

Leech Lake **Cottagers' Association** **NEWSLETTER**

CIVIC HOLIDAY WEEKEND 2023

President's Message – Susan Baskin

GET INVOLVED.

As we approach the August Civic Holiday I am encouraging our members to think about how you can get involved in our cottage association. Getting involved spreads the workload and it is a wonderful way to meet people while contributing to our community.

The LLCA is blessed to have a group of committed volunteers who contribute in various ways to the work of our association: taking on tasks related to roadwork and gardening; supporting our stewardship initiatives; creating graphics; boosting our presence on social media; helping with events like the regatta; and serving on our executive and associated committees.

We LOVE our volunteers, but we need MORE.

For those new to the lake or wondering how to get started, I encourage you to come out to the Regatta on Sunday, August 6 to meet our executive and make some new friends. I started my lake involvement 30 years ago by working on the Regatta Committee. I did that for many years before moving into the role of secretary for three years, and I am now in my third year as president. It has been very rewarding.

For those who have been on the lake for some time, please consider stepping up to take your turn on the LLCA executive. We are currently seeking people to join our executive in June of 2024. If you are interested, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Have a safe and enjoyable Civic Holiday.

I hope to see you at the Regatta.

Leech Lake Regatta on Sunday August 6!

Our annual regatta will be Sunday, Aug. 6 from 12 noon -3pm at the Boat Launch. Join us for a BBQ and lots of fun for all ages.

There will be games, prizes, and maybe even some boat racing. Bring your self-propelled watercraft and life jackets for the kids!

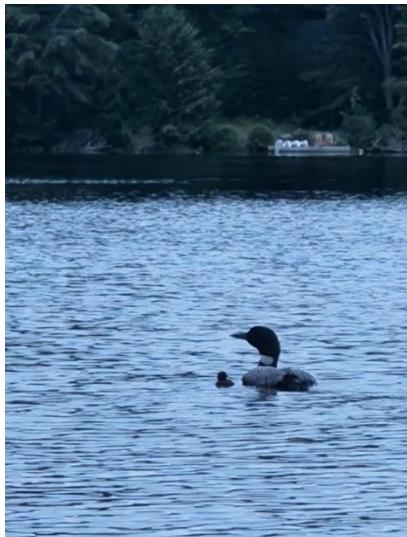
Some folks have inquired about boat races, and if there is interest we CAN offer some races for families in canoes and paddle boats, and for individuals in kayaks, canoes, and on stand-up paddleboards. If there is interest we'll organize races to take place at 11:00 before the BBQ and games begin. We need to know if you want to race! If you want to participate email Susan at: llcapresident@yahoo.com.

Loon Watching – Joy and Sorrow in July 2023 – by Susan Baskin

One of the great joys of being at the lake in late spring and early summer, is to take note of what's happening with the loons. It is exciting to see loons and other migratory birds arrive at the lake just as the ice is going out. Then it is time to wait and see if sometime in late June or early July a nesting pair of loons will be blessed with a chick or even two.

This year we were thrilled to see a beautiful pair bring two adorable chicks out onto the lake. It is always an occasion for celebrating and for saying a prayer of hope that everyone in the family will survive and be able to fly south in the fall.

Unfortunately, there was a tragic incident involving the adult male loon. It was killed in an accident with a motorboat and subsequently buried by a member of our cottage community. I learned about the incident from a report on our LLCA Facebook page. Subsequently there were more postings reporting that the male loon had not seemed well for at least 48 hours prior to the collision and might have been hurt or unwell.



The mother loon and the two chicks survived the incident, but now there are reports that there is only the female adult and one chick. Let us hope that they make it!

Please do everything you can to give them space and look out for their safety when boating.

In over 35 years of cottaging on Leech Lake I had never before heard of a loon being hit by a boat.

A healthy loon will dive. It made sense to me that the loon was unwell. I wanted to find out more about what might have made the loon sick, and I also wanted to speak to a wildlife expert who could give us an opinion on what happened, and information on how to best handle such a situation if it ever occurs again in the future.

From doing some research, I learned that in Canada, migratory birds are under Federal Jurisdiction, and any matters regarding loons need to be discussed with the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative. In Ontario, the CWHC is at the University of Guelph. I was able to reach their wildlife biologist, Lenny Shirose.

Lenny said that it is uncommon for a healthy loon to be struck by a boat. The loon may indeed have been unwell, but without an autopsy it is impossible to know what happened. Possible causes might have included lead poisoning from lead sinkers or the avian flu (which is rare in loons, especially in summer, but has been found in some deceased loons).

He said it wasn't wrong to bury the loon, but that his department would have appreciated having had an opportunity to do a post-mortem. The CWHC will pay to send a cooler for the body and have it shipped back to them. They do studies and keep statistics that help us learn more about the loon population.

Lenny shared some useful information on what to do in case of dead or sick/injured wildlife. You will find it on the next page. I hope that everyone will make a note of this important information. If you can, please print it out and post it at your cottage.

REPORTING DEAD or INJURED WILDLIFE



The Ontario/Nunavut regional centre of the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative is located within the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. The team, which is made up of faculty members, pathologists, technical and administrative staff, provides expertise in wildlife disease diagnostics, contributes to Canada's national wildlife health surveillance program, provides educational programs, information, and consultation to government and non-government agencies, and participates in research and wildlife health management activities.

To report DEAD wildlife:

Call the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative hotline toll free at: 1-866-673-4781.

You can send an email to: cwhc@uoguelph.ca

You can submit an online report at: <https://cwhc.wildlifesubmissions.org>

The CWHC will follow up and let you know if they would be interested in getting the animal into their lab for testing and provide further instructions for either submission or disposal of the carcass. The CWHC will pay all costs for shipping a carcass to them for the purposes of testing.

Always wear gloves and take safety precautions when handling a dead animal. While waiting for a reply, try to keep the carcass cool, and protect it from scavengers.

In the case of SICK or INJURED wildlife:

It is best to reach out to a wildlife rehabilitation centre.

The closest centres to Leech Lake are:

Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Rousseau. Call: 705-644-4122

A Wing and a Prayer in Utterson. Call: 705-385-1488

Woodlands Sanctuary in Minden Call: 705-286-1133

Bug Count 2023 – by Valerie McCoy

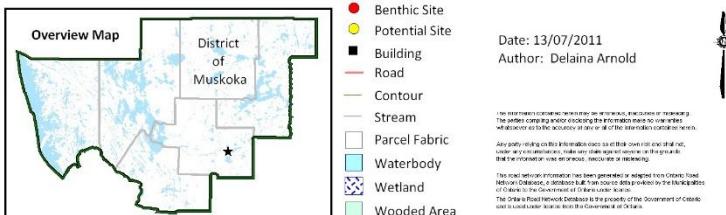
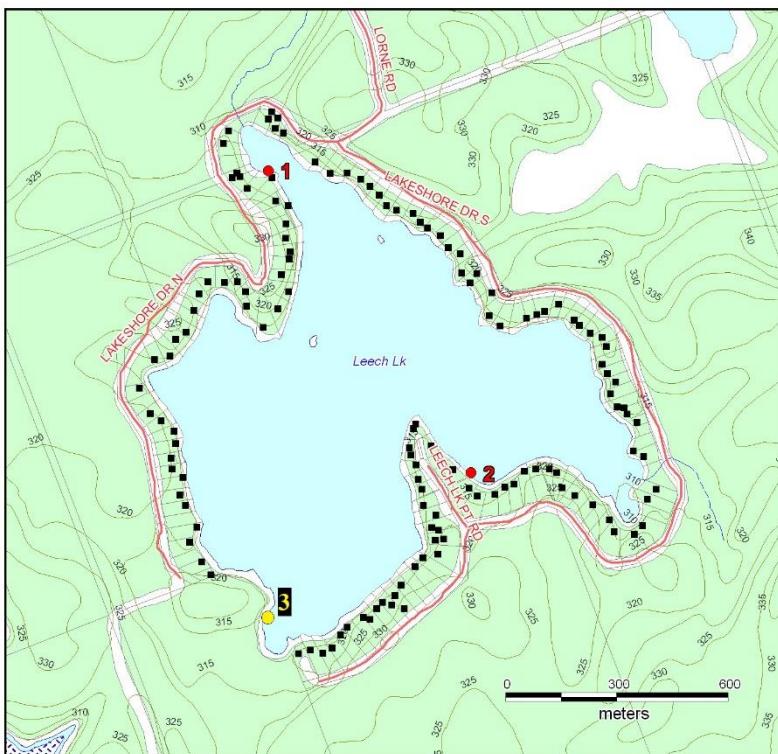
Our Annual Benthic Monitoring known as “The Bug Count” was held July 22nd. The collection & identification of macro invertebrates is managed by the District of Muskoka in conjunction with participating lakes. Changes in benthic types and numbers relative to each other are indicators of water quality. Our lake began this process since 2006 and over time has made it into a fun and educational “citizen science” event.

The day started with collection of lake bottom muck from two sites by Maggie Dechert our Biomonitoring Technician. Participants then combed through trays to collect creatures such as dragonfly larvae for counting and identification in exchange for raffle tickets. Like other years we had families and adults counting. It's not just for kids!

The results are in and look consistent with the Muskoka average.



Leech Lake Town of Bracebridge



attending next year.

Should you be interested in more information please contact us at
leech.lake.stewardship.committee@gmail.com

Recommendation for next year is that we add a 3rd site since the two historic sites no longer qualify for a reference which needs to be minimally impacted. See map for site locations.

Tommy & Lindy Bartlett passed on the knowledge gained at Turtle Guardian camp with an informative talk and handouts on turtles (see below for a transcript of their talk). We learned a lot from these conscientious kids. The key takeaway is our water quality is in a large part due to turtles' consumption of decaying matter and with it harmful bacteria.

Shelley & Vaughn Bumstead manned the BBQ and prepared the food.

Kasey McCoy organized the event which included procuring adult & kids Leech Lake hats. Kasey enlisted her finance Alex Westlake & father Rick McCoy for volunteers.

The venue was a great forum to discuss Stewardship issues with neighbours. We hope you'll consider

TURTLES – talk given at the bug count by Tommy and Lindy Bartlett

First Nations call the earth "Turtle Island". This is because turtles are as old as dinosaurs and are said to have witnessed Creation...

Ancient creature, have been around for millions of years making them the oldest reptiles on earth. North America looks like a turtle.

Unique Features:

- Shell – Protective structure made up of Upper Carapace (dorsal shell) and lower plastron (ventral shell). Excellent protection against predators.
- Retractable head and limbs – many can hide head and limbs in shell for extra protection.
- Cold Blooded – they regulate their body temperature through external sources (basking in sun, seeking shade to cool down)
- Scaly Skin – protects them from injury and dehydration.
- Beak like mouth – Herbivorous have broad flat beaks for chewing plants, carnivores have sharp hook beaks to capture prey.
- Webbed Feet – allows them to swim well.
- Long Lifespan – some can live for several decades/centuries. Slow metabolic rate and low reproductive rate.
- Unique Respiratory Adoptions – aquatic turtles have lungs but can also extract oxygen from water through their skin.



There are 8 Species of Turtles in Ontario

- Painted
- Snapping
- Blanding's
- Spotted Turtle
- Wood Turtle
- Musk or stinkpot
- Map
- Spiny Softshell

Turtles Help the Environment:

Turtles help control populations of insects, snails and small aquatic animals in lakes to maintain balance of ecosystem. They serve as an indicator of a healthy ecosystem. They are

sensitive to changes in water quality and habitat destruction. Monitoring turtle populations can offer insight to overall health and well-being of lake. Seed dispersal from what they eat. Contributes to distribution and regeneration of plant life in the lake.



Turtles love to eat dead and decaying things that are found at the bottom of ponds, lakes and wetlands-they help keep the water clean. Young turtles eat more protein and older turtles choose more seeds and vegetation.

Threats to turtles:

- Loss of habitat due to urbanization
- Pollution
- Road mortality
- Illegal pet trade
- Invasive species

Things we can do to protect turtles:

- Don't disturb nests or hibernation sites
- Avoid capture and removal of turtles from the wild
- Report injured or distressed turtles.
- If you see them, observe from a distance, avoid handling them unless needed.

If you see Turtle crossing the road:

- You can help the turtle cross the road in the direction it was heading (careful with snappers due to temperament and size)
- Grasp sides of shell avoiding the head and tail.
- Lift carefully and keep it close to the ground to minimize injury or stress.
- Don't lift by tail – can damage spine.
- Place the turtle down once you've reached a suitable location and face away from the road.
- Observe from a distance.

Turtle Hotline at 705-955-4284.

If you find an injured Turtle:

- Don't leave them to suffer
- Do not feed them or give them water
- Put them in a container and keep them dry and out of direct heat (well ventilated container)
- Call: Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre at 705-741-5000 (home of Ontario's only Turtle Hospital) They can meet you

If you find an adult or hatchling:

- Crossing the road – it's ok to help them cross in the direction they were going
- Unsure in the middle of the road – stay about a car length away and let them show you the direction they are going and you can help or wait. If they are unsure, google the closest water source and carry them across in that direction. Turtles use earth magnets that help them navigate so be sure to keep them close to the road when you carry them.
- On the shoulder or in nesting season (May to early July), mothers will nest on roadside and u-turn back to wetlands. Do not spook her and give her lots of space.
- Call or text TURTLE GUARDIANS at 705-854-2888 (they can help tell you how to protect a nest or come out and get the eggs to incubate).
- Red eared slider – invasive and carry disease for domestic turtles. Remove it and call turtle guardians, they will put it up for adoption.

Reproductive Facts

Less than 0.1% of turtle eggs will make it to adulthood. This is because eggs and hatchlings face many threats:

- many mammals love to eat turtle eggs and dig up nests
- if temperatures are too cold, the eggs won't hatch
- if just slightly cool, for most species, the hatchlings will be males (no breeding females);
- if nests hatch, the young need to find water and while searching around are often eaten by birds
- if they find water they are then predated by fish

Turtles take a long time to mature until they can reproduce- up to 20 years.

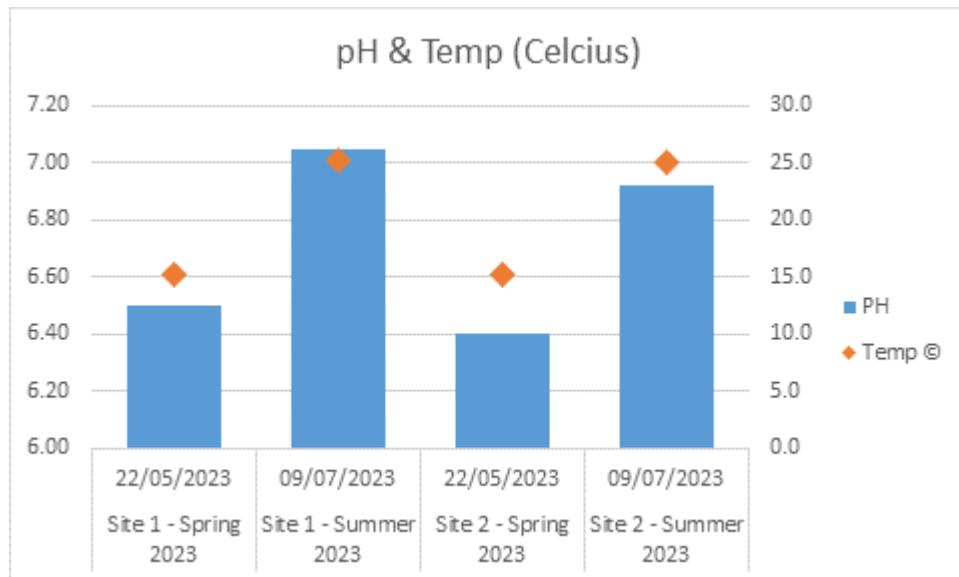
This late maturity and the low recruitment rate means that it can take up to 60 years to replace one turtle once, and then about 35 years for each subsequent turtle for that parent.

pH info for Leech Lake – by Valerie McCoy

As you may recall pH results from the Fleming Study conducted by the Center for Advancement of Water and Wastewater Technologies (CAWT) had shown a downward trend in Fall readings over the years. Many Muskoka lakes had acidified over the years and in general starting to recover. There was a lot of concern and many discussions with experts in the environmental field about Leech Lake's readings.

As a result - it was decided to start a pH monitoring program on the lake. Murray Hall (1004 South) purchased a pH meter and began taking readings this spring. Murray is the founder of Halltech Environmental Inc., a Fleming College Alumni of Distinction and student Mentor and as such is the ideal person to take on and oversee the program. Murray takes the readings and emails the results to Kasey McCoy. Kasey manages a Google Drive of Stewardship data set up by the 2022 Fleming team lead Sal Kennedy.

As you can see from the chart below pH has risen with temperature to neutral at both sites this summer. We will continue to monitor and share results.



As always, should you have questions or require more information – please email leech.lake.stewardship.committee@gmail.com

Shoreline Naturalization at my Cottage – Update - by Rob McGill

Further to the June 14th Zoom meeting about shoreline remediation by Rebecca Wilson of the Muskoka Watershed Council, we invited Rebecca out to our property to do an assessment. She was great. She and her crew talked with us, went through the property, took pictures and within a few days she had drawn up and emailed to us a plan of action for planting natural species.

In the plan there is a list of plant suggestions (with info on all the plants) and also, using the photos, a planting plan for the recommended spot to plant everything. She also costs it all out. Bottom line – they will deliver 50 plants to our property for just \$300... fantastic value in my mind. Rebecca and her team are small and very busy, but she said she would come to anyone's property free of charge to do this assessment.

The downside catch is, there is a waiting list for her to attend; the upside catch is, if enough people from Leech Lake express an interest she will prioritize us. So, if 3 – 4 property owners ask for a site visit and a plan to be developed she will make the time as it becomes more economical for her to come out. She will do up a planting plan just like what she did for us and propose a "starter kit." Again, for us she is proposing 50 plants which will be delivered to our property all for just \$300 – seems to me like incredible value!

A few general comments about her visit: she looked at the areas that I had previously been mowing and have, this year, left unmown, and she identified a number of native species sprouting up that were all desirable. As I suspected, she said simply doing nothing (ie. not mowing or trimming near the shoreline) is a good start to letting native species re-establish; I assured her I excel at doing nothing and would continue on thusly.

Rebecca identified some periwinkle I had planted in my gardens as non-native and recommended that non-native plants not be planted near the shoreline; they are okay in gardens, but she recommended they be kept away from the shoreline and not allowed to spread. Down by my shoreline there are a couple of hostas; she identified those as non-native and recommended they be taken out and/or relocated (say, up by the road), which I will do.

On our property there are some large boulders that were placed about halfway between the road and the shore by the guy who developed the lot. They are both decorative and meant as a retaining wall. I have noticed they are gradually moving down the slope. I mentioned this to Rebecca and she recommended some plants to root around these boulders to keep the earth in place and prevent running water from encouraging the slide down the hill.

We will definitely be proceeding with the purchase of the "Starter Kit" to receive 50 plants for \$300. All we need to do is confirm our order by end of August with a view to our plants being delivered for planting mid-September.

I will print up copies of our plan to hand out at the Regetta, and I'll be there to chat about our experience. We are thrilled with what Rebecca Wilson and the Muskoka Watershed Council have done for us, and are excited about further naturalizing our shoreline and property.

August bottle drive

This is a month-long annual event at Leech Lake that will see the proceeds of donated bottles and cans going to two local charities, which have yet to be determined. Give us your beer and liquor cans and bottles for a good cause. We promise no judgement!



The town's new recycling and garbage services start very early on their Monday collection schedule, which is way too early for our collection teams. This year we ask residents who participate in the bottle drive to leave their empties about 20 feet from the road at the side of their driveways – but away from where you leave your regular garbage/recycling. In order to work around the Town's early collections of waste and recycling our collection teams will be picking those up on Sunday between 4:00pm and 7:00pm.

Wear a helmet and wear your life jacket

The OPP was on the lake earlier this week. Apparently, this weekend the local constabularies will be on the lookout for ATV / dirt bike riders who are without helmets. If they catch you, they will fine you, no excuse will work on them. The fines for the helmetless are \$100 plus up to \$300 plus. They may also have a presence on our lake this weekend but we do not know when. You have been warned. They will also watch for safety equipment in/on watercraft, even paddleboards, so make sure you have life jackets and other required safety equipment.

If you ever do see the OPP on the lake, please put up a post on our Facebook group so others are aware.

Last Call for Septic Service



One final reminder for those who would like their septic systems pumped out. Our service provider was onsite July 25 and 26 taking care of six properties. Another five properties have signed up but are waiting for an available service date. If you are interested in this service please email the roads team to get your property added. leechlakeroads@gmail.com

Poop and Scoop

In the various cities where our residents reside, as pet owners they are very diligent with the collection of their pets' previously enjoyed meals. Once some of those neighbours head to the lake they go on a mental holiday and forget to poop and scoop. Not only does our lake suffer the effects from the varied animals living around us as their waste eventually finds its way into our lake, the waste from pets also negatively factors into the overall health of our lake. You can easily stop that from happening – please pick up!



Keepers of the Lake

Lloyd Watson - For his ongoing dedication and generous spirit as he helps out with the roads team whenever he is onsite. When not working on our roads, he will also give his time and energy to better the lives of his neighbours.

Alan Schwarz and Blair Clark - For their continued support and donations of time and energy to help with our road projects.

A big thank you to these three gentlemen for making the lake better for us all.

Bits 'n Pieces

1. **FOCA Alert:** the most recent Federation of Cottage Associations newsletter is full of great [information](#).
2. **Star Light Star Bright:** Look up to the night sky as there are meteor showers taking place this month. The Perseid meteor shower (AKA - The Perseids) is active every year from mid-July to late August. This year's meteor showers will be most active between August 12-14, with the peak on August 13. Night sky visibility in 2023 will be good this year for the Perseids as the moon will only be 10% illuminated. There are other meteor shower events that take place throughout the year but the big two are the July-August Perseids (90 meteors per hour) and the December Geminids meteor showers (120 meteors per hour).
More info [here](#) and [here](#)
3. **Algal Blooms in Muskoka** – we've all heard of them and we don't want one! If you want to learn more about them, understand why they're happening and what we should do, there is a "what, where, who, when and why" presentation hosted by "The Friends of the Muskoka Watershed". This event takes place August 10, 2023 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm.
The presenter will be Dr Norman Yan, past-chair of the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed, and the event takes place at the Muskoka Chautauqua: Theatre in the Woods, 1039 Golf Avenue, Windermere Village, ON P0B 1P0. It is a free event but you need to register [here](#).
4. **Simcoe Day, now you know!** – This coming Civic Holiday is commonly referred to as the August long weekend. It is probably the busiest day on the nation's highways as tens of thousands of families go camping, to cottages, to resorts, etc. this weekend.
It is known by many names in different provinces and municipalities.
 - **Regatta Day** in Newfoundland
 - **Terry Fox Day** in MB

- **Saskatchewan Day** in SK
- **British Columbia Day** in BC,
- **Natal Day** in Nova Scotia and PEI
- **Simcoe Day** in Toronto, ON
- **New Brunswick Day** in New Brunswick
- **Colonel By Day** in Ottawa
- **Heritage Day** in Alberta
- **Joseph Brant Day** in Burlington, ON.
- **Benjamin Vaughan Day** in the City of Vaughan, ON.

LLCA Contact Information

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