

Otter Lake Landowners' Association (OLLA)



Otter Lake News



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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

What an exciting year we have had accomplishing many firsts! Our Lake Plan Committee put together their first draft of the *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan*. To let our members and non-members have a look at it, we organized our first (and maybe annual) Family Day Picnic. It was held at Camp Otterdale in June and was quite a success with close to 100 people in attendance. The final *Lake Plan* was presented at our Annual General Meeting in July. The audience was impressed, and our members passed a motion to accept the *Lake Plan* and to continue to work on the action items.

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To my knowledge, we are the first lake association in our township to have a lake plan. We also stand alone in doing this without substantial grants from any government agency. Our volunteers have done fantastic work. The Lake Plan Committee is now in the early stages of setting up committees to work on the action items contained in the *Lake Plan*. Thank you to those volunteers who have already stepped forward to help - there can never be too many volunteers! If you would like to lend a hand and donate a few hours, please send me an email and I will put you in touch with the Committee.

Another milestone was also passed this year. Our membership surpassed previous records and now stands at 45% of all Otter Lake property owners. This is impressive as most lake associations have 25 – 30% membership. With all this going on, we should all be very proud that we have a lake with the best water quality in the area, and we have an involved and dedicated lake association with great member support.

As this is the last newsletter of the year, I wish you a Merry Christmas or Happy Hanukah or a happy festive season. ☺

Randy Hodgins, President OLLA
randyhodginskal@hotmail.com ☺

LOON UPDATE

All of Otter Lake's loons did extremely well this year. We probably had 4 loon pairs on the lake and all of them successfully produced chicks in late June or early July. Two loon pairs had 2 chicks each while the other 2 had one. All chicks survived and flying lessons in September were successful. Knowing how much we all love our loons, here follows some information on this unusual bird that you might find interesting.



What do all those calls mean? There are four: Hoot: a soft, single note to stay in touch with family. Tremolo: a fast-vibrating call when the loon is worried. This is the one that sounds like laughter. If it's really upset it may also flap its wings and rise up in the water and perform the "penguin dance." Yodel: two low notes to start, then a series of high calls that swoop up and down. This is generally a warning to a rival. Wail: long, slow, haunting call loved by all. One loon telling others: "Here I am".

How does the yodel work? The male gives the yodel, and that basically says: "If you're another male loon and you come here, I will try to dive underneath you and spear you through the sternum with my bill". It is not a welcoming call. A loon does not make this call all that frequently, it is basically a territorial phenomenon. The loon only responds if an intruder flies over, or a powerboat comes too close and even a low flying aircraft can trigger this call. Basically it happens only if there's a provocation during the day.

Why are loons so noisy at night? Nighttime calls are something of a mystery. It is possible that at night it is quiet and these sounds travel a long distance. They are therefore a way a loon can figure out who is on adjacent lakes and what they sound like, so that they can be identified to determine whether or not they pose a threat. However this is all speculation.

Do loons ever sleep? Like all birds they do need to sleep and rest, but loons kind of keep one eye open and they go out into the middle of the lake to do so. You have to paddle out into the lake and sit there for an hour to find a sleeping loon. Watching a loon sleep is not particularly exciting!

Can loons be identified and tracked? Almost all birds can be identified and tracked by banding. Bands are usually placed on the legs. Two coloured bands would usually be placed on each leg. So, for example one loon can be mint over white on the left leg and blue over red stripe on the right leg. An ornithologist can read those as easily as a hockey fan can pick out a uniform colour. For land birds this is relatively easy if the bird is sitting on a tree branch or at a bird feeder. In the case of a loon the bands are usually underwater. However thanks to the bird's odd leg design they remain fairly visible from a canoe. Loon legs are at the rear end of the bird, like a boat propeller (which is why loons are pretty hopeless on land). Then about once an hour they preen, roll over, and wave their legs in the air, and when they do that you've got them! Nonetheless, banding a loon is not easy. It has to be done at night, and requires the playing of recordings of chicks in distress to keep the adults from diving and escaping. Then a light is shone that temporarily blinds them, and the loon is grabbed in a net designed for banding. They are a big bird and have lots of sharp corners and their beak is pretty impressive. It bites and it spears. Their toes are equipped with great claws and their wings are very

powerful. And you have an irate customer in the net. The trick is to slip a towel over its head in a hurry. This instantly makes the loon more docile. However, the fact that we know so little about loons stems from the fact that they are not an easy bird to band successfully.

Are loons a migratory bird? The definition of a migratory bird is one that spends winter and summer in different and distinct locations that are often widely separated. Loons do not fit that definition. However, since loons feed on fish, they are only found in open water. Hence as lakes begin to freeze over in December, loons will slowly start to move south in search of lakes and rivers that are not yet frozen. This journey over the winter months can take them as far south as the Carolinas or even Florida. In early spring they begin the return journey northwards.

Do loons mate for life? This is in fact a legend that has grown because all loons look more or less alike. The banding that has been done successfully on loons is beginning to suggest that the legend is probably false. They do, however share nesting duties.

How can loons stay under water for so long? Studies have shown that loons can remain underwater for as long as 15 minutes and they will surface and are ready to dive again after only a couple of breaths. Loons have a very efficient respiratory system that enables them to extract 90% of the oxygen in the air that enters their lungs. The human respiratory system is pathetically inefficient when compared to a loon's.

Do loons fly well? One only has to observe a loon in the fall to realize that the answer is no, they are not the greatest of flyers. Especially, they do not take off well and require a lot of "runway" (which is why you do not see loons on small lakes). Loons have heavy bones and dense musculature which enable them to dive and catch fish. To become airborne they need a long lake, and they cannot take off from land. Interestingly, New England loons that travel a short distance to the Atlantic in winter are a kilogram heavier than Northern Ontario loons that can travel as far as Florida!

Doug Franks
Lake Steward

EXPERIENCED OTTER LAKE ANGLERS WANTED

We would like your help in gathering information about the fish in Otter Lake.

Have you been fishing Otter Lake for many years?

Do have any historical records or information about the types and size of fish you caught over the years?

Please help us expand our knowledge about fish in Otter Lake. Contact us at:
finless@rogers.com or [613-797-4096](tel:613-797-4096)

CURRENT VALUE ASSESSMENT

For those interested in the exciting world of property taxation, Current Value Assessment (CVA) will be performed again on January 1, 2016. As you may recall, MPAC does this every 4 years. In the 2012 CVA, most waterfront assessed value increased in Rideau Lakes Township although not at the same rate as inland property according to Mayor Holman. OLLA will be following the discussions between the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA) and MPAC to learn how this area compares with other waterfront communities. The assessment notice recently received from MPAC is only detailing the 4th year of the 4-year cycle. We will be notified of the new January 2016 assessment about March or April. Increases are phased in over 4 years and decreases are effective immediately.

In 2014 most of us experienced an assessment increase as well as an increase in the tax rate applied by the Township, which is struggling with much higher costs for police, development services, and roads. The 2016 budget process is happening right now and the public is welcome to provide input.

SHORELINE SURVEY UPDATE

Watersheds Canada completed the shoreline survey of Otter Lake in late July. Many thanks go to all those who assisted with this project by providing transportation to the Watersheds team.

The next stage of the project will be the collation of all the data by Watersheds Canada. All of the information obtained is entered into a database to generate customized property reports. Upon completion of the assessments and data entry for an entire lake, shoreline property owners will receive a letter in the mail. This letter will contain a survey code, which is unique to each individual property owner. This letter will also provide instructions to visit Report.LoveYourLake.ca, where shoreline property owners will enter the unique survey code and complete a registration form to order their report. Reports will be available as an electronic PDF or as a hardcopy. If shoreline property owners do not have access to the internet, they can contact Watersheds Canada to order their report. The personalized property report will contain information about the state of their unique shoreline with suggestions of voluntary actions shoreline property owners can take to improve the natural state of their shoreline and lake health. OLLA will receive a a global summary of all the data collected.

Watersheds Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Federation are the administrators of the *Love Your Lake* program, of which the shoreline survey is one part. No personal information (such as names, phone numbers, email or mailing addresses) collected on any websites will be shared with third parties, including federal, provincial or municipal government agencies, unless it is required for the program for which it was originally supplied. Users will have the opportunity to read and confirm their understanding of further terms and conditions to providing their information online at Report.LoveYourLake.ca.

BOATING ETIQUETTE

Our most recent Newsletter contained an article on Boating Tips, which received positive feedback, so it will continue in this Newsletter.

The last issue outlined the requirements for a Pleasure Craft Operator Card, and provided information on how to obtain a “Fishing map” of Otter Lake. Most importantly, we highlighted the benefits to the fish population of waiting for bass season to open the third weekend of June before fishing for bass.

Drunken boater loses licence: An article in the June 17 edition of the Ottawa Citizen summarized how a 19 year-old Beckwith Township man had his drivers licence suspended for 90 days after being charged with impaired boating on Mississippi Lake. Police used the incident to remind boaters that impaired operation of Water Vessel results in the same legal consequences as impaired driving of a land vehicle.

Speed limits: Did you know it is illegal to operate at a speed greater than an unposted speed limit of 10 km/h (6 mph) within 30 metres (100 feet) of the shore in the waters of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta? The only time these restrictions do not apply is when waterskiing, while the towing boat is taking off or dropping a skier by heading directly away from or into the shore at a 90° angle. Please respect our shoreline and swimmers by slowing down when boating close to shore.

Safe Boating Guide: A copy of the complete “*Safe Boating Guide*” is available on the Transport Canada website at the following link: <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/marinesafety/debs-obs-menu-1362.htm>

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

The OLLA executive continues to work to bring benefits to all property owners on the lake, sharing new information through Newsletters, AGMs, picnics, and most recently, the publication of the *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan*. We cooperate with many organizations to ensure OLLA is focused on ensuring water quality and enjoyment for all residents of Otter Lake. Organizations such as the Township of Rideau Lakes, the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, Lake Links, and the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey have all contributed their expertise and assistance to help achieve OLLA’s goals on your behalf.

We believe our efforts are producing the outcomes Otter Lake landowners want to see. This year we have seen a 23% increase in membership to a total of 124 (45% of Otter Lake property owners). If you have a neighbour who is not yet a member of OLLA, please suggest they lend their support by becoming a member (still only \$30).

Thank you again for your support, and remember, as an OLLA member you are entitled to a bound colour copy of our new *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan*. If you have not received your copy, please let us know so that we can deliver one to you.

OTTER LAKE SUSTAINABLE LAKE PLAN

The *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan* received unanimous support and approval at the OLLA AGM on July 25, 2015. Now Otter Lake has an official *Sustainable Lake Plan*, possibly the first in Rideau Lakes Township. Increasingly lake plans are viewed as the best tool for improving lake stewardship, promoting community involvement and providing input to municipal official plans.

Thank you to Shelley Dunlop, Karl Fiander, June Finless, Judy Hodgins, and Marcia Maxwell for all their efforts that resulted in the approval of the *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan* and in an updated *State of the Lake Report*.

Work has now begun on the next phase, addressing actions identified in the *Lake Plan*. A summary of the action items, along with the status of some of the actions, is available on the OLLA website: http://www.otterlake.org/lake_plan_action.pdf. To address these actions, the following five sub-committees have been established:

1. Water Quality, Water Levels and Shoreline Health & Protection Sub-Committee - Chair: Laurence Beaulieu
2. Aquatic Plants Sub-Committee - Chair: Judy Hodgins
3. Fish & Wildlife Sub-Committee - Chair: June Finless
4. On-Site Sewage Systems and Development Control Sub-Committee - Co-Chairs: Karl Fiander and Shelley Dunlop
5. Social & Recreational Sub-Committee - Chair: Marcia Maxwell

A big thank you to the 16 people who have already volunteered to work on these sub-committees! Additional volunteers would be appreciated.

The chairs of each sub-committee are in the process of contacting the volunteers assigned to each sub-committee, and will begin planning the work on the action items.

Progress on the action items will be reported in future Newsletters, on the OLLA website under the document *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan: Summary of Action Items*, and at the 2016 AGM.

Laurence Beaulieu
Chair, *Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan* Committee

WILD PARSNIP

Wild Parsnip has started to make an appearance in our area, although there does not seem to be too much of it in the vicinity of Otter Lake. It is found mostly along roadsides in the area. Wild Parsnip may have been transported to North America from Europe or Asia for its edible root. Wild populations are thought to be a result of escaped cultivated plants. By 1943 there were reports of Wild Parsnip growing wild in every Canadian province. By the 1970's its range included the territories (with the exception of the area now known as Nunavut). However, it is not a nice plant. Similar to Giant Hogweed, Wild Parsnip is also given the names bird's nest, common parsnip, poison parsnip, and hart's eye. It is called poison parsnip because of the toxic sap that **causes skin burns** if skin exposed to sap is then exposed to direct sunlight. Also, studies have shown that livestock ingesting Wild Parsnip have reduced weight gain and fertility. Dense stands can out-compete native species, such as Cow Parsnip and Queen Anne's lace (which is also an invasive species, though relatively harmless) in an area thus reducing local biodiversity. Wild Parsnip can grow up to 1.5 m tall. The single stem is narrow and is smooth with few hairs. Leaves are mitten shaped that are sharply toothed, and are arranged opposite in pairs. Flower heads are umbrella shaped and are usually a yellowish green. Found commonly in disturbed areas like yards, waste dumps, meadows, open fields and roadsides. It is considered to be one of Ontario's most unwanted invasive plants!



Wild Parsnip



Cow Parsnip



Queen Anne's Lace

If your property has fewer than 100 plants then manual removal is possible. Remember to wear protective clothing! It is important to wear waterproof gloves, long pants/long-sleeved shirts, and eye protection. Digging out plant and taproot is the ideal method. **DO NOT WEEDWHIP** since this sprays sap-filled plant material over anyone in close proximity. After removal, remember to wash gloves and dispose of plants in a plastic bag. Leave the plants in the plastic bag for one week and dispose of in the landfill if allowable. Do **NOT** attempt to burn the removed plants since the vapour generated by the burning sap is extremely dangerous if inhaled. Do not compost the removed plants! If there are large infestations on your property then you will probably need a professional exterminator to chemically control it. For permanent removal, this method will probably have to be repeated for several years.

PRIVATE ROAD NAME CHANGES ON OTTER LAKE

In the last 6 months there have been discussions by lake and road associations with the Township of Rideau Lakes regarding the possible renaming of some or all private roads with the alpha-numeric naming system which has been in place since 1996. The primary reason for this has been because of the duplication of road names which has led to confusion by emergency responders, delivery vehicles and guests. There are some that are completely fine with the existing names and some that would prefer a more “normal” road name even if duplication is not a factor. However there have been circumstances where emergency responders have become totally confused and have responded to the wrong address.

History: In 1996 four townships amalgamated into what we now know as Rideau Lakes Township. Two of these, South Elmsley and Bastard & Burgess had previously initiated identical private road naming systems which lead to the duplications after amalgamation occurred. While there was some thought by Councillors to rectify the situation at the time of amalgamation, the issue was never acted upon over the 19 years elapsed since the duplications were created.

Where are the Duplicated Roads? There are 27 duplicated roads in the Township in the alpha-numeric style. On Otter Lake O-1, O-2, O-3 and O-4 are duplicated. One series exists at the north end and one at the south end of the lake. Also O-1X is considered confusing if not actually duplicated. The other duplicated roads are on Big Rideau and Lower Rideau Lakes, Bass Lake and Bellamy Pond.

Why is it Confusing? As more residents locate permanently on the lakes, the calls for fire, ambulance and police become more frequently needed. Also deliveries by couriers, building suppliers, propane suppliers etc. become more routine. After consultation with 911 operators it became clear that the mechanism by which 911 calls go through various operators leads to confusion. Drivers are usually not from the region and are not familiar with the road system. For example an ambulance driver may be from Brockville and has never heard of “Road O-4” and the 911 operator in Sudbury has to decide which road it is from the caller who may not even be aware that it is a duplicated road. Complicating matters, a call from a cell phone does not allow a 911 operator to get an accurate fix on the caller’s location.

Current Situation: Prompted by an overture from the R-10 road association last year and encouraged by the Rideau Lakes Networking Group, the Township activated a 911 Committee which has the mandate to seek solutions for the duplications. The current private road naming policy prevents any name changes to the alpha-numeric system until a “broader policy is adopted” by Council. So current efforts endeavour to seek solutions and change the policy to allow road name changes. From the Otter Lake area, Councillor Arie Hoogenboom is the Chair of the 911 Committee and Councillor Jeff Banks is a member. A public meeting was held in August in Portland where there was a healthy turn-out and lively discussion.

What is being Proposed? After much dialogue, and in response to public input, the suggested solution is to change the names of duplicated roads in Bastard and South Burgess only, leaving those in South Elmsley as is. This was selected because it would affect the least number of residents and changes would cost less. So this means the roads on the south end of Otter Lake will be changed leaving the north end roads the same.

What Happens Next? In due course, residents will be contacted by the Township. This will probably be completed in 2016. It was strongly suggested that the Township involve the road associations as “road captains” to steer residents through the steps involved which includes deciding upon a new name. It would be worthwhile for affected road associations to begin discussions now. Although it hasn’t been discussed in great detail at the Township level, it is possible that delays will occur or undesirable names selected if road associations don’t mobilize early and represent the wishes of their residents.

For those that desire a name change for non-duplicated roads, the 911 Committee may evolve and change the current policy so any and all alpha-numeric road names could be subject to change if a majority of residents desire it. This will probably be a 2016 discussion once duplicated roads are rectified.

Karl Fiander

ZEBRA MUSSEL FILTERS

(The following is provided as an information service to property owners.)

As you may recall, a number of years ago we discovered that Otter Lake had been infested with zebra mussels. Some property owners were having problems with zebra mussels getting into their lake intake pipes and causing problems in the water systems, either clogging the pipes or burning out the pump. In a number of cases, young zebra mussels were even discovered inside toilet tanks or other parts of the indoor plumbing. At that time, Ken Maxwell, an Otter Lake resident, found a supplier for a protective filter for the intake valve. Ken arranged for a discount on a bulk purchase of these filters for interested members of the Lake Association.

The effective life span of the filters purchased approximately 10 years ago was 5 – 7 years, if maintained properly. However even a well maintained 10-year old filter might not be effective in preventing the entry of zebra mussels into a water system. This fall it became apparent that the zebra mussels were back quite aggressively in parts of our lake as well as in other lakes in this area. Ken has recently received some inquiries from property owners who are now interested in replacing the original filters.

With this in mind, Ken is again making arrangements to purchase filters at a discount. If you are interested in purchasing a filter, contact Ken at 613-207-1950 or ken@maxwellenterprises.ca.



Zebra Mussels

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These commercial enterprises have supported the publication of our Newsletter.
Please be generous with your support of their establishments and services.



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