



Otter Lake News



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Fall 2017

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From The President's Desk

Well, this was certainly a summer to remember or try to forget not sure which way it will be referred to in the future. It certainly broke records for being an unseasonably cool wet summer. With record rainfall amounts throughout the summer the lake level remained very high beyond the normal spring runoff resulting in many having to remove their docks early, or place rocks on the decking to prevent the docks from floating away. There were many

reports this year of lost and/or found articles along the shore, kayaks; canoes etc. Hopefully all items were recovered by their owners. Summer did finally arrive albeit late in the middle of September, again breaking records with extreme highs for early fall.

In spite of the weather OLLA still had a very busy season on the lake, starting with the Family Day Picnic in June at Camp Otterdale and our AGM in July where Randy Hodgins, our President, announced his resignation from the board. Thank you Randy, for your fabulous leadership and extensive work while on the board, it was greatly appreciated.

Beyond our normal activities we have been involved in a couple of Lake Plan projects. An extremely important one and very time demanding is the removal of the European Frog-bit an invasive aquatic species that has been discovered in Otter Lake in the past couple of years. Please read carefully Judy Hodgins report on the efforts that are being taken to prevent this spreading any further into the lake and consider helping with this project next summer. See also June Finless' article about the brush bundle project to enhance the fish habitat in our lake which is also a very interesting endeavour.

Wishing you all a wonderful fall and winter season!

Marcia Maxwell

OLLA President

INFO@otterlake.org

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European Frog-bit Eradication Project

by Judy Hodgins, Chair, Aquatic Plants Sub-Committee
Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan

European Frog-bit, an invasive aquatic plant, was discovered in Otter Lake in July 2016 while conducting a survey of aquatic plants which was one of the action items identified in the Otter Lake Sustainable Lake Plan. This survey was conducted with the assistance of a Rideau Valley Conservation Association (RVCA) staff member and two summer students. Maps of this survey can be found on both OLLA's website and Facebook page.



In August 2016, the two summer students, together with volunteers from the Aquatic Plants Sub-Committee, spent a day removing a small amount of frog-bit from the bay at the boat launch area and the mouth of Otter Creek.

On July 26, 2017, 3 volunteers and 2 RVCA students searched for and removed frog-bit. Unfortunately we did not have to look very hard as there was lots of it, mostly in the boat launch area. In fact, for an unknown reason but possibly due to the large amounts of rainfall and high water levels, large floating mats of both native aquatic plants and the invasive frog-bit were found clogging the boat launch itself and amongst the reeds nearby. The amount was somewhat overwhelming but a large quantity was removed and disposed of. As the amount of frog-bit that was found was significantly more than found in 2016, the RVCA students took samples back to their supervisors to confirm that it was indeed frog-bit. Unfortunately, it was identified as frog-bit.

Consequently two more organized eradication expeditions were carried out on the mornings of August 1st and 16th, with 6 volunteers and 5 volunteers with 2 RVCA students, respectively. Both these days were spent entirely in close proximity to the boat launch and resulted in filling a utility trailer on both occasions. Six more lone outings were done, four in August and two in September, two of which extended to the bay area across from the boat launch and behind the island. A total of 80 man hours were spent this summer in an attempt to eradicate this troublesome plant.



While we were able to make a significant harvest, we did not remove it all. It is difficult to estimate what sort of impact we have had but I would guess that we removed close to 75% of the frog-bit, but we will have a better idea next year when we again conduct search and removal outings.

The only way to eradicate, or at least control this invasive plant is by frequent and repeated hand removal, together with ongoing education to stop the spread of frog-bit and other invasive species. This will require a significant ongoing effort. While it may seem to some to be a battle not worth fighting, European Frog-bit if left to grow and reproduce, will have a significant negative impact on Otter Lake, whether ecological, economic and/or social. This invasive aquatic plant is prolific and forms dense mats once it becomes established and thus prevents light and nutrients from reaching native vegetation thereby replacing native plants, reducing biodiversity and depleting dissolved oxygen levels from decaying mats all having negative impacts on fish and wildlife. Dense mats can restrict boating, swimming, angling and other recreational activities.



The Invasive Plant Sub-Committee makes a plea for volunteers to commit to this important project. Please contact Judy Hodgins at INFO@otterlake.org if you are willing to put your name forward for next year's eradication project. A big thank you to the following volunteers who helped out this year: Ted Duffin, Doug Franks, Gail Thain, Jane Chomyn, June Finless, Shelley Dunlop, Tracy Mantle, Randy Hodgins, Mimi Fortier, and the four RVCA summer students, Brady, Lake, Jamie & Fiona.

Free Native Shoreline Plants Available!

The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority has selected Otter Lake for the supply and installation of free shoreline naturalization plants for the 2018 season. They are waiving their normal fee for this service for a limited time so all residents are encouraged to participate in this program.

The Watersheds Canada shoreline investigation in 2016 reveals that too much of our 'ribbon of life' is lacking the natural shoreline protection that native shrubs and plants provide against erosion and nutrient leaching. This is an excellent way to make a start on reclaiming and protecting some of your shoreline next spring.

To inquire further, please contact Meaghan McDonald at RVCA. You can phone her at 613-692-3571 (ext 1192) or email her at meaghan.mcdonald@rvca.ca.

The link to the program is: <https://www.rvca.ca/stewardship-grants/shoreline-naturalization/shoreline-naturalization-program>

A Successful Brush Bundle Installation Day at Camp Otterdale

by June Finless

What a great work day we had at Camp Otterdale on September 8th! We assembled and installed brush bundles at 11 locations in Otter Lake to enhance the fish habitat – approximately 24 brush bundles and a total of 60 Christmas trees.

We were a sight to see on the lake, with Ed's pontoon boat and Jeff's Boston Whaler pulling floating rafts filled with brush bundles along with a few brave volunteers around the lake in the wind and rain. We were damp but enthusiastic volunteers and were treated by RVCA to hot chocolate and donuts to start the day and later treated with a wonderful lunch provided by Camp Otterdale that warmed us up and sustained us until we finished in the mid-afternoon. Well done team!



IT DOESN'T END THERE. The work will continue on this Fish Habitat Enhancement project next year with the installation of an additional 10-12 brush bundles in early September 2018. We will need volunteers, and boats to accomplish this. If you are willing to help, please contact June Finless at INFO@otterlake.org.

In addition next year, RVCA will do a survey of the submerged bundles with us in the spring, using their underwater cameras to observe the fish enjoying the protection these brush bundles provide. I expect we will have pictures and videos of our happy fish to share with you at the next AGM.

I would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to RVCA for their leadership and all the volunteers who helped us with the brush bundle assembly and installation day on September 8th, including: Jeff Brown (along with his Camp Otterdale staff), Ed Wilton, Marcia Maxwell, Shelley Dunlop, Gail Thain, Jim Thain, and Arie Hoogenboom as well as the three RVCA staff, Jennifer Lamoureux, Adrienne Lewis and Rosario Castanon Escobar. We couldn't have accomplished what we did without all the support from RVCA and our volunteers.

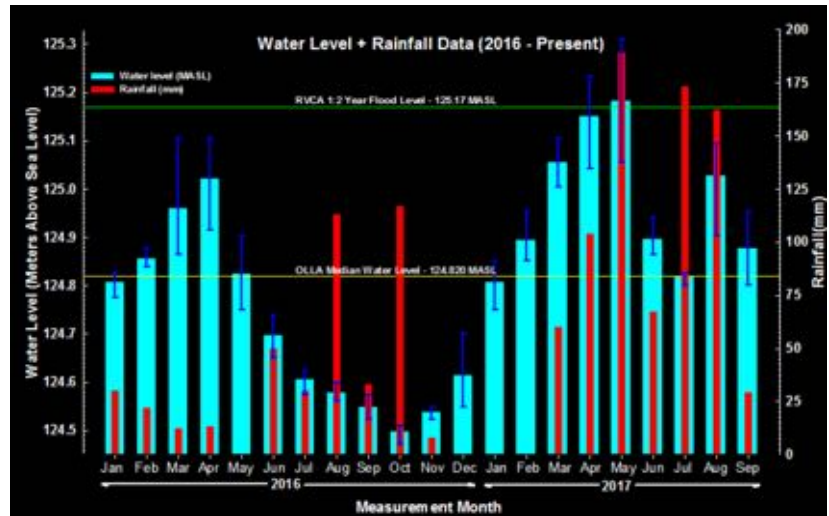


Water Levels

by Doug Franks, Lake Steward

The situation with respect to the very low water levels we experienced in the summer of 2016 was commented on in the OLLA 2016 Fall Newsletter and will not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that the last statement in that report stated that “the only hope for water level recovery over the winter is mild weather with a lot of rain or a cold winter with a higher than average snowfall accumulation!!” Well that is exactly what happened **and with a**

vengeance. The graph on the right depicts the water level in Otter Lake from January 2016 to the present. The “error” bars represent the highest and lowest water level recorded for each measurement month. As can be seen, our maximum low occurred in October 2016 and the lake level then began to recover with the significant rain and snow we received in



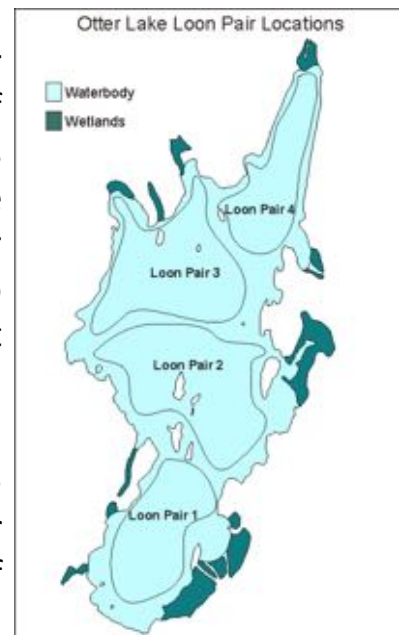
November and December. The lake level continued to rise throughout the winter months, a winter that overall was quite mild with an average snowfall and fluctuating temperatures. With the snow melt and significant rain in April it looked as if our spring “high” was reached in mid-April when the water level exceeded RVCA’s 1:2 year flood level of 125.17 MASL. However, that was not the case since following the incredible rain event in early May when we received over 100 mm of rain in 2 days the lake rose to levels we have not seen since water levels in Otter Lake began being recorded. On May 9th, there was only 16 inches of air space at the culvert on Otter Lake Road. So in the first 2 weeks of May there would have been considerable flooding of low lying areas and access roads. Other lakes in the region suffered the same fate. The situation on Bob’s lake (the major source of the Tay River) was particularly serious until Parks Canada opened the dam at Boilingbroke and transferred the problem downstream to Christie Lake and the town of Perth. With only 60mm of rain in June, water levels in Otter Lake began to decline as can be seen from the above graph. Unfortunately July and August were both extremely wet months (170 mm of rain in July and 150 mm in August) so lake levels began to rise once again. Our driest (and hottest) month of the entire summer was September with only 30 mm of rain and several days with temperatures of 30 degrees. Water levels dropped significantly, but it will still be quite some time before the water level returns to what we would consider as “normal” for this time of year.

Loon update

by Doug Franks, Lake Steward

In 2011 OLLA began participating in the Canadian Lakes Loon Survey (CLLS). CLLS was first initiated in Ontario in 1981 to assess the long-term health and productivity of Common Loons, and the lakes they depend on. Loons breed on lakes throughout most of Canada, and as top predators, their survival reflects broader lake health. Each year, hundreds of volunteer participants spend time observing loons on lakes where they breed: at least once in June (for loon pairs), once in July (for newly hatched chicks), and once in August (for young that survive to fledge). This information is used to monitor loon chick survival over time, and is an important indicator of loon and lake health.

During the summer months, Otter Lake is home to 4 loon pairs. The areas they occupy are shown on the map on the right. Loons tend to be very territorial and establishing their territory is why they are so noisy in the early spring. Most of the areas in which they establish



territory include wetlands which is where they usually nest. OLLA has installed 2 loon nesting platforms, one in area 1 and another in area 3 but there is no evidence that the loons have used them as yet. Despite the fluctuating water levels we experienced this spring and summer our loons did remarkably well in producing chicks this year. The loon pair at the south end (area 1) probably had 1 chick as did the loon pairs in areas 2 and 3. The loon pair at the north end (area 4) had 2 chicks and all seem to have survived even though the loon pair in area 3 were not hatched until mid July, which is rather late in the summer for loons since the chicks need considerable time to mature and be able to fly by migration time which is usually in October or November.

This summer Otter Lake was also home to two families of mergansers. These waterfowl are interesting in that like loons they are fish eaters and are considered to be a "diving duck", however they are not as proficient at diving and swimming under water as loons.



Mergansers have larger clutches than loons, who rarely ever lay more than 2 eggs. A female merganser can lay as many as 10 or more eggs. Also, unlike loon pairs who share egg incubating and chick rearing duties, the male merganser leaves right after mating and leaves the female to incubate the eggs and take care of the chicks well being. One

of our mergansers hatched 12 chicks in mid-June. She nurtured them all summer and they all survived and have been seen as a big happy family many times on the lake.

The author would like to thank Laura Cashin, Bob and Joan Wright and Judy Hodgins for information regarding the whereabouts of our loons along with lots of images. We would also like more information on where the loons are on Otter Lake, so if there is a loon pair living in your part of the lake please let OLLA (postmaster@otterlake.org) know when you first saw them, where they are and when you think they may have nested. It is not necessary to know the nest location but if you have a good idea where it is, let us know that too.

Do you know all the benefits that are included with your OLLA Membership in regards to FOCA?

FOCA is the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association and their mission is "*To protect thriving and sustainable waterfronts across Ontario*". FOCA represents 50,000 member families in more than 500 lake and road associations across Ontario.

For over 50 years, FOCA has been the voice of Ontario's waterways and lake associations. FOCA **speaks where individuals cannot**, acting as an information bridge between policy-makers and property owners on significant issues, such as:

- Fair property taxation
- Rural safety and emergency preparedness in the face of extreme weather developments in recent years

FOCA works with Government and other partners on important policy and best practices, to make our waterfront communities environmentally and financially sustainable.

FOCA provides **information, as well as services**, to cottagers. As an OLLA member a portion of your dues is to support FOCA and their efforts. As a result this **gives you direct access** to all of their information and in particular the member services that they provide. These include access to home, cottage and car insurance. For many of the out of province property owners it can be difficult to obtain insurance through their permanent residence homeowners' policy. There is also private road insurance that can be obtained for the larger road association groups.

There is a wealth of information provided on the FOCA site that is of interest to all waterfront property owners. Monthly News Alerts – October's included tips on cottage closing and an update on the Asian Carp. Did you know that it has now worked its way up to the western end of Lake Erie? Check out the FOCA website for more information about their mission, what they do and for other topics of interest to cottagers. Visit them at <https://foca.on.ca/>

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