



Friends of Wilson Lake

Volume 16 Issue 3
October 2023

President's Letter – Sandy Muller, President

Thanks to Dennis Taylor, Monitor of the Kineowatha Buoy

For a number of years there has been a buoy marking the hazardous rock off Kineowatha Park. This buoy was installed by FOWL to keep boaters from hitting this rock in times of high water. Securing a buoy is not a simple matter. We had to obtain the buoy from the state. They have an entire department on “marker buoys” and one must apply for, pay for, and place appropriate signage for each buoy. Once this is done, the state must be notified annually as to who are the officers of the organization and who is the buoy tender.

The buoys must comply with a nationwide marking system so that markers in all waterways will have the same meaning. They must be authorized by permit and configured, colored and lettered in accordance with the *Maine State Aids to Navigation System*. Buoys must be installed after Ice-Out in the Spring and removed prior to freeze up in the Fall. They require only lightweight anchor blocks to allow for installation without special equipment. Once you apply for a permit and it is granted, you must wait until a buoy becomes available for your use. In our case it took over two years before a buoy was available.

Once you acquire a buoy, someone must put the buoy in the water and remove it at the appropriate time. Fortunately, we have a wonderful volunteer who has been maintaining our buoy, placing it appropriately in the spring and removing it each year. **Dennis Taylor** has been handling this most appreciated task for many years. As you can see from the attached photo, the buoy can be quite dirty at times.



Buoy on Boat by Dennis Taylor



Dennis's Helpers by Dennis Taylor

A couple of years ago, the buoy developed a crack and had to be replaced. Dennis took the old one to Augusta and replaced it with a new one. If you drive your boat near Kineowatha, or even if you are tired and want to take a rest on the rock and observe the buoy, thank Dennis for his efforts. I am sure Dennis would welcome your assistance in the future. You can see him on the lake with his two trusted assistants of “Westie” lineage.

Sandy Muller

Visit our Website:
www.friendsofwilsonlake.org

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(All articles by Wynn Muller, FOWL LakeSmart Coordinator, unless otherwise identified)

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Loon Count on Wilson Lake

by Judy Landry and Wynn Muller

For the past 20 some years Judy Landry has been conducting the Loon Count on Wilson Lake for the Audubon Annual Loon Count for all Maine Lakes. Next year Bob and Barb O'Reilly will be taking over the Loon Count under the tutelage of Dennis and Judy Landry. On the third Saturday of July each year, between 7:00 and 7:30 am, they travel around the entire lake counting all the loons seen. It helps to have good knowledge of where loons are likely to be—near Kineowatha Park, near Goat Island, and at the head of the lake. On Wilson Lake we have had between 2 and 9 adult loons each year since 1983 and up to 4 chicks in any one year. In 15 of these 41 years, we had no chicks, meaning that we have had chicks in about two out of every three years. If we have none this year, wait for next year.



Loon Nesting by wayne Smith

Do Loons mate for life?

No, pair bonds last, on average, six to seven years. Pairs often change when a loon challenger takes over a territory of a mate doesn't return to the territory after the winter. Therefore, loons can be said to engage in serial monogamy.



Loon Count Boating by Holly Windle

This loon count is conducted statewide each year. At that time hundreds of volunteers venture onto lakes and ponds across the state to count loons. Larger lakes are divided into sections so the count takes place in the same time slot. These data allow Audubon to make observations about the population and health of loons throughout the state and establish trends over time.

Some of the questions Audubon is frequently asked and their answers appear below:

Do loons return to the same lake year after year, and nest in the same place every year?

Once a chick fledges and migrates to the coast for its first winter, it won't return to lake breeding until it's two to five years old. Then it may wander between lakes over a few breeding seasons before settling on a lake to breed—either the same lake where it was raised or one within a dozen miles of its natal lake. Once settled on a breeding territory,

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How often do loons have chicks and how many do they have each year?

Loons start to breed when they are about six years old. Once they have a territory and a mate, loons can potentially produce one brood of chicks per year. Typically, they lay one to two eggs at a time and both parents incubate the eggs for about a month. Loons can re-nest if their first nest isn't successful, but they won't produce more than a single brood in a season.

How long do loons live?

Most common loons live to be about 20, but some die before then, and some live longer, with one documented at 35 years old!

Where do loons go in winter?

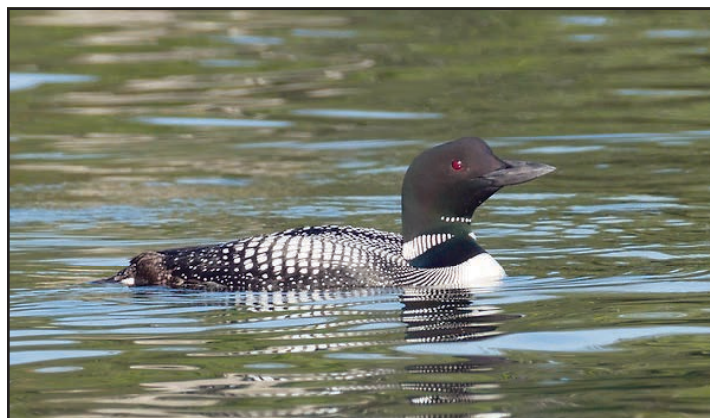
Because our lakes freeze, common loons normally migrate in late fall to salty waters including coastal bays and coves, the mouths of coastal rivers, and sometimes even areas up to 60 miles offshore in New England's coastal waters.

How do they adapt to being in a saltwater environment in winter?

Loons likely do not drink saltwater. However, they do have a salt gland above the eye that helps get rid of excess salt they ingest when feeding on marine fish, crabs, and other marine organisms.

Is flooding from boat wakes a threat to loon nesting success and chick survival?

Because loon's feet are located far back on their bodies, loons can't walk on land. Hence, they nest right on the shoreline, which makes their nests vulnerable to flooding by boat wakes. Every year people report eggs off the nest and floating in the water. To protect the shorelines from erosion, all boaters in Maine are required to travel at headway speeds (non-wake-producing speeds) within 200 feet of shore or islands. This law helps protect wildlife from disturbance and loon nests from boat wakes



Loon by Sandy Muller



What is the present situation with loons and lead poisoning and has the lead tackle law helped?

Based upon many years of data on causes of loon deaths in Maine, it appears that the number of lead-poisoned loons is going down as a result of the legal restrictions on the use and sale of certain sizes and weights of fishing tackle. Yet, lead poisoning continues to be one of the leading causes of death for common adults in Maine.

Are bald eagles becoming a threat to the loon population?

Eagles are a top predator of loons, and loon chicks can be an easy prey item. However, common loons and bald eagles have coexisted across the same North American range for many thousands of years. With more eagles all across Maine, loons may be adapting by improving their defensive tactics.

We're seeing more loons getting trapped when lakes freeze. How can we help these stuck loons?

Loons need a long runway to be able to take flight. When lakes start to freeze, it reduces the area of open water and thus their runway. Winter loon rescues are dangerous and take special equipment and training. Maine has not had this expertise to undertake these rescues in the past; however, Biodiversity Research Institute began coordinating ice rescues in 2021 and worked with several fire departments to aid in these rescues. See our last newsletter for more on this. 🗣️

Legacy Giving

by Wynn Muller, Treasurer

It is that time of year when we begin thinking about paying our taxes for 2023. Many of us have IRAs that require that we make a "Required Minimum Distribution—RMD" or face a penalty for not doing so. The rules for this RMD changed in 2023. As of January 1, 2023, the SECURE 2.0 Act increased the age for starting RMDs from 72 to 73. This is applicable to individuals turning 72 on or after January 1. This change means that if you turn 72 on or after 2023, you can delay your RMDs one more year, allowing the funds in these accounts to grow tax-free for longer. At 73, you must start taking annual RMDs from the tax-deferred accounts you own—traditional IRAs, SEP IRAs, SIMPLE IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(b)s and 457(b)s. You are required to pay tax on these RMD withdrawals. If you are currently age 73 or older, you must also take taxable RMDs on these tax-deferred investments.



There are ways that you can avoid the tax on your RMD distribution. One of these ways is by making a qualified charitable donation (QCD) to a qualified charity. Friends of Wilson Lake is such a qualified charity. You can contribute up to \$100,000 each year to such a charity under the QCD regulations. If you are interested, please contact me for a W-9 and 501(c)3 documentation. Email me at wynnmuller@comcast.net.

How might this work? Let's say that you have already withdrawn the \$5000 RMD required for the tax year 2023. Let's also assume that you have an interest in making a gift to a special not-for-profit organization, such as FOWL. If you were to make a gift to FOWL of \$2000, we would provide you with documentation as being a qualified charity. You could then treat the \$2000 as a (QCD) to a qualified charity and only pay tax on the remaining \$3,000. This year we received our first donation of RMD under a QCD. We were very excited! 🎉

Courtesy Boat Inspections 2023

by Justy Nazar and Sandy Muller

The 2023 year was characterized as one of Soggy Weather. Over the course of the 15-week summer, we routinely have monitors inspecting boats in about 80, three-to-four-hour shifts. This year 19 of these shifts we cancelled due to rain. That is nearly one fourth of our monitoring cancelled by rain. We pay these students for any and all shifts that are cancelled by rain. Not all lake associations pay monitors for days of rainouts, but we have always felt that the weather was beyond the monitor's control and they should not be penalized for weather conditions. In spite of this year's example, we still believe our "rain pay" policy is in the best interests of FOWL and its monitors.

As you know, our monitoring occurs from Memorial Day through Labor Day. We inspect boats on Friday evenings and Saturdays and Sundays. We also inspect on the Monday of Memorial Day and Labor Day. This year, since Independence Day was on a Tuesday, we worked that Monday and Tuesday. We had 5 inspectors working over these days. Over the summer, they inspected 926 boats. Accounting for the weather, this was quite similar to that of the recent past whereby we averaged 1033 boats over the past four years.

The reason for the inspections is two-fold: 1) to remove any plants from boats entering or leaving Wilson Lake, in order to avoid those plants entering the lake and 2) to educate the boaters on the need to keep plants off their own boats. While both are most important, certainly having boaters to assume this

responsibility is most desirable since it would prevail when we do not have monitors on duty. This year we only found plants on boats on 2 occasions and neither were invasive.

Another significant benefit from the boat inspections is the involvement of the community in this worth-while effort. We have 15 volunteers serving as Adult Support for one weekend each. They provide support to the student monitors over the summer. They are there mostly as a resource for the monitor should any questions or issues occur. Each "Support Person" covers only one weekend, so it does not cause undue effort to anyone. However, they also become a part of the program and learn a lot about invasive plants and the students as well. We would welcome your assistance as "Support Persons" should you be so inclined. We also have 15 business sponsors who contribute toward the cost of our monitors. They have a display in our kiosk during the week of their sponsorship and the monitors make a point of telling the boaters who the weekly sponsor is and pointing out their kiosk display. While we sincerely appreciate their monetary contribution, of even greater significance is their involvement with the lake protection program. We all need to be actively involved in the overall protection of Wilson Lake. Each of the support staff and business sponsors know how much we appreciate your help and we **sincerely thank you** for that effort. You should also know that throughout the state our program with its volunteer and business support is highly recognized as being unique and one to emulate.

While we are talking about the CBI program, you may be interested in the state-wide impact of the CBI program. Over the 2023 season, a total of 72,338 boats were inspected. Of these 56,849 were motorized and the remaining 15,489 were non-motorized. A total of 2215 plants were found on boats of which 101 were invasive. Inspectors were paid a total of 40,746 hours which would amount to about \$600,000 to keep those 101 invasive plants out of our lakes. Is it worth it? I will let you determine. If one of those had entered Wilson Lake, certainly we would have said YES! 🎉



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Wayne Smith Lakes and Loons Program

by Sandy Muller assisted by Lucas Savoy

This June Wynn and I attended our first Wayne Smith Lakes and Loons program for the third graders at Academy Hill School. It was most interesting. Lyn Jellison and Rob Lively were also present representing FOWL. About 50 students attended representing two classrooms from grades 3. The students sat on the floor in front of a podium and viewed a slide show presented by Lucas Savoy, a wildlife biologist and Loon Program Director with the Biodiversity Research Institute. The program described and compared the 5 different species of loons that exist world-wide: Common Loon, Pacific Loon, Red-throated Loon, Yellow-billed Loon, and Arctic Loon. Lucas emphasized that only the Common Loon resides on our freshwater lakes during the spring and summer months in Maine, where they nest and raise their young.

As our lakes begin to freeze over in the fall or winter, loons migrate to the ocean and live on the coastal waters of the Atlantic until spring. Loon chicks that make their first successful migration to the coast in the fall, will reside on the ocean year-round for a few years, before returning to freshwater lakes as an adult loon and to find a mate. The presentation also described the loon's variety of vocalizations and why they display them, common behaviors of loons, and a loon's preferred habitats for nest site selections.

A wooden replica loon egg was passed around the room to demonstrate the size, shape, and coloring of their eggs. A taxidermy adult loon was also on display within a glass case for the students to view. At the conclusion of the presentation, the students were provided an opportunity for questions and answers. Students were very engaged and asked many questions, to include: How many loons are on Wilson Lake? Why can't they walk on land? How do they compare to ducks? What is acid rain? Does it actually include acid? 🗣️



David Prince Memorial Scholarship

by Wynn Muller, Rob Lively and Judy Upham

On June 6, 2023 the Friends of Wilson Lake presented the 21st annual David Prince Memorial Scholarship to Seth Pinkham. The award is named after a founding member of FOWL and a Master Maine Guide. The scholarship is awarded to a graduating Mt Blue High School student who intends to pursue higher education. Preference is given to students who are Wilton residents, have attended Wilton Schools, or have a connection to Wilson Lake. The award is based on scholarship, community service, extra-curricular activity, and work history. Special consideration is given to one with a demonstrated interest in environmental science, biology, or education.

Seth is attending Thomas College in Waterville, studying Criminal Justice and Conservation Law. His goal is to become a Maine Game Warden. Much of his community service centers around the outdoors and outdoor activities; he is a certified swim instructor. Seth is best known as one of our Courtesy Boat Inspectors at Wilson Boat Landing where boats are inspected going into and out of the lake for invasive plants. Wilson Lake is free of invasive plants due to the vigilance of CBI inspectors like Seth.

The scholarship program was commenced in 2004 with Scott Harris as the initial recipient. Each year applications are received from the guidance program at Mt Blue. They are then reviewed by a select group of members of FOWL and based upon their consensus, selected based upon the above criteria. We do have a vacancy on this committee. If you would like to be considered, please contact: wynnmuller@comcast.net 🗣️



Marker and heron at Kineowatha by Sandy Muller



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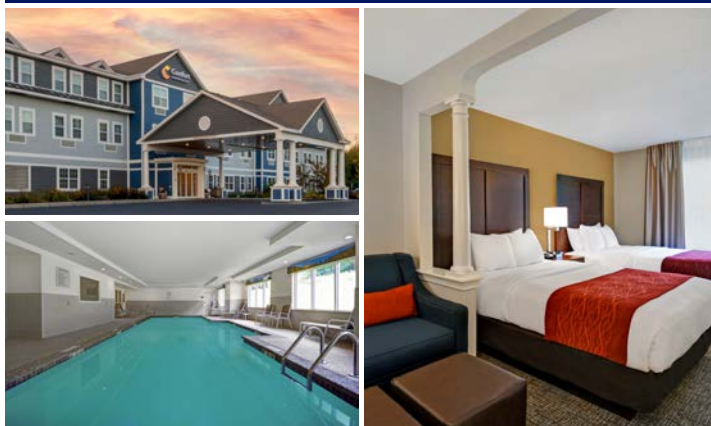
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Annual Meeting, July 16, 2023

by Pam Harden, Sun Media Group, with permission

WILTON — At the Friends of Wilson Lake [FOWL] annual meeting Sunday, July 16, an update on a documentary being prepared on the organization and Wilson Lake was shared, programs were highlighted and awards presented.



Andre Cormier, executive director Mt. Blue Community Access TV in Farmington on Sunday, July 16, shares information about the documentary he is working on that will promote Friends of Wilson Lake and the environmental, economic and cultural impacts the lake has on the area during the FOWL annual meeting held at the Lions Hall in Wilton by Pam Harden

Andre Cormier, executive director Mt. Blue Community Access TV and the Daily Bulldog, heard about the wonderful things being done and approached FOWL with the idea of doing a video on Wilson Lake, FOWL and its various programs, Rob Lively, vice president FOWL said in introducing Cormier.

“One of the pleasures of doing a job like community access tv is to work with people in the community and find out what is going on, get a feel for what opportunities there are to tell stories,” Cormier said. “Sometimes just for interest and others for educational, a lot of times a blend.”

Cormier talked with Lively about doing some short videos on the buoy at the deep hole in the lake and why it was there.

“Typically, the more I talk with somebody the more curious I get,” Cormier said. “I keep asking questions. After Rob and I had more conversations we eventually decided the video should be 30 minutes to an hour to talk about different aspects, the importance of the environmental impacts of the lake, economic impacts the lake can have for the town and cultural aspects.”

Cormier shared clips that have been put together to date. Sandra and Wynn Muller describe the beginnings of FOWL and some of its programs while Seth

Pinkham and Lively highlight the courtesy boat inspection program.

Pinkham teaches swim lessons at Kineowatha Park, enjoys fishing on the lake and does his part to ensure people don't have to worry about anything being in Wilson Lake that shouldn't be there.

People are encouraged to inspect their own boats during the week, information is available in the kiosk found near the boat landing, Lively noted. The lake is important to the town's history, is a focal point providing industry and recreation, he said.

“Wilson Lake is a resource for the entire community,” Lively said. Only after getting involved with FOWL did he more fully understand its importance.

“We need to learn to protect what we have,” Wynn Muller stated.

Cormier encouraged anyone with photos or other materials for use in the documentary to contact him at

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the station or call [207] 778-8146. He had hoped to have it ready in time for this year's Wilton Blueberry Festival but that isn't going to happen.

"I hope to showcase the lake, what a gem this is," he noted. Cormier also wants to show other interactions besides the human one. "The end goal is to get people to realize it is a lot easier to protect things, educating everybody about that," he added.

Wynn Muller discussed why the official name of the lake is Wilson Pond. The major difference between a pond and a lake is that a pond is shallower. Generally, if it has an output it is a lake, he said. There is a Wilson Lake in York County, he noted. The Wilton waterbody is twice as deep, is almost twice the size of the one in southern Maine, has an input and an output, but still the state name is Wilson Pond, he said.



Award recipient Seth Pinkham at left listens as Rob Lively shares information about the Friends of Wilson Lake/David Prince Scholarship Award Sunday afternoon, July 16, during the FOWL annual meeting held at the Lions Hall in Wilton
by Pam Harden.

Pinkham was recognized as the recipient of the FOWL/David Prince Scholarship Award. The award is named after a founding member who was also a Master Maine Guide, given to a Mt. Blue High School graduate who intends to pursue higher education, Lively noted. Pinkham will be attending Thomas College, studying criminal justice and conservation law, with the goal of becoming a game warden, Lively added.

Olivia Schank was recognized and presented a gift for having served as coordinator of the courtesy boat inspection program. Justy Nazar is the new coordinator.

"Wilson Lake is one of the key jewels of this town as is Kineowatha Park," Wilton Selectperson and FOWL member Tiffany Maiuri said. She noted the town has applied for a \$17,000-18,000 watershed grant, next year the National Guard as part of field training will be doing some work on the wall replacement project, and money is being put away to address issues with the 100-year-old dam. She thanked FOWL "for making sure the crown jewel remains the crown jewel." 🍷

Invasive Zebra Mussels Approaching Maine

adapted from an article in the Portland Press Herald

This article was sent to me by Jan Collins. I have adapted her Press Herald article which describes the invasive zebra mussel and also introduces the "Clean, Drain, Dry" bill LD 92 recently passed by the Maine Legislature. This bill was effective June 16, 2023 and requires all boaters prior to entering a water body and when preparing to leave launch sites, to remove or open any devices designed for routine removal/opening to encourage draining of areas containing water. This is to be done in such a way that does not allow drained water to enter any inland water of the state. Boats should NOT be drained on the boat launch ramp. This obviously presents issues of concern to boaters and our inspection monitors since we do not presently have an area where boaters can remove their boats to be so drained without the water flowing back into the lake. While the bill has obvious practical concerns which we will need to address with the town, the reason for the legislation is to avoid the transfer of many invasive plants and species which tend to reside in and can be released from boat waters.

At present a freshwater mussel that has infested lakes and rivers around the world is approaching Maine, with confirmed sightings in Canada within miles of the Maine border. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has issued a warning about microscopic larvae of zebra mussels which might infest our waters. "Zebra mussels have not yet been confirmed in any water of the state of Maine, but represent a high threat level to the health of our waters, fish and wildlife," the agency said. "Zebra mussel infestations result in irreversible negative impacts on native species and water body systems and are nearly impossible to eradicate once introduced." These small mollusks can quickly spread throughout a water body.





They attach to rocks, docks, other shellfish, and clog water intakes, boat hulls, and propellers.


Young zebra mussels can attach to vegetation and get caught up in propellers or anchors and larvae brought on board in ballast water or bait tanks. They can grow to about one inch and can survive out of water for several days. They are native to Eastern Europe and appear to have reached this continent in the ballast water of ships before spreading through parts of the country. Sightings have been confirmed in waters that drain into the Saint John River in both Quebec and New Brunswick. The larvae are tiny and translucent and difficult to spot in water.

Mary Jewett, Director of Education and Invasive Prevention for the Lakes Environmental Association has lobbied for the LD 92 “Clean, Drain, Dry” bill for healthy lakes statewide. Similar laws are also in effect in more than 20 other states including New York, New



Zebra mussels in hand from the internet, anchor and hopesf.com

Hampshire, and Vermont. Jewett is also heavily involved in our CBI program, approving our grant from the state for that effort. “It could have catastrophic impacts if we don’t prevent them (zebra mussels) from coming in,” Jewett said. The new law took effect and requires boaters to drain their vessels of any standing water before moving from one body of water to another to help prevent the spread of zebra mussels or other invasive species. “In Maine, we’re working on preventing them from getting here to begin with,” said Jewett, “but we need to operate under the assumption that zebra mussels are everywhere.”



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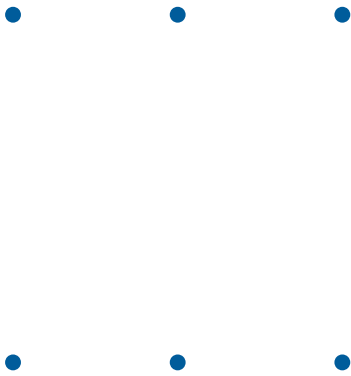
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