny fish, so they are able to deal with fish hooks. In the vast majority of loons, hooks are rapidly broken down in the gizzard.

If you have an old tackle box in a shed or garage and your kids or grandkids are coming to visit, go through and take any lead out so everyone will fish safely. It only takes a moment.

In our next newsletter, we hope to have an update on newly hatched chicks. We hope for the success of the loons in our watershed and that, with education, we become better able to preserve the loons in our watershed.



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2023 Lakes Congress - Info About Cyanobacteria Blooms

By Sharon O'Donnell

Each year, New Hampshire Lakes (a nonprofit organization advocating for the health of all lakes in NH) holds a Lakes Congress for leaders around the state to convene and learn about trends in the New Hampshire Lakes. This year, the congress was held on Friday, June 2, and the event was sold out. It has always been an excellent way for concerned leaders to network and get current information about our waterways. I attended several workshops and would like to share some information and notes I took.

I learned about cyanobacteria blooms in New Hampshire's lakes. Cyanobacteria blooms have been on our planet for 3.5 billion years. The blooms are very dynamic and their colors include: green, yellow, white, and brown. They cause damage, take oxygen out of the water, and kill fish. Toxicity can change over the course of a bloom, which makes it challenging to address. Blooms are increasing globally due to climate change. We are seeing blooms earlier in the spring and later in the fall seasons.

Anoxia (oxygen-depleted) zones are building up in the bottoms of our lakes, and we are seeing more intense storms and higher temperatures in the summer. This will impact the blooming season, and unmaintained septic systems may negatively impact our water bodies. Toxins can dissolve in the water for up to 14 days after the bloom has passed, causing difficulty in the lungs, liver, stomach, and neurological system. Dogs and wildlife can experience seizures, muscle weakness, and respiratory distress. The fish can become contaminated as well.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Sciences (NHDES) has a new online tool where anyone can report a new bloom. Your submitted form information remains private within DES. If a bloom tests positive through microscopic analysis, DES will issue an alert, advisory, or warning. Anyone can sign up to be on the alert list for one waterbody in the state after filling out a form on the DES website. 113 lakes have been flagged in the past, and last year there were 46 advisories. Some water bodies have multiple advisories and alerts. Over the last five years, the average advisory has lasted 25 days. August is the busiest month for blooms, with the most advisories issued. For more information, please contact the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Sciences.



Photo by Ryan O'Donnell

Who are the members of our board?

Sharon O'Donnell, Chair
Lake Waukewan

Linda Heminway, Secretary
Lake Winona

Deb Finch, Director
Lake Waukewan

Jeff Moody, Director
Lake Waukewan

Bea Thibault, Vice Chair
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