

Otter Lake Landowners' Association (OLLA)



Otter Lake News

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Fall 2020

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As I sit here at my desk in early November, looking out across the lake with the sun shining brightly, it is hard to believe the summer has come and gone. We'll have a bit of a respite with the warmer temperatures being forecast for the next couple weeks, but the trees have definitely lost most of their leaves and most of the waterfowl have taken off for their winter holiday in the south. One exception is the pair of loons here in Toohey's Bay. They're not saying much lately but there they are, paddling around in front of the house!

As part of the Board's effort to improve awareness and communication around the lake, you will find more articles in the newsletter that we have received from other groups and associations. We are passing them along because we think you might be interested. If you spot something that you think should be shared with the members, please don't hesitate to pass it along to me (jeff.neal.o7a@gmail.com) or to one of the other Directors.

We held our "virtual" Annual General Meeting in September and I have to say, it went extremely well. But it is just not the same as getting together in person. Hopefully by the time the next one rolls around we'll be able to go back to meeting at the local hall. The draft minutes of the meeting are posted on our web site. For those that weren't able to join us for the meeting, here is a quick summary:

- The Directors and I have been working with both the Township, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests (MNR) and the RVCA and we have had very positive results. The topic of managing water levels has been dealt with and the Township understands we want them to leave it alone and let nature take its course. Now we are moving on to discussions about the effects of climate change on the lake and our local environment. The Township will be forming a group to study this and OLLA will be a part of the group. We are in discussions with MNR about stocking the lake with Lake Trout
- Our Treasurer, Karl Fiander, presented our financial statements and even though membership is down from a few years ago, we are still doing well enough to continue with our projects on invasive species, water quality and fish habitats.
- Membership Director, John McKenney, reported our membership is currently at 74, up from the previous year's 64, and appears to be still climbing. This is great news because it means this Association is in a

stronger position to speak for the lake.

- The election of Directors resulted in a continuation for Karl Fiander and the addition of two new Directors, Deb McVean and Eric Hempell.
- The main item discussed at the meeting was the revision of By-Law #1 – Constitution of the Association. The goal was to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the By-Laws. I am happy to say we achieved this goal and the new By-Laws were approved with a minor amendment. I would like to add that this would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of Judy Hodgins. By-Law #1 – Constitution is available on our website, www.otterlake.org.
- Our Lake Steward, Doug Franks, provided a brief update on water quality, indicating there had been some concerns about e-coli at a couple of sites but further testing indicated the areas were back to normal and had never reached a point where there were concerns of safety. Doug also, on behalf of the Board, thanked Laura Cashen for all the work she and her little green kayak have done keeping track of our loons.
- There were also updates on the Lake Plan, the State of the Lake Report, Frogbit removal and Cormorants. More information on these items will be coming your way soon.

Following the AGM, the Directors met, virtually of course, to determine the path for the upcoming year and onward. Positions and tasks were agreed upon and a detailed report on the outcome appears later in this Newsletter.

Enjoy the winter! See you in the spring!

Jeff

jeff.neal.o7a@gmail.com

YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Deb McVean

- New to the Board this year, Deb will be assisting the Treasurer, Karl Fiander
- Deb will also be assisting John McKenney with Membership

Dianne Taylor

- Dianne will be leading a project to modernize the OLLA website

Doug Franks

- Doug will be continuing as Lake Steward
- He is also currently Webmaster for the OLLA web site and will be working with Dianne on the modernization

Eric Hempell

- New to the board this year, Eric will be engaged in environmental issues
- He will support Judy on the Lake Plan

Jeff Neal

- Jeff will continue as President this year
- He will be responsible for Government Liaison and will be assisting Doug with his Lake Steward function and will back up Karl on the Township's Rideau Lakes Lake Associations Committee (RLLAC)

John McKenney

- John will continue his role as the Director responsible for membership

Judy Hodgins

- Judy will continue in her role of Lake Plan Coordinator

June Finless

- June has agreed to continue as Secretary of OLLA

Karl Fiander

- Karl will continue as Treasurer for the upcoming year
- He will also represent OLLA on the Township's Rideau Lakes Lake Associations Committee (RLLAC)

Susan Thum

- Susan will continue as the Director responsible for Communications
- She will coordinate activities relating to the Association's publications, website and Facebook page

DR. JOHN P. SMOL INCLUDES OTTER LAKE IN HIS RESEARCH

Submitted by Jeff Neal

Dr. Smol is well known to those interested in the environment and ecology of lakes. John was recently awarded the Royal Canadian Geographical Society 61st Massey Medal which recognizes outstanding career achievements in the exploration, development or description of the geography of Canada. Members of his research team returned to Otter Lake to take new core samples of the lake bottom sediment. Chris Grooms and Kapillesh (Kap) Balasubramaniam spent the day on the lake obtaining a clean sample that was then prepped to go back to the lab for analysis. Once we have an update from them, we'll pass it along.



Preparing water samples for analysis



Calibrating equipment



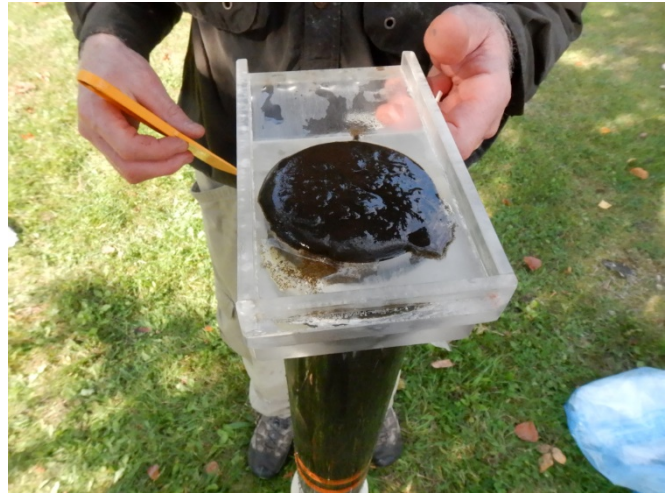
Ensuring the sample bottle will do its job when it get to the bottom 80 feet below



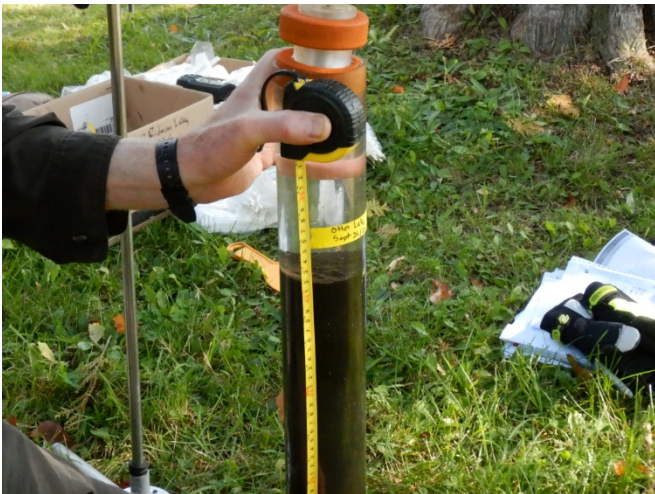
Success! A perfect core



Preparing the equipment for the tedious job of extracting the core sample one quarter of a centimetre at a time



The perfect mud pie about to go in a sampling bag



Recording information on the core



Starting the extraction process

Membership Update

Submitted by John McKenney

One key goal of the OLLA Board of Directors in 2019-20 was to increase our membership, so more property owners could add their voices to our association and OLLA could better serve the broader Otter Lake community. We're proud to say that despite the challenges posed by a global pandemic, we're well on our way to accomplishing that goal. Membership has grown from 64 to 84 (up from 74 at the time of the AGM), and we are confident that with a consistent and determined effort to connect with more of our neighbors around the lake, OLLA's numbers will continue to rise.

To that end, we'll be reaching out to road associations, espousing the benefits of OLLA membership. We also hope that you, our members, will help spread the word. If you have a neighbor who is not yet a member of our association, please tell them about OLLA and encourage them to reach out to one of our directors or visit our website to learn more about what we do and how they can join us.

Thank you for your support!

CHANGES TO THE CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES ACT

The Lake Networking Group (LNG), which is an informal gathering of Eastern Ontario lake association representatives united by a common desire to work together and learn from one another, recently posted a notice concerning the above subject. Over the past few years, the LNG has held a number of discussions and presentations concerning proposed changes. Last week's Ontario 2020 Budget included a number of changes to the Conservation Authorities Act.

For more information on the proposed legislative amendments, see the Notice on the Environmental Registry of Ontario at www.ero.ontario.ca/notice/019-2646. As you will read, there is no requirement for public consultations on the proposed changes as the changes are part of a budget bill.

Conservation Ontario posted a media release outlining their concerns for the Changes to the act. A number of the changes could have a significant impact on Conservation Authorities and their watershed management responsibilities. Kim Gavine, General Manager of Conservation Ontario pointed out, "there are a number of changes that could actually create more red tape and delay permit application approvals". This Media Release can be found on the OLLA website www.otterlake.org. If you would like to express concern, please contact your MPP and/or the Township council.

LAKE TROUT IN OTTER LAKE.... FACT OR FICTION?

Submitted by Karl Fiander

The subject of the OLLA fish habitat project in 2020 is to determine if Otter Lake still supports a Lake Trout population or is capable of doing so.

Historically there was a healthy Lake Trout fishery here according to Ministry of Natural Resources records going back to 1920. In those days it was common for residents of the area to ice fish for Lake

Trout as a food source. Big Rideau Lake was the main fishery but as overfishing took place, Otter Lake was opened up and in fact stocked with Lake Trout in 1927 as an alternative. More recent records show that Otter Lake received 66,500 Lake Trout fingerlings between 1957 and 1970. Anglers often reported substantial catches in those days, but reports of Lake Trout catches have declined since then. The last MNR fish survey that found Lake Trout was in 1975. So what happened? Are they still there but in small numbers, or are they gone altogether?

In 1996 Otter Lake resident Jim Reeves worked with MNR (now MNRF) to determine the extent of the habitat for Lake Trout in Otter Lake. The results showed that the habitat area was decreasing due to a warmer and larger epilimnion (surface water layer) and the hypolimnion (the cold deep water where Lake Trout live) was suffering declining oxygen levels. In 1996 MNRF found an average of 4.8 ug of oxygen in the hypolimnion, which is well below the 7 ug that trout require to thrive. In 2004, the oxygen levels appeared to increase somewhat to 5.7 ug. Since then water quality records show that oxygen levels in the deep waters are improving, but are they enough to support Lake Trout and are there any other impediments for a possible recovery?

Unlike most other fish species, Lake Trout spawn in the fall when water temperature declines to about 11C, which coincides with a late October, early November date on the calendar. The fish migrate to shallow water with a clean rocky bottom where the males arrive first to houseclean the rocks and then the females arrive to lay about 1000 eggs in the crevices of the rocks during the evening. Ideal spawning areas are subject to wind so that fresh water flows around the eggs. Once the males fertilize the eggs, everybody goes back to the depths again. The few days of the fall that spawning occurs is the only time that Lake Trout can be observed from a boat or the shore. There is no period where the adult fish hang around to protect the eggs as demonstrated by species like Smallmouth Bass.

In the summer of 2020 large fish have been observed in the deep water with modern fish-finders and it is

possible that the Lake Trout are still there. OLLA Director John McKenney has observed this on several occasions. OLLA Director Karl Fiander consulted with MNRF Fish Management Director Joffe Cote in Kemptville during the summer to narrow down the possible spawning sites around the lake. Karl and OLLA President Jeff Neal looked at several possible sites from their boats during the course of the summer and with these observations, narrowed the area for a fall observation to the deep basin shoreline roughly bordered by the boat launch area on the east and the islands on the west.

Now the cold part.... during the week of November 1, Karl made evening trips by rowboat around the shoreline of the target area. There were 12 sites that appear to meet the requirements for a spawning area. No fish were observed but pictures were taken of two sites that may have already been used as spawning areas. Hopefully MNRF can confirm if these areas were in fact visited by Lake Trout. By this time the fall boat trips occurred, the water temperature had declined to 10C so it's possible spawning had already been completed.

In conclusion there is some good news: There are several possible spawning sites that could support Lake Trout if they are there. Oxygen levels appear to be improving in the deep waters so there is some optimism that Lake Trout could recover or be established again. Unfortunately, the effects of climate change are raising water temperatures which cause an increase in the summertime warm layers at the surface and a corresponding reduction in the cold hypolimnion.... where the Lake Trout are living. As more becomes known, there could be other steps that could be taken to enhance the chances of Lake Trout survival, and with improving conditions, MNRF is considering stocking Lake Trout again. In 2020 they stocked 7000 Splake in Otter Lake but these fish are not intended to reproduce and are simply stocked as a 'put-take' arrangement where they are deposited for the benefit of sports fishers.

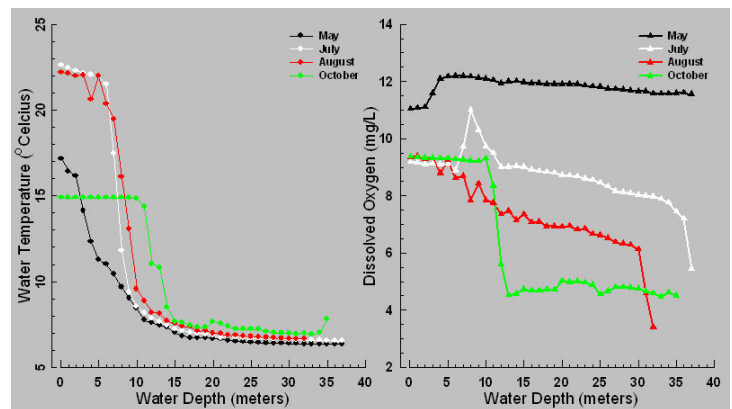
If there are any recent Lake Trout stories you can share please email Karl at klfiander@gmail.com.



Lake Trout Adult



Lake Trout Juvenile



2014 Water Temperature/Dissolved Oxygen Levels

THEFT AT OTTER CREEK

A very short while ago, the Township staff installed a steel grate over the lake side of the culvert. The intention was to prevent sticks from flowing into the culvert, getting stuck and causing a blockage. The grate would make removing blockages much faster and cheaper. The grate didn't last long. It was stolen.

If you see anything suspicious going on around the lake, you can contact the OPP at 613-272-9402 (unless you feel it is extremely urgent in which case call 9-1-1).



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Did you know?



OLLA members receive FOCA membership – Membership benefits can be found at the following link <https://foca.on.ca/member-services/benefits/>

Otter Lake Landowners' Association

2020 Membership Form

Your membership is important. It helps pay for water quality monitoring, associated laboratory fees, and other key initiatives. Members have access to all the resources of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations (FOCA).

Our annual membership fee remains at \$30.

This is a new membership or a renewal

Number of years being paid for: Amount of payment @ \$30/year: \$

Date of this membership payment:

Additional donation to OLLA to support an Otter Lake Fish Habitat Study: \$

Name(s) of Owner(s):

Mailing address:

.....

Cottage/House and Road number:

Telephone: Lake: Cell: Residence:

E-mail address:.....

I would like the OLLA Newsletters sent to me by: email letter mail

I **don't** want to receive an OLLA Newsletter:

I would like the FOCA Newsletters sent to me by: email letter mail

I **don't** want to receive a FOCA Newsletter:

Membership fees and this completed form can be given to any OLLA Board Director, or you can letter mail them to this address:

Otter Lake Landowners' Association (OLLA)
#32 - O10, Lombardy, ON, K0G 1L0

Membership fees can also be paid by **e-transfer** to **otterlakeassociation@gmail.com**. If paying by e-transfer, please send this completed form to the same email address, or letter mail it to the above address.

This membership was paid by: cash cheque e-transfer

Thank you for your support!