



Otter Lake News

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Spring 2025

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Otter-Lake-Landowners-Association

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Message from the President

The sun is shining, and the temperature is on the plus side! Spring is coming!

This year the Board of Directors will be focusing on three major things. First, a membership drive. We currently represent less than 25% of the families around the lake as members. We want to improve this. Second, a members-only portal on our website. This will distinguish items on the website that are available to the public from those that should only be available to paid-up members. Third, volunteers! We are looking for 3 or 4 people to join the Board to help provide direction regarding OLLA's work and to ensure OLLA can continue. Please think about it!

The 2025 AGM & Spring Seminar of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Association (FOCA) was held March 1st. I attended by webinar along with over 150 others with an additional 100 cottage association folks attending in person at the Bayview Golf Club in Thornhill, Ontario. (As a member of OLLA, you can get reduced price tickets to this event if you wish!).

The discussions included topics such as Drinking Water Sources in Lake Communities, Private and Municipally-unassumed Rural Roads, Cardiac Safety, and details on the latest FOCA member survey. All of this information (including a recording of the entire event) will be made available to OLLA members as soon as it comes available.

Some of our neighbours came to visit this winter.



For those who haven't enjoyed the winter here at the lake, welcome back!

Jeff

ollapresident@otterlake.org

Why Should I Bother Paying Lake Association Dues

Submitted by Jeff Neal

I hear this more often than I'd like to. So, here are my thoughts on this subject.

First, the BIG one! The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) samples the water in most lakes in this area 3 – 4 times each year. Samples are taken for E. coli bacteria, Nitrogen and Phosphorus. The Nitrogen and Phosphorus readings help to determine the "health" of the lake. Due to budget cuts, the frequency and the number of sites have been reduced. OLLA membership dues pay for additional sampling around the shore of the lake. Each sample costs between \$25 and \$50. We try and sample 4 additional sites around the lake 3-4 times. That works out to between \$400 and \$800 each year. That works out to between 7 & 14 membership fees. OLLA currently has only 80 or so members out of over 340 households around the lake.

Why do we do this? Well, the bacteria test is pretty clear. We don't want people or pets getting sick. Over half the people on the lake use lake water for household purposes. We need to know if it isn't safe.

As for the Nitrogen and Phosphorus tests, picture your house as it is now on the lake. What's it worth? Then, imagine that picture where the waterfront is choked with vegetation and algae! Where did your property value go!

By tracking the chemicals, we can localize sources and, hopefully, move to remediate them.

Next up! Benefits. Your membership provides you the opportunity to have a say in messaging to the Township, the RVCA, and the various ministries of Natural Resources, Environment, etc.

Your membership also entitles you to member benefits of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, (FOCA). FOCA has a huge amount of information related to lake living, including research on topics like road maintenance and fees, insurance, capital planning and much, much more. FOCA also

provides members with discounts on things like cellphones, wireless connectivity and insurance.

OLLA provides newsletters and other information about things and activities around the lake, organizes roadside clean-up campaigns and some social activities.

This Spring, the Board of Directors is hoping to increase the number of members in our organization. And, to address "the elephant in the room", there is a history where the association did not provide what some members wanted. Some of those things are outside the mandate of the organization. If you want to check out what the mandate includes, you can find it on the OLLA website (<https://otterlake.org/business/constitution/>). History is about the past. We need to focus on the future for ourselves and our families. The OLLA Board of Directors is looking to you to help us with this by renewing or re-instating your membership and talking to your neighbours about joining us.

Rideau Lakes PITCH-IN campaign

Submitted by Betty Large

If you would like to be a part of OLLA's PITCH-IN event on **April 26th at 10:00 am** we will be walking along Otter Lake Road starting at Rd. 06 heading both directions along the road. Stay as long as you can but the goal is to cover the entire length of the road, both sides. OLLA will sign for student volunteer hours. Feel free to organize your own PITCH-IN location and OLLA will promote it on the Facebook page.

Yellow bags will be provided. Make sure to dress for the weather. If there is pouring rain, we will cancel. Wear sturdy footwear, protective gloves and bright clothing. Bring water.

Please contact Betty Large – info@otterlake.org if you are interested in participating in this event or would like help organizing your own PITCH-IN time and location. We look forward to seeing you out there!

For more information about the Rideau Lakes program please follow this link - [Pitch-In](#).

Introducing Our New Sections

Submitted by Susan Thum

In this newsletter we're introducing some new sections that we hope you will find of interest. Here's what's new:

If you were at the AGM last summer you may recall the interest in OLLA member & board member Eric Hempell's energy efficient cottage and the information that he shared about it. Eric will be contributing articles in the "Nature's Neighbour" section in which he will share his build experience and provide information on various topics related to it.

The next section that we've added is dedicated to articles about our environment, under the heading "Environmental Corner".

We've also added a new segment that we're calling "Member Moment". The goal is to introduce you to OLLA members around the lake and help you get to know your lake neighbours.

And finally, we've added a section we're calling "You Otter Know". We want to share interesting facts, lore or news about the lake and our community in this space.

We hope that you find these articles interesting and informative. If you have an idea or suggestion for newsletter material, we would like to hear it! Send us an email at info@otterlake.org or message us on our Facebook page.

OLLA Dines Out Again

Submitted by Betty Large

On Sunday April 27th OLLA will be meeting at the Recess Café (2761 HWY15 #103, Portland) at 10:00 am for brunch. If you would like to join us, please RSVP to bettylarge@gmail.com by April 25th.

Member Moment

Loving the Lake! - Betty and Dave are both finally full-time residents on Rd. 06. We are enjoying skating on the lake in the winter, biking to pickleball in Smiths Falls, paddling the lake in our kayaks and of course our favourite evening ritual of DOCK TIME!

We look forward to meeting more great people around the lake.



OLLA would love to introduce more of its members. Please send a picture and a quick introduction for an upcoming Newsletter to info@otterlake.org.

Looking for Anglers!

Submitted by Jeff Neal

Our Association has been approached by the Fisheries Conservation Foundation to work with them to promote a Bass Spawning Sanctuary Project.

We need a few keen individuals, especially, but certainly not limited to, anglers, interested in representing our lake in this endeavour.

For more information: <https://arcg.is/9j89b0>

If you or one of your neighbours would like to participate, please let me know.

Thanks

Jeff (ollapresident@otterlake.org)

Cormorants on Otter Lake

Submitted by Jeff Neal

Last fall I received an email from OLLA members Kim and Blair Gemmell about Cormorants (Double-crested Cormorants). The article prompted me to do a bit more research since, as many of you have

noticed, Cormorants have returned to Otter Lake. Google came up with oodles of articles. Some, emotional, some strictly scientific and everything in between.

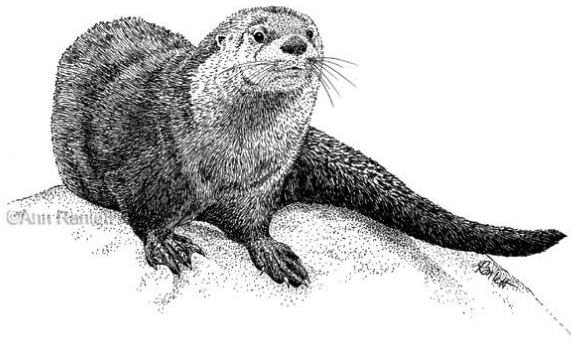
First a bit of history! Cormorants first came to Ontario (Lake of the Woods) in 1798. The earliest recorded nesting was in 1920 in Black Bay of Lake Superior. Nesting in Lake Ontario and the surrounding region was recorded in 1938. Populations declined for many years but increased rapidly in the 1970's following the ban of DDT.

Cormorants mature at 3 years of age and can live to 20 years of age although the average is around 8 years. They normally lay 3-4 eggs although, on average, only 2 chicks survive. Both parents are involved in looking after the nest. Cormorants are "colonial" nesters. They like company. The nests are found both on the ground and in trees.

The Cormorant's diet consists primarily of small fish although they also eat molluscs and invertebrates.

Concerns around Cormorants relate primarily to their waste (guano). As with the waste of geese around the lake, it's not something residents are likely to appreciate. Cormorant guano is very high in ammonia and can easily destroy vegetation in roosting areas.

Another concern raised by some is the competition with local Loon populations (and perhaps anglers) for fish. Studies have shown that the cormorant's diet contains only about 3% game/sport fish species.



You Otter Know

Submitted by Deb McVean

Rideau Lakes Township will be making some changes to the curbside waste collection schedule beginning the week of **Monday, March 31, 2025**.

If your garbage collection currently takes place on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday there will be no change.

If your garbage collection currently takes place on **Thursday**, your collection will now take place on **Wednesday**.

If your garbage collection currently takes place on **Friday**, your collection will now take place on **Thursday**.

These changes ONLY affect the waste collection schedule, not recycling. **Emterra's recycling schedule remains unchanged.**

If you have any questions about this change, please contact Ben at the municipal office by phone at 1-800-928-2250 ext. 230 or by email at brothwell@rideaulakes.ca.

Emterra can be contacted with questions or issues related to recycling at 1-888-597-1541 or customercareont@emterra.ca.

Nature's Neighbour - Solar Panels

Submitted by Eric Hempell

This feature, called Nature's Neighbour, is intended to address and inspire those who are curious about ways to live in harmony with nature.

Owners at the OLLA AGM seemed to have an interest in becoming stewards of their own environment and wanted to know more about what others have done. This particular article will look at solar panel installation and energy efficient design.

Perhaps you've seen the round cottage with 24 solar panels on Otter Lake Road. It was built to be energy efficient as well as comfortable. The round shape provides the least amount of exterior surface area for the volume of space within, and therefore uses a

minimal amount of energy to maintain a comfortable temperature.

The walls have been insulated to R53 (R24 is the norm) and windows are triple pane rather than double. Radiant hydronic heating warms the concrete floor which holds temperature well as a thermal mass.

The entire structure gets all it's energy from solar power with no fossil fuels used except for the lawn mowing.

After much thought of which technologies to use, simplicity became the primary factor. Maintenance and repairs needed to be kept minimal, as well as having a reliable power source.

The largest expense on a solar installation is batteries. But batteries can be avoided entirely by keeping the Hydro One grid connection through the Net Metering program. Staying connected costs very little, and power can be exchanged between the solar panels and the grid at no charge if there remains a surplus for the solar power generated over a one-year period.

Consider the benefits of a proven alternative that helps the environment and ourselves.

- Reduce reliance on the grid
- Increase property value
- Government Rebates and 0% Loans
- Powering Your EV for Free

The following is a brief summary from Hydro One: Our Net Metering program is available to any Hydro One customer who generates electricity primarily for their own use from a renewable energy source (wind, water, solar radiation or agricultural biomass). Net metering allows you to send electricity generated from Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs) to Hydro One's distribution system for a credit towards your electricity costs. Excess generation credits can be carried forward for a consecutive 12-month period to offset future electricity costs.

Environmental Corner

Submitted by Deb McVean

What we can do to help Climate Change

Shoreline Planting

Planting along your shoreline helps reduce erosion, helps filter ground water running into the lake and trees and shrubs provide shade and soak up carbon from the atmosphere. A good time to plant trees or shrubs in Eastern Ontario is in the early spring, after the ground thaws.

- Native shrubs which enjoy wet to moist conditions at your shoreline include Red Osier Dogwood (1-3 metres, full sun). Highbush Cranberry (1-4 metres, sun and shade) and Sweet Gale (1.5 metres, full sun).
- Native trees which do well on shorelines in wet to moist conditions include Silver Maple (20-25 metres, full to partial sun), and Larch (Tamarack) (up to 25 metres, full sun).
- Native wildflowers which do well on shorelines in wet to moist conditions include Cardinal Flower (full sun), Spotted Joe Pye-Weed (full sun) and Blue Flag Iris (full sun).
- Avoid introducing any invasive species. E.g. Invasive Phragmites, European Frogbit, Buckthorn, dog-strangling Vine, garlic mustard, tree of Heaven, purple loosestrife, white sweet clover and others.

For additional lists of trees, shrubs and plants with pictures and full details you can visit any of the following sites:

Mississippi Valley Conservation and download a copy of their MVCA Native-Shoreline-Species-List at [Native-Shoreline-Species-List.pdf](https://www.mvca.org/conservation/nature/native-shoreline-species-list)

Ferguson Tree Nursery offers a variety of trees, shrubs and native perennials at: <https://www.fergusontreenursery.ca/>

Rideau Valley Conservation (RVCA) offers a Shoreline Conservation Naturalization program and will cover up to 90% of costs for a custom planting plan which

they will order for you. Details of the program are found at: [Shoreline Naturalization](#)

!!!Reminder - OLLA Photo Contest!!!

Submitted by Betty Large

Rules for Otter Lake Landowners Association Photo Contest:

- Otter Lake Landowners Association photo contest is for Otter Lake Landowners and their friends and family who are amateur photographers.
- The photos should show nature (bonus points for otters!) in and around Otter Lake or activities in and around Otter Lake, taken after June 30, 2024.
- All photos must be original work, taken by the entrants.

3 Age categories – 12 and under, 13-18, 19 and older
Multiple entries are acceptable. There will be one winner and A RUNNER UP in each category.

See [Photo Contest Details of OLLA website](#).

Contest closes June 30th, 2025 at midnight.

Save These Dates!

April 26 th	Rideau Lakes PITCH IN
April 27 th	OLLA Dines Out, Recess Café Portland
July 26 th	OLLA Annual General Meeting



Reminder: OLLA members receive FOCA membership. FOCA supports members with a wide range of services, programs, events and special offers.

Membership benefits can be found at the following link
<https://foca.on.ca/member-services/benefits/>

Ice and the Lake

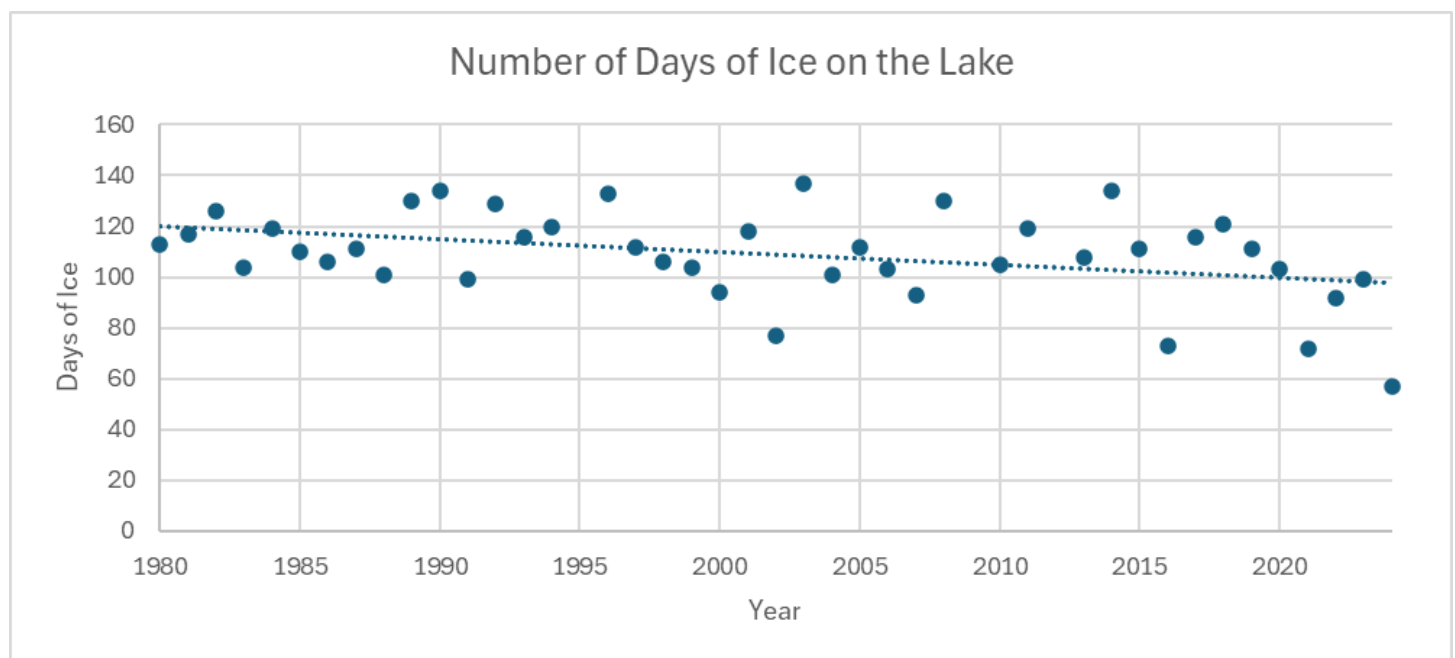
Submitted by Jeff Neal

Residents on water like to keep track of what that water is doing. For many, it's the temperature. On the coasts, it's all about tides. For most lakes in Canada, ICE is the big topic.

Many people around Otter Lake track Ice On and Ice Off dates. Some members, including the McKenney's, have shared that data with us. However, we are still missing a couple of dates! Here's what we are looking for:

- Any dates prior to the 1978/1979 winter
- Ice On for 1978/79
- Ice On for 1994/1995
- Ice On for 2008/2009
- Ice Off for 2011/2012

It's very clear that climate change is reducing the number of days that Otter Lake is frozen. The following graph focuses on that trend.



The following chart shows the winners for earliest and latest dates.

	Earliest	Latest
Ice On	November 30, 1990	January 25, 2002
Ice Off	March 14, 2024	April 27, 2018

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