



# Friends of Wilson Lake

Volume 14 Issue 1

February 2021

## President's Statement

**D**ear FOWL Members and Friends, we trust this finds you and yours well. In spite of the limitations and restrictions COVID-19 has placed on us all, our Newsletter Editor Wynn Muller shows how FOWL continues to move forward, regardless of the pandemic. In my contribution I want to talk about collecting Ice-In data, and how we are working to assure the well being of the organization through long-range planning.

ICE-IN: Ice-Out data has been collected yearly on Wilson Lake since 1889, but collecting Ice-In data is a fairly recent practice. The Lake Stewards of Maine collect the data through local observers, with the goal of a better understanding of how climate change affects our lakes. Deciding on Ice-In can be a bit dodgy, as the lake will freeze, but then thaw with warmer weather, to be followed by colder weather, when it will refreeze and remain frozen.

### In 2020:

December 19 -- first Ice-In

December 26 -- open water again (you will recall how warm it was)

### January 1, 2021 -- permanent Ice-In.

Something similar happened in 2019:

December 7 -- first Ice-In

December 15 -- open water again

### December 18 -- permanent Ice-In.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: I expect many of us have been involved in organizations that have engaged in long-range planning; they step back, look at themselves in light of their mission, and make strategic plans for the future.

FOWL is currently involved in such an activity.

In the Fall and Winter of 2020-2021, the FOWL Board, together with FOWL community members, are engaged in a Strategic Planning process to address two questions: 1) Where do we want FOWL to be in the next 3-5 years?; and, 2) given #1, How do we get there from here?

Under the skillful facilitation of Jen Jespersen of Ecological Instincts, a series of meetings are being held from which three top priorities have emerged: 1) Board & Membership Development; 2) Public Relations/Outreach; and, 3) Lake Science. Each category will be divided into its component parts, responsibilities will be assigned, along with a timeline for their accomplishment. We will update you on the progress of this organizational roadmap in the next Newsletter.

Thank you for supporting FOWL, and for renewing your membership!

*Rob Lively*



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## Membership 2021

Let me begin by wishing you all a most pleasant 2021. We all recognize that this past year has been most unusual. When I was writing the winter newsletter last January, the Coronavirus was only something that was happening in China and I never considered that it would dominate our society as it has. We have all been “Sheltering in Place”, not visiting friends or even family. We are constantly hearing the truly horrific numbers of how this virus has impacted our lives. We experienced the summer’s social unrest. We lived through an election like none other due to the virus and are still immersed in the backlash of that event.

How has this impacted us at FOWL? Let’s look at the many ways.

Let’s first address the area of membership. Since we cancelled many of our normal activities and events this summer and many from “away” were not able to visit Wilton this summer, we did suffer a loss of contact with many of our members. Our membership dropped from last year’s 313 to 301 and that took considerable effort on our part to make contact. A list of the current members is attached elsewhere. Please, in this time of isolation, try to make contact with your friends and family and neighbors to see how they are doing. Let’s go out of our way to keep our FOWL community united. If you see someone on the membership list that you have not contacted this year, pick up the phone and give them a call. Also, if you fail to see a friend, family member, or neighbor on this list, give them a call as well and ask them to join our FOWL family. It has been most welcome to see our members who have moved out of state continue to remain on our membership roster. Remember our dues are a modest \$12 per family, but many have voluntarily increased this amount to \$50 or \$100 and even \$1000. Our basic dues will not even pay for these three newsletters we send out. You can use the enclosed reply envelope to submit your check payable to FOWL. Some had requested we seek electronic payment options. We have worked with Franklin Savings Bank and established that option through “Zelle”. If you are interested in this, please contact me at [wynnmuller@comcast.net](mailto:wynnmuller@comcast.net) and I will assist you. You do need to have Zelle active at your local bank.

While our membership did drop slightly, our member donations were up from \$6,000 in 2019 to \$7,600 this year. Also, due to the cancellation of some of our programs, our checkbook increased

from a balance of \$14,000 in 2019 to \$17,000 at the end of 2020. Also our business members increased from last year’s 23 to 26 in 2020. We also made donations to Maine Lakes, Lake Stewards of Maine, Wilton Fish & Game, Wilton Tyngtown Club and the Franklin County Chamber.

In late winter, we made the decision to postpone the annual **Wayne Smith Lakes and Loons Program** for the third grade at the Academy Hill School. This was necessitated due to the school having switched to remote learning. We also realized that the June **“Floating Classroom”** planned for the fourth grade would also need to be postponed. Both are planned to occur in some fashion in 2021, but most likely will be in some form of remote or virtual presentation. It also was obvious that our **Annual Meeting** scheduled in July could not happen as planned and our Board of Directors met virtually to cancel the 2020 Annual Meeting and reappoint the existing Officers and Board Members. This was not done without serious concern since that one event is an annual rallying point where our members renew their friendships with one another and also many pay the annual dues.

The **Courtesy Boat Inspection** program also created concern. How could we ask students to inspect boats under the shroud of this deadly virus? We spoke to the state and they provided guidelines that we must adhere to mask wearing, 6 foot distancing, hand sanitization and total avoidance of contact with the boat or the boaters. Make brochures available for boaters to pick up and not hand out. Recognizing that the 6 foot distancing rule would be most difficult to enforce with boaters, we asked our CBI monitors to have boaters self inspect their own boats under the supervision of our monitors. This worked well for a start, but soon the boaters and monitors both agreed that it was more efficient for the monitors to do their own inspections. Three of our monitors were returning from last year: Olivia, Mick, and Kahryn which gave us a great start. Our final monitor Matty was appointed mid-year and we needed her help. We hope she will return in 2021. With the virus, our boating increased this year – with many kayaks and canoes. We actually inspected 1065 boats compared to last year’s record total of 983. Also, only two plants were found compared to the 13 found last year. Fortunately, none of those plants were determined by independent inspection to be invasive. We were also fortunate to have the support of our business community to sponsor most of our weekends allowing for the continuation of this most important program.



Among the other activities we do, Olivia Schanck was selected to receive the **David Prince Memorial Scholarship** presented virtually in June. We were able to approve one LakeSmart evaluation and award to Wally and Annette Backus in the fall. The **Hazard Buoy** that we sponsor near Kineowatha Park took on water and our long time tender of that buoy, Dennis Taylor arranged for its replacement. Mary Ryan, the Mullers, and Rob Lively continued to assure that the **Secchi Disk** and **Dissolved Oxygen** level readings were conducted throughout the summer and our “**Scientific Buoy**” hosted by UMF in the center of the lake was re-installed in the spring with some additional floats to avoid the tangling of the anchor rope with the rope that carried the data readers that has occurred in the past. We do hope to have new results on these readings in our Spring Newsletter. Unfortunately, since the Blueberry Festival was cancelled, we were not able to offer our annual **Boat Rides** and **Loon Booth**.

Since we were not able to meet in person, we have been working with our consultant, Jen Jespersen to establish a Strategic Plan and Plan of Continuation for FOWL. We plan to have more to share with you on this in the next issue of this newsletter. We have also been looking into the “delta” that is occurring at the head of the lake. Barry Hathaway and Peter Campion photographed this area via drone to establish a current rendering of the delta via the plant growth. We hope to compare these results with earlier renderings taken from satellite images in past years. While we have no plans for any efforts to reduce this delta, we do believe it needs to be monitored and perhaps action can be taken to avoid its increase. Finally, while we have been looking at the head of the lake, the Town has been looking to replace the rock wall at the foot of the lake. Our board has been actively providing input in this effort. Please review the Fall Newsletter for a full report. More current news is available on the Wilton town Facebook page. 📍

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## What Killed Over 350 African Elephants Last Summer?

The short answer is a cyanobacteria bloom. This is important to us because such blooms can occur on freshwater lakes in Maine such as Wilson. Should we be concerned? For the long answer and how it might impact us, read on.

Botswana is in south Africa and is home to about 130,000 elephants—the world's largest elephant population. It is also one of the most stable countries in Africa with one of the best wildlife records.

In July the *Guardian* reported the death of over 350 elephants in the country. The story was picked up by both CBS and ABC News. The elephants walked in circles and appeared dizzy before suddenly dropping

possible causes including: ingestion of toxic bacteria in water, anthrax poisoning, poisoning by humans, viral infections from rodents, or a pathogenic microbe. They also speculated that the cause might have to do with heavy rains after many years of drought. Cyanobacteria (as found in some algal blooms) can be deadly and many of the elephants had been found near waterholes, but elephants tend to drink from the center of ponds, not the edges where cyanobacteria generally accumulates and the heavy rainfall should have washed out the bacteria. Anthrax poisoning is suggested since the neuro-impairment is symptomatic of anthrax and this bacterium occurs naturally in soil and has been known to affect animals around the world. Human poisoning using cyanide or other toxins would remain in the carcasses long after death and impact other animals eating the bodies, but no evidence of death on



Dead elephant at polluted pond

dead. No one knew why. This bizarre behavior and the sheer numbers of elephants dying suggest that it was not any of the diseases known to afflict wild elephants. That their tusks aren't missing ruled out poaching for ivory as a cause. The dying began as early as March 2020 and by June over 350 deaths had been identified. Concern was expressed that this might be some disease that might possibly spill over to humans as well. None of the symptoms appeared related to the Corona Virus. The disease, whatever it might be, seemed to be some form of neuro-impairment, not of the respiratory system.

*The National Geographic* interviewed veterinarians and wildlife experts and came up with some

jackals or vultures was noted. The final theory of rodent-borne virus has been known to kill elephants in the past, but there was no evidence of any high concentration of rodents in the area.

Finally, by September the experts had agreed that the most likely cause of the elephant deaths was toxic algal blooms of cyanobacteria that have increased due to climate change. They spent months studying samples from the carcasses, environmental samples from soil and water and samples from live animals. The principal veterinarian officer at the Botswana wildlife and national parks said that the samples were also sent to laboratories in the U.S., Canada and Europe for testing. These deaths ceased as the water holes dried up in late June. Reuben explained, "one



Map of Africa showing Botswana

working hypothesis on why only elephants were affected is that, unlike other animals, elephants suck water with their trunks from underneath, so they drink from deeper levels in the waterholes, closer to silt where the anaerobe toxin are contained.”

**Why is this important?** What do we care about the death of elephants in Africa? The reason is that we do have toxic, cyanobacteria algal blooms in fresh

water lakes in Maine. In the summer of 2019, there were numerous social media postings about the deaths of domestic dogs dying from ingesting water from ponds experiencing algal blooms. Also, in 2017 Dr. Elijah Stommel at Dartmouth presented a report that cyanobacteria blooms were connected to certain neurological diseases, including ALS and Alzheimer’s. However, the United States Geological Survey issued a report in November of 2017 that cast doubts on this research. Still one needs to be cautious when confronted with any algal blooms.

**Dr. Ben Pereris**, Research Director of the Maine Lakes Science Center in Bridgeton addressed this issue in the Fall/Winter issue of the LEA Lake News. He says, “This diverse group of microorganisms is not technically algae, but rather bacteria that can use light for energy. Members of this group can be found all over the world on land, in the ocean, and in fresh water. Cyanobacteria are a natural component of most lakes and coexist with algae. Under warm, calm, nutrient-rich conditions, however, cell growth can be so rapid that blooms form, often as visible blue-green scum. Since many cyanobacteria can produce toxins (or cyanotoxins), blooms of such species sometimes contain levels high enough to cause illness or death in humans and animals. Maine lakes harbor many cyanobacteria species, but fortunately few reach bloom levels and not all of those blooms are toxic. Only those lakes that bloom regularly and have water transparency reduced to



Herd of elephants



about six feet or less will possibly have cyanotoxin concentrations that exceed EPA guidelines. The agency maintains a list of lakes at risk for algal and cyanobacteria blooms, using low transparency as a criterion ([www.maine.gov/dep/water/lakes/bloomrisk.html](http://www.maine.gov/dep/water/lakes/bloomrisk.html)).” In reviewing this list only seven lakes are listed as “Very High” or likely to bloom annually. Those seven are: China Lake, Lovejoy Pond in Albion, Pleasant Pond in Gardiner, Quimby Pond in Rangeley, Sabattus Pond in Greene, Three Mile Pond in China, and Unity Pond. In Wilton only Pease Pond is on this list and its risk level is Low (unlikely to bloom) but with a frequency level of “sometimes”.

**Scott Williams**, Executive Director, Lake Stewards of Maine (formerly VLMP) also addressed this issue in the Winter 2019 edition of *The Water Column* which also appeared in the Spring Edition of the Maine Lakes Society *For the Sake of Maine's Lakes*. Scott's article is headed, “Toxic Algae Blooms, Don't Panic But Do Become Informed About This Threat.” Much of what Scott says repeats those comments of Dr. Pererls above. Scott said: “The social media posts were largely about situations occurring in the southern U.S. where algal blooms (toxic and otherwise) are much more common than in Maine. Other names that are sometimes used to describe this phenomenon include “bluegreen algae” or “cyanobacteria” blooms and the events may also be referred to collectively as “harmful algal blooms” or “HABs”. Historically, Maine lakes have been, and continue to be, less likely to experience a toxic algal bloom than lakes in more southerly areas for a number of reasons:

- 1) Maine's climate is relatively cool. For thousands of years, our lakes have been covered by ice and snow for half the year or more. The Cyanobacteria/blue-green algae associated with HABs are more likely to reach bloom levels in warm climates, where the lake water is warmer.
- 2) Maine's “glacial till” soils are less fertile (less phosphorus) than soils throughout much of the country, which means that the ingredients that are essential to algae growth are in naturally short supply – provided that soils are stable and erosion is minimal.
- 3) Maine's population is relatively small.”

In another area Scott addressed the topic of “When is it Not Safe to Go into the Water?” He says, “Although the overall risk of encountering unsafe conditions for you and your dog in a Maine lake is low, you should be aware of the potential, especially if you are not familiar with the body of water. Short of taking a water sample for analysis, the following are two rel-

atively simple ways to judge whether or not lake water may contain unsafe levels of algal toxins:

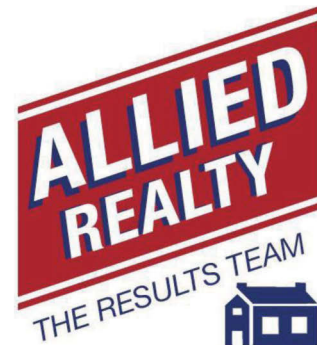
- 1) If you are a Certified LSM Lake Monitor, your Secchi disk is a reliable tool that can be used to quickly assess conditions in the lake. If the Secchi reading is greater than 2.0 meters (approximately 6') depth, it is unlikely that any toxins in the water that may be associated with cyanobacteria exceed the health risk threshold.
- 2) Another simple option is to wade into the water in a relatively shallow area until you are up to your neck, look down. If you can clearly see your toes the water is probably free of algal toxins. This method should not be used by small children, because someone who is only 4 feet in height might still be able to see their feet during severe bloom conditions.

In either case, if the water is greenish, and there is a buildup of scum on the surface or near the shore, it is best to avoid contact with the water altogether.”

All in all, while we appear to have no serious concern at present, we need to do whatever is necessary to avoid algal blooms in our lake. Wilson Lake Secchi disk readings are in the 5–6 meter range and we have no blooms. Thus, we have no current need to be concerned with the toxic nature of a bloom. The best way to do so is to keep phosphorus-carrying erosion out of our lake. LakeSmart is designed to help avoid such erosion and serious algal blooms. 🏠

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# Kineowatha Park Long-Term Management Plan, A joint Project of the Wilton Parks and Recreation Committee and the Wilton Conservation Commission, April 2020

*Presented by Ken Sawyer, Member of FOWL Board and Wilton Conservation Commission Summary (Page #s are related to the overall Management Plan)*

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All parks, whether national, state, or local, require management plans. In the words of the National Park Service, “Management plans provide the basic guidance for how parks will carry out their statutory responsibilities for protection of park resources, unimpaired for future generations, while providing for appropriate visitor use and enjoyment.”

In 2018, the Conservation Commission approached the Parks and Recreation Department with the idea of jointly preparing a long-term management plan for Kineowatha Park, to both help preserve the park as an outstanding town recreation and natural area and to provide well-grounded guidance for future town committees and park directors. This document, the result of that work, has three sections: An **Introduction** which gives a full background discussion for the project, the **Recommendations** which give the proposed guidelines and care plans (also given below), and the **Appendix and References**.

The **Recommendations (p. 13–21)** reflect both the excellent work already being done by the current director and town committees along with five new care plans. The **Use and Care Guidelines (p. 14)** are based on recommendations from the 1993 Kineowatha Long-Term Planning Committee and guidelines from the Kittery, ME Parks Commission Management Plan. A discussion of the KEMP management plan previously presented to the town is given on p. 16, while the five major recommendations of the current report are summarized below with full discussion for each given in the report.

- (1) Kineowatha Tree Management Plan (p. 16,17)
  - a. Upper Park – Entrance trees will be pruned, maintained, and replaced as needed for appearance, health and safety.
  - b. Middle Park (Buzzell Lane disc golf course and walking trails) – Trees will be cared for and removed as necessary to keep the trees healthy and the trails safe and usable.

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- c. Lower Park (below golf course to shoreline) – Will be passively managed as a natural area in agreement with shoreland zoning and best management practices for lake protection.
- (2) Kineowatha Park Natural Area (p. 18) – will be walking trails for public recreation, nature study, and educational uses by local schools. The Conservation Commission will work with the park director to help passively manage this area and prepare signage and educational materials.
- (3) Lake Protection Plan (p. 19) – will focus on phosphorus control (minimizing fertilizer runoff, soil erosion, disturbing of bottom sediments) to prevent toxic algae blooms in the swimming and cove areas. The Conservation Commission and Friends of Wilson Lake (FOWL) will help with this.
- (4) Invasives Plan (p. 20) – will document, monitor, and help remove or control invasive species such as Japanese knotweed (invasive bamboo). The Conservation Commission will have primary responsibility for this and will coordinate all work with the Park Director.
- (5) Climate Change Response Plan (p. 21) – will address the “warmer, wetter, wilder” prediction for Maine’s climate in the future. The plan will respond to the consequences of climate change by monitoring for invasive species, preparing for drainage and erosion issues, and monitoring and pruning the parks trees to limit wind damage. In addition, this plan will try to maximize tree canopy (pro-forestation) to help maximize CO<sub>2</sub> removal and minimize erosion and invasives.



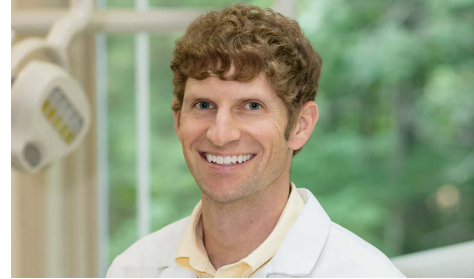
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## History of Kineowatha Park

[From a talk by Harold Karkos, Town Historian, to the Wilton Historical Society (c.1994)] as written in the Appendix to the Kineowatha Park Management Plan



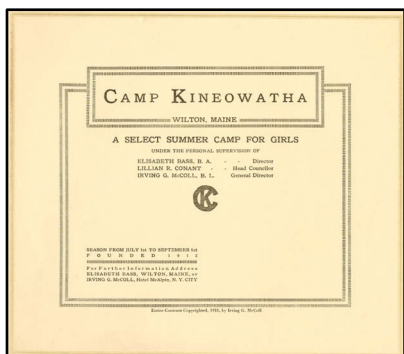
Boating at Camp Kineowatha

The so-called “War canoes” were often seen on Wilson Lake.

In later years, ownership passed on to Mr. and Mrs. Wellman Roys. In 1975, the Roys deeded the property to the State of Maine and in turn the State deeded Kineowatha Park to the Town for 99 years. In 1987, the Town officially became owner.

The 1975 Town report says, “1975 was a year of great advancement for the Town of Wilton in the areas of both parks and recreation.” Kineowatha Park was opened for public use in June. A director, Kenneth Burrill, was hired on a full-time basis to manage the new and expanded facilities and programs. During his tenure until 1982, basketball courts were built, tennis courts were changed from clay to hard surface, and ice skating was moved to the Park. The second director was Gavin Kane who served until 1989. During this time, a Little League

The first evidence of the existence of camps at the site of the present park was on a map that accompanied the Wilton Register of 1910. Early photographs in the files at Wilton Historical Society show a Bacheller's Music camp and Blue Mountain camps at the location. In 1914, the property was purchased by Elisabeth (Bess) Bass and a Mr. McCall. They named it Kineowatha. One explanation for this name was that McCall owned a boy's camp near Harrison called Camp Kineo. The last part of the name was borrowed from Hiawatha of Longfellow's poem, producing Kineowatha.

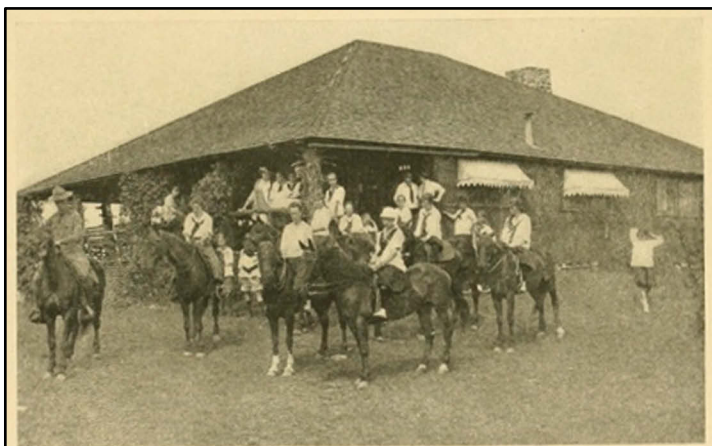


Camp Kineowatha

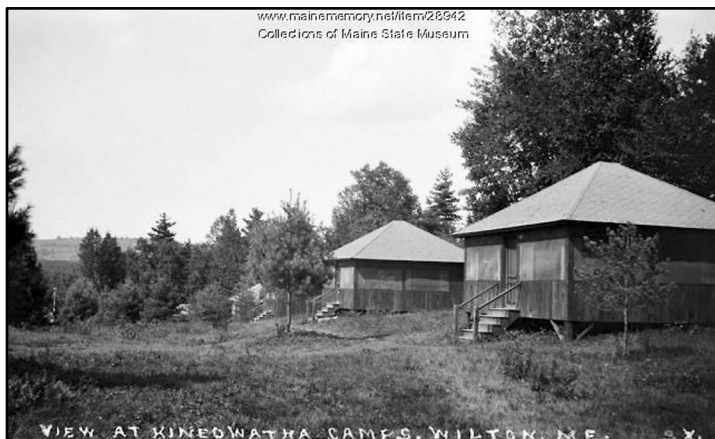
Later on, Bess Bass became sole owner, and with her sister, Annie, operated the camp for many years. Girls came to Kineowatha from many states and foreign countries to enjoy activities such as horseback riding,

archery, ballet, and canoeing.

The center of activity was the main bungalow, known as the main bung. This served as a theater, a post office, a store, and a central meeting hall. Additional structures, called Bungalots, were smaller and served as Living Quarters. Citizens of Wilton were used to seeing groups of campers on horseback on Main St. in the 20s, 30s and 40s.



Horseback riding at Camp Kineowatha



Kineowatha Camp Cottages



Boating at Camp Kineowatha

field was built and an extensive drainage system was placed under the soccer field. Frank Donald succeeded Kane in 1989. In more recent years, the list of programs has grown to a total of 19, and 14 buildings are maintained at the Park. In 1990, a play space was constructed with volunteers and community donations as a Main St. 90 project. The Park was connected to Town sewer. The tennis courts are being rebuilt and will be ready for use in the spring of 1994.



Sunset at Kineowatha Park



Kineowatha Park Beach

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