

The ~~Board~~ (Steenburg) Lake Community Association

STEENBURG LAKE

HASTINGS COUNTY

ONTARIO, CANADA

April 1973

HI FELLOW COTTAGERS:

Welcome to another season of Steenburg Lake enjoyment.

As mentioned in our letter last fall, the 1973 Annual Cottagers meeting will be held at the Orange Hall, St Ola at 8:00 p.m. July 21, 1973. Coffe will be served.

On March 28th, Tina and myself attended the Federation of Ontario Cottagers Association Annual Meeting in Toronto. It was an informative meeting attended by many representatit'es from all parts of Ontario.

Some of the topics discussed were:

- (a) Pollution Probe - discussed the prevention of pollution by the summer residents. In brief the recommendations were as follows:
1. Use of pure soap only for laundry. It dissolves quickly and completely in soft water. Detergents with no phosphates and bio-degradable are acceptable but not as good as pure soap as they don't dissolve as well.
 2. Don't use any form of fertilizer around the cottage, animal or chemical.
 3. Refrain from washing hair or body in the lake unless, again using pure soap.
 4. Look for liquid ponding on top of septic tile bed.
 5. Have septic tank pumped every 2 - 4 years depending on use. Don't allow to go any longer.
 6. Use of Dumps - Place garbage in bags or containers and throw well into the garbage dump. Do not drop any where outside the designated area.

This has been a real bone of contention on our lake. There are 2 dumps to serve us so please do your part to keep them clean. The cont' mis-use of the garbage dumps is bound to lead to the areas being condemned for garbage use and if so, our problem will be much worse. We have a truly beautiful lake. Lets keep it this way.

- (b) Government of Ontario, Department of Environment - Cottage Pollution Control Program's - An analysis is being done, by area, of existing water and sewage systems and controls being levied.
- (c) Capital Gains Tax - Evaluation of cottage properties at time of Capital Gains inception. This evaluation could be needed at a later date.
- (d) Ministry of Treasury and Economic Affairs
 - Elections
 - Assessments
 - Qualifying Candidates
 - Voting eligibility
- (e) Ontario Government - Canada Centre for Inland Waters
 - Controls made on water levelsOur control is managed by the Crowe Lake Conservation Authority.
- (f) Director of Safety Administration for the Ontario Provincial Police
 - Importance of "Operation Identification"
An aid to help enforce conviction in theft of stolen property. Through the cooperation of the local police (OPP in Madoc or Bancroft) and your independent general insurance agent an electronic pencil is available, to place your social security number on such items as outboard motors, small appliances, chain saws, and other items that are commonly stolen. This allows the police to have a positive means of identifying ownership, and helps as evidence in the conviction of those involved in the theft.
 - East Road Cottagers
Parking area on the east road at Highway #62. Did this location help you during the winter? I would appreciate your comments before approaching Limerick & Tudor Councils to discuss.

TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS - 1972

Tudor & Limerick Townships. The Lloyd Jrs and the J. B. McGeachies had the distinction of being the first people to cast their votes at Limerick Poles on November 27, 1972. The following is a list of elected candidates for each township:

TUDOR

LIMERICK

Reeve - Ross Sprackett

Reeve - Frank Robins

Council - Arnold Burkitt

Council - Clive Wilson

Tom Bruce

Mrs. Audrey MacKillican

Claude Davidson

Don L. Polmateer

Stan Robins

Robt Alton

I apologize for failing to notify Tudor Township Cottagers of their council election last fall, however, a few notices to certain cottagers helped to spread the word to their neighbours. I do not have a percentage count on how many cottagers exercised their right to vote.

CONSERVATION (along with pollution) is a topic that every one of us should take an active interest in. On this topic you will find attached an article written by Jack McGeachie which is most interesting. The McGeachie family are members and cottagers of long standing and avid naturalists. This is the second article Jack has produced for our letter, the other one being, "The History of Bass (Steenburg) Lake and a Recommendation for Preservation."

For those of you who are interested in saving the worlds wildlife, you can contact "The Elsa Wild Animal Appeal of Canada" Box 864, Postal Station K Toronto 12, Ontario. This organization presently is raising \$25,000 to complete a research into the cause of the diminishing loon population.

The visitation program last year was a success so we are planning again this year to have another visit. Please give your utmost co-operation and have any questions or suggestions ready for the visitation group.

The final page of this letter, contains a membership form to be completed. Would you kindly enclose your \$2.00 cheque or money order and return promptly. There is a space for any comments you may wish to make. Last years returns were quite interesting to read.

See you at the Lake.

G. R. Lloyd
President
Steenburg Lake Community Association

BASS LAKE FLORA AND FAUNA
THE WOOD DUCK, OSPREY AND LOON

The flora and fauna of the North Hastings County Region of which Bass lake (Steenburg Lake) forms a part is a rich heritage. The area is at 45° Latitude averaging 1100' above sea level. Being Pre-Cambrian shield country it alternates rocky ridges with swampy lowlands all interspersed with many lakes and streams. As varied as the topography is the life it sustains.

And sustain is what it did for the Wood Duck.

The decline and rise of the North American Wood Duck population is one of the few success stories among the many tales of disaster in man's attack on his environment. This beautiful little "summer duck" had everything going against it. Brilliant and varied plumage made it a target for milliners, fly fishermen and taxidermists. Feeding on wild rice in the fall, its excellent eating qualities made it a favourite of the pot hunter. Being easily called or decoyed it was gunned down in large numbers. The destruction of practically all of the mature timber over its range eliminated most of its nesting sites. These were mainly abandoned Pileated Woodpecker nesting holes.

At its low point the population was estimated to be no more than 500, of which 300 nested along Beaver Creek.

Belatedly it was given protection.

The first measure was a closed season and taking Wood Ducks for any purpose was completely prohibited. The measure was well intentioned and partially effective. The characteristic call and silhouette in flight identified it to the experienced sportsman who co-operated to spare it. But the habit of congregating in communal roosts at the end of the breeding season and before the annual migration left it a prey of local pot hunters. Shooting from cover in the roosts by the light of the harvest moon, they could not distinguish between species. And since they were operating illegally anyway, probably did not much care whether they took a prohibited species or not.

The next measure was to shorten the duck hunting season to reduce the pressure on all varieties. Opening of the season was delayed. This proved very favourable to the Wood Duck. Since it is an early migrant many left before the new season opened while the opening itself precipitated the departure of the rest. Dispersal on the flyways and better law enforcement further south reduced the kill.

The public were becoming aware that endangered species could not simply be legislated back to abundance by restrictive statutes. Individual and group involvement nurtured by favourable and plentiful publicity began to be very effective.

The Wood Duck rehabilitation was a case in point.

It was found that they adapted very readily to nesting in man-made nest boxes. The first of these were placed in large trees to simulate natural conditions and breeding pairs were enticed to "summer over" along the migrational flyways. This had the effect of dispersing the breeding stock and reduce the total hazard. Next it was found that the nest box was more important than the site. Boxes placed close to or over water at any height were acceptable and reduced the mortality of the newly hatched ducklings on their initial trip to water.

Sportsmen and conservation clubs began large scale operations. Probably the largest of these was in the Dundurn Marsh at Hamilton. Here the nest boxes were mounted on posts driven into the muck of the marsh itself through holes cut in the ice in the winter.

Thanks to efforts such as these the Wood Duck population has increased enough that special restrictions are no longer necessary. The breeding population has been dispersed to the point that their fate no longer hinges on the nucleus along Beaver Creek.

Two other birds, while not unique to the region, are noteworthy, one because it still breeds successfully at the lake, the other because it now seldom, if ever, does. Both are on the endangered list.

They are the Osprey and the Common Loon.

Both are fish eaters and as such they suffer from pesticide residues such as DDT accumulating in the food chain. This happens when small amounts of pesticide are picked up by plankton which are ingested and concentrated in fish which are in turn eaten by the birds, further increasing the concentration. The most obvious effect is the production of thin shelled eggs which cannot survive incubation.

- The birds mature slowly and it is believed that loons do not mate until at least five years old. Many at this age have accumulated sufficient residue that they never become successful breeders.

The Osprey and Loon are both long season residents at Bass Lake. The Osprey or Fish Hawk arrives before the lake ice goes out in the spring and the Loon shortly after. The young birds are the last to leave, the Osprey in October and the Loon in November.

The fact that the Ospreys have raised a pair of young each year for the past fifteen augurs well for the health of the lake. The birds have used the same nest for this period. It is a huge affair of several hundred pounds of sticks on the top of an old dead pine deep in the solitude of the swamp. However, as they have not been banded it is not known whether they are the original builders or succeeding generations. The ancient belief that an Osprey nest was a good omen is even more appropriate today.

Since the Osprey is still breeding successfully we have to look for reasons other than pesticide why young Loons are so seldom, if ever, observed at the lake.

The Loon is probably the oldest of our birds from an evolution point of view. It is the ultimate in grace in the water but completely helpless on land. Its legs are positioned far back on the body for efficiency in swimming. The birds cannot stand upright, walk or take off from the land. For this reason they nest on the ground at the water's edge. The two large eggs are dark olive brown with small black spots.

The Bass Lake Loons were the subject of a short story entitled "The Great Northern Diver" written by Samuel T. Wood of Belleville and published in his book called "Rambles of a Canadian Naturalist". This article was reprinted in the Ontario School Reader used in the early part of this century. The story starts with "Out of the night comes the weird, long call or the shrill, demoniacal laugh, telling of the sleepless activity of the Loon, or Great Northern Diver."

There used to be two breeding pairs on the lake and the little flotillas of parents and chicks were an intriguing sight. The chicks alternately swam or hitched a ride on the parents' back.

Finding a nest was an event. It was an opportunity not only to see the eggs but the birds very close at hand. The surge the old bird made in the shallow water to get away from the nest when surprised was spectacular. Unfortunately, the birds are very excitable and usually abandoned these discovered nests.

People pressure therefore, seems to be the problem.

As more and more cottages are built, less and less shoreline is available for the nesting sites. And while much suitable shoreline remains, human presence prevents its use. With the introduction of the two-day week-end, better transportation and personal insecticides, the summer population starts using the lake with or even before the arrival of the birds. When the first cottages were built, the traditional summer holidays started the first of July. In those earlier days the young Loons were already hatched by then.

Young Loons can still be seen on some of the remote lakes where activity does not start until the opening of the Bass season. As these lakes are opened to cottage development the last breeding locations will become unsuitable and the population will be reduced to a few non-breeding individuals. Attrition will eventually eliminate this residue.

The Common Loon appears destined to be uncommon in the area.

To survive it needs small wilderness lakes safe from the bull-dozer and the power saw, the aeroplane and the outboard motor. While there is still a reservoir of breeding birds, a few small lakes as yet undeveloped and strategically located should be chosen as primitive pocket parks. They could provide an oasis not only for Loons, but many more of our shier neighbours. The overflow would continue to add to the aesthetic value of the surrounding lakes of southern Ontario.

While these pocket parks would not be as spectacular as those at Killarney and James Bay (Polar Bear) they could be easily and quickly set up as many small lakes are still surrounded by Crown Lands. They are already under aerial surveillance by the Department of Lands and Forests and would only require posting.

Individual and collective pressure would be required for such a program.

This brief review of three of our bird neighbours illustrates three different patterns of man's involvement and responsibility for other forms of life.

First the Wood Duck, where mass slaughter for decoration, food and sport was stopped by regulation and the destruction of nesting sites remedied by provision of man-made substitutes more suitable than the original.

Second, the Osprey which has proven it can co-inhabit providing man does not contaminate the environment to the ultimate destruction of both.

And third; the Common Loon, which in addition to the problem of contamination, needs suitable nesting areas to survive.

Pollution is politically popular and is receiving mass attention and effort. Pollution control alone will not solve all of nature's man-made problems. Some of these which can be simply and easily fixed today will be very expensive, if not impossible, tomorrow.

J. B. McGeachie
July 1971

TO: Mrs. Anita Waddell,
Treasurer
Steenburg Lake Community Association,
5 Charles Tupper Dr.
West Hill, Ontario.
MLC 2A8

Dear Mrs. Waddell:

Enclosed is the \$2.00 for my membership for 1973.

Name

Address

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COMMENTS