



Washington Lakes Watershed Association

Newsletter 2016

Twenty-five years of water quality advocacy and conservation education

Newsletter #29

February 2016

Medomak Brook Trail

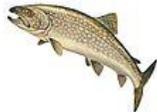
Washington Lakes Watershed Association volunteers worked during the past summer to restore a walking trail along Medomak Brook. Washington Recreation Committee will work with the lakes association to make the trail available as an easy, close-to-the-village walk. We'll post progress on our website:

www.washingtonlakesassociation.org.

Named Medomak Brook Trail, it runs along the brook in a small loop behind Prescott Memorial School. Principal Nancy Stover and several faculty noted that the trail could be used as a teaching tool in a number of ways, including making labels for the large number of tree species in the area.

Trout Stocking in Doubt

Due to limited access at the Washington Pond public launch, Maine Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Department may discontinue stocking trout in our big lake. IF&W stocks Washington Pond for the benefit of the general public (not only shoreland owners) and their policy calls for "reasonable and equitable public access" for everyone. The boulders placed at the site several years ago by the town prevent trailered boats from launching there, which is against IF&W's equitability policy and an influence in the decision to cease trout stocking unless the boulders are removed. Whether or not to do so will be among the items to vote on at Town Meeting, March 26, 2016 at 10 a.m. at Prescott Memorial School gym. Be there if you want to speak to this issue.



Rare sight – a "raft" six loons

Six loons were seen swimming together on Washington Pond and a seventh was observed about 30 yards away, although it didn't join with the others.



While trolling in his small boat with an electric motor, Dave Lear and his mom, Charlotte, noticed two loons swimming close together. Over the next few minutes, they were joined by another, and another, and another. When the sixth one joined the group, Dave and Charlotte were mesmerized. This raft – the name for a group of loons – swam down the lake within 6 feet of their boat for quite some time. They made sounds to each other, swam about in a contra-dance like way and seemed oblivious to people so close by. Dave cut the engine and scrambled for his camera hoping to get a picture before they were gone. Gradually, the loons moved ahead, still in their "dance" formation. After a while, they began to spread apart (photo above). One of the loons dove and didn't reappear. One by one away in the same manner. Their "meeting" was over, but what a thrill to see. [More at Loon Lore](#)

Loon Lore

The fascinating behavior of the six loons on Washington Pond led us to a fine article published in Cabin Living Magazine a few years ago [Dec 2011].



The author, Brian Collins, states that there are a number of hypotheses for these social gatherings. Perhaps the loons are preparing for fall migration. Or, they may be working out leadership. It may be that they are deciding next year's mating season issues. And, of course, they might be just playing or building skills. Whatever these handsome birds are up to, this ritual is a delightful sight!

Plant i.d. paddle

On a perfect day last summer, twelve paddlers joined WLWA member and registered Maine Guide Rob Stenger on an aquatic plant identification paddle on Washington Pond. Rob led the group along the southern shoreline of the lake focusing on common native flora. Underwater viewing scopes made it possible to inspect sub-merged plants up close. A highlight of the two hour paddle was stopping on a small island for a snack break with snack bars prepared by Rob himself! Participants lingered for awhile enjoying the beautiful surroundings and the gorgeous summer day before heading back to the boat launch. We'll offer paddles this coming summer. Please watch our website for dates: www.washingtonlakesassociation.org or facebook.com/washingtonmaine.lakesassociation

LakeSmart Awards



Four Washington Pond property owner applicants – Roger and Mary Cady, Frank and Nancy Braun, Patricia Medeika, and Victor and Marlene Cohn – received LakeSmart Awards last summer for care of their property. LakeSmart is a voluntary education and reward program for lakefront homeowners who maintain their places in ways that protect lake water quality and property values. The award acknowledges owner's (1) management of rainwater so that runoff doesn't flow directly into the lake, (2) maintenance of a sturdy ground cover, (3) stabilizing the shoreline with a buffer area of plants and shrubs, and (4) avoiding use of chemicals. Many lakeside families are already doing this. WLWA directors voted to participate in the statewide LakeSmart program managed by the Maine Lakes Society. Property owners can apply for recognition of their places at www.mainelakessociety.org/lakesmart or call us locally at 207-845-2661.

Ice-Out Contest

Guessing when ice-out will  happen is a fun pastime even in the throes of this unusual winter. This year, contest guess entry boxes were at Linscott's, Washington Auto Parts, and Washington General Store in addition to the Snowmobile Club's Fishing Derby on Washington Pond. All were collected on February 13. Winner will be announced within five days after ice-out as judged by WLWA observers. Past ice-out dates include: 4/10/ 2009, 4/16/2011, 4/8/2013, 4/15/2014, and 04/21/15.

Washington Pond covers 565 acres, Crystal Lake 99 acres.
Washington Pond contains more water than all other water bodies
in the Medomak River Watershed combined!

Annual Loon Count

Faithful volunteers Roger and Mary Cady, Don and Liz Grinnell, and David Allen conducted Maine Audubon's Annual Loon Count Day last July 18. The 2015 count was 6 adults and 1 juvenile on Washington Pond and 1 adult on Crystal Lake. Our volunteers work with the official annual Maine Audubon Loon Count.



WLWA Board Meetings

WLWA members are welcome at Board meetings. Our next meeting is March 7. Call Sharon at 845-2140 or

email wlwassn@gmail.com for time and place.!

For email updates on lakes news send your address to wlwassn@gmail.com.

Maine Lakes Society Conference - Join us!

The Maine Lakes Conference is an annual event for members of lakes advocacy groups to hear speakers, enjoy exhibits, and learn about each other's projects. Saturday, June 25, the 46th Conference – Emerging Issues in Lake Research and Conservation – will be held at Unity College. Topics include harmful algae blooms, partnerships between organizations, and technologies we can use to increase lake protection.

Besides the educational component, the conference is a wonderful time to meet members of other groups, make friends, enjoy sociability over lunch, view the lake art exhibit, and participate in the raffle. Registration is open to everyone. For more information go to:

www.minelakessociety.org

or email wlwassn@gmail.com.

Legislative Lake Policy and Issues

Maine legislation affects all of us. Maine Lakes Society Reports on 2016 legislative issues at <http://mainelakessociety.org>. Click on the Advocacy tab and select Legislative Status.

All About Fish

Fisheries Biologist, Scott Davis - Annual Meeting Speaker

Scott Davis spoke about Washington Pond which is in Region B, a huge area with lots of lakes that he and just two others cover. Of our two lakes, it is the one on which he has the most data. Davis visits "his" lakes on a rotating basis and it is often quite some time between visits, which, he points out, makes volunteer lake monitoring very important. Davis says he expects to find a dissolved oxygen (DO) deficiency in late summer, but generally there is a band of cold water with enough oxygen to support a salmonid population (trout or salmon), easing heat-stress. These cold-water fish need at least 5ppm DO and temperatures no greater than 15-16 degrees Celsius.

In an IF&W fish survey (caught by rod and reel or by gill-netting) in 2007, 6 brown trout and 0 brook trout were caught. The fish caught were from two different year classes. IF&W stocking programs are contingent upon some fish making it to the next season as hold-overs. If wardens catch only fish from the previous stocking event (a single year class), they may consider discontinuing stocking in that water body as happened on Unity Pond.

In 2015, 600 spring yearling brook trout (~12"), 600 brown trout fall yearlings (~14"), and 250 brook trout (~14") were stocked. About twenty-five 18-20" brood stock fish were put in in 2014. Based on a multi-year holdover pattern observed, Davis expects that the 2016 stocking pattern will be the same, but perhaps without brood stock which are only added on an occasional basis. In "creel" surveys, IF&W staff will survey ice fishermen daily on a particular body of water and can most often account for every single brood stock fish placed in the lake. Brown trout up to age 4 were caught on the last survey. → **continued**

→ Fisheries biologist, continued

The costs of stocking a fall yearling costs IF&W (and consequently, taxpayers) about \$8. These costs are paid for by fishing licenses.

Smelt make up a good forage source for salmonids, but there are not many in Washington Pond, so they may feed on snails or mussels. If there are snails and mussels in the stomachs of fish, they don't have enough to eat. Alewives are a good forage fish and have been reintroduced in Washington Pond but up-stream passage for them has not been secured*.

Largemouth bass out-compete smallmouth but smallmouth bass are more numerous in Washington Pond. The bass population is classified as "quality" and individuals up to 18 years old were caught. Trophy bass are usually at least 20 years old. [Caution - the older the fish the more toxins it may contain.] They are aged by dissection of head bone rings. Davis says stocking brookies costs about \$8 per fish but rainbows are more catchable. Browns are a little more sport and have the trout niche.

Davis pointed out that there are not many bass tapeworms in Washington Pond, surprisingly, because this parasite is usually common in Maine lakes. Alternative hosts are fish-eating birds like loons and merganser ducks. If using rubber bait, he said, don't discard it into the water when you clean the fish. If we don't put anything into the lake – it's better for what we get out of the lake.

Davis said that Washington Pond is in good condition and thanks everyone who is helping keep it that way.

* Alewives are sea-run fish that mature in the ocean and come to fresh water to reproduce. Passage on Medomak Brook has been blocked by dams and natural barriers for many years. An effort to restore open passage from Medomak River to Washington Pond is underway. For more information contact: charlotte@fairpoint.net or call 207-845-2661.

Why water temperature matters. . .

All aquatic species thrive in a narrow temperature range for which they are best suited. Even a few degrees of change make a difference to fish, insects, zooplankton and phytoplankton. As little as 2-degrees can change the chemistry of the water and the biology of the creatures so that their environment is no longer inhabitable.



Swim Teacher Wanted

WLWA is seeking to hire a qualified swim teacher to provide a week or two of swimming lessons on Crystal Lake this summer. Salary to be negotiated. Call Sharon at 845-2140 or email wlwassn@gmail.com.

Water quality testing underway

WLWA is now doing our own dissolved oxygen (DO) testing monthly during summer months. A collaboration with the Damariscotta Lake Watershed Association is making that possible. Two of our members, Rob Stenger and Roger Cady, are trained, certified DO monitors. Training ensures the scientific accuracy and consistency that make the tests reliable. Training sessions are available through Maine Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program www.mvlmp.org or contact us locally at wlwassn@gmail.com.



WLWA gratefully thanks the numerous people who fish our lakes for having switched or traded to non-lead gear. Lead poisoning is the leading cause of death* among adult loons in Maine.

**If you ever find a dead loon, please phone Maine Audubon's Dead Loon Hotline at (207) 781-6180 x275. They will tell you what to do.*