

KENNEBEC LAKE ASSOCIATION

WINTER NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016

Changing of Seasons

We certainly have had a marvellous fall, with warm temperatures and sunny skies that made outdoor work all the more pleasant. The cold weather seemed so far away that it was way too easy to put off the various chores of preparing for winter. Well, we knew it had to come, and sure enough it did. Now, as I write this at Kennebec, we are experiencing the first piece of serious winter, with some 10 to 12 cm of snow having fallen and a bitterly cold northwest wind blowing down the lake.

The people at Quinte Conservation have been reminding us that there are still Level 3 drought conditions. Everyone is hoping that we receive enough precipitation over the course of the winter under conditions that favour absorption and flow sufficient to give the watershed the opportunity to recharge, bringing ground and surface water back to more normal levels. If this doesn't happen, we will be facing some serious water shortages next year. For more information, be sure to read the article by Aileen Merriam on page 5 in this newsletter.

Following the Annual General Meeting in August, your Executive completed the assignment of roles/responsibilities and is working on plans for a series of stewardship activities and social events for the coming year. While details will be shared through newsletters, the website and periodic emails, the members of the Executive are listed on page 2 for your information. You are invited and encouraged to contact us with questions or concerns.

On behalf of the Executive, I would like to extend best wishes to all Kennebecers for a wonderful Christmas and holiday season and a healthy, happy winter!

— Terry Kennedy

Mark your calendars for these special events

Festival of Trees

Thursday to Saturday, Dec. 8 to 10 (10am to 5pm)

This fundraiser for Villages Beautiful provides money to participating hamlets in Central Frontenac for flowers, trees and other landscaping projects. This year, Arden received funds for new barrels and annuals, as well as a contribution to the sod-laying at the new Kennebec Heritage Garden.

The festival features decorated trees, gift baskets, wreaths and other Christmas decorations donated by area groups and businesses. All entries are raffled off, with the drawing done at the end of the festival. There is musical entertainment throughout the event — the Arden Glee Club sings carols on Saturday afternoon. Held at the Soldiers' Memorial Hall in Sharbot Lake. Free admission (donations to the Food Bank appreciated).
— Sarah Hale

CF Heritage Festival

Friday to Monday, Feb. 17 to 20

Enjoy fun activities during the Family Day holiday throughout the township to celebrate Central Frontenac's culture and history: horse-drawn wagon rides, snowshoeing, craft show, pioneer displays, talent show, photo contest, polar bear plunge, snowmobile drag races and more.

Visit www.frontenacheritagefestival.ca for more information as it is posted. You'll find that Arden will host plenty of activities on Saturday.

KLA Winter Fun Day 2017

Saturday, Feb. 18

The sixth annual KLA Winter Fun Day is scheduled for Saturday, February 18, on the lake near the bridge and boat launch. Our event will be one of many activities taking place in the area on the Family Day long weekend. Check www.kennebeclake.ca for details as we get closer; we hope to make this one of many Canada 150 celebrations in the township. Interested in helping with preparations for this event? Please contact me at gord.brown53@gmail.com or 613-335-4843.
— Gord Brown

Empty Bowls

Saturday, Feb. 18 (10:30am to 4pm)

Empty Bowls began as an art class project in a Michigan high school in 1990. Students made pottery bowls, served a meal of soup and bread and invited guests to keep the bowl as a physical reminder of world hunger. Empty Bowls events are now held around the world, raising millions to combat hunger.

Local potters Joanne Pickett, Aileen Merriam, Sharon Matthews, Tracy Bamford and Jonas Bonnetta will carry on the tradition at this year's Heritage Festival at the Kennebec Hall. Guests can buy a handmade pottery bowl for \$20 and enjoy a delicious lunch while at the same time making a donation to our local Food Bank. Baked goods will also be on the menu this year.
— Joanne Pickett

2018 Kennebec Lake Calendar Photos

A picture is worth a thousand words. We would like to invite you to submit photos depicting your experience at Kennebec Lake. Of special interest are notable landmarks, nature photos, wildlife and lake-related events or activities that correspond to the values listed on the main home page. Please include a short description of the photo: location, date and the name of the photographer as you would like it to appear in credits.

Photos used in the annual Kennebec Lake Calendar need to have a minimum resolution of 2300 pixels on the long edge. The image should not be too dark or too light. We will accept lower resolution of your photos for initial consideration, but be prepared to provide a high-resolution version if requested. If you are unsure how to determine the resolution of your photo or how to submit it via your device, please contact us and we may be able to assist.

Deadline for photo submissions for the 2018 Calendar is April 7. Photos can be sent via our "contact us" page at <http://kennebeclake.ca/contact>, or email to kennebeclakeinfo@kennebeclake.ca.

— Noreen Dertinger

Website Wanderings

Kennebec Lake experienced historically low water levels in 2016. On the website, you can find details, including the Level 3 low water conditions advisory sent out by Quinte Conservation in July. We also have water level data from a gauge at the Salmon River from 2006 to October 2016. Our home page has a link to the Arden Community Calendar too. Be sure to visit the site to access these items as well as some other new articles and a variety of Kennebec Lake-related information. If you have photos, stories or other information pertaining to how the low water level condition has affected your Kennebec Lake experience, please submit them using the contact information below.

Our website (www.kennebeclake.ca) sees a steady flow of visitors year-round. Ongoing maintenance keeps the site user-friendly and working properly. To ensure that the site supports a majority of devices, it is time to look at upgrading the open-source (free of cost) software to the next version.

We'd also like to dedicate a portion to Canada's 150th birthday. To that end, we invite you to submit photos and stories about what you, your family and guests enjoy at Kennebec Lake.

We welcome your input and suggestions. Please send your feedback via our "contact us" page at <http://kennebeclake.ca/contact>, or you can send emails to kennebeclakeinfo@kennebeclake.ca.

KLA Executive 2016/2017

Chair: Terry Kennedy

Vice-Chair: Kevin LaPorte

Vice-Chair: Doc Maiorino

Secretary: Sandra Dunham

Treasurer: Roy Beechey

Stewardship Committee Chair: Tony Downs

Webmaster: Noreen Dertinger

Gord Brown, Jamie French, Judy Kennedy, Carrie LaPorte, Jack Nicolson, Gloria Smiley, Peter Smiley, Terry Trojck

Newsletter Team

Charlotte DuChene, Judy Kennedy,

Aileen Merriam and Gloria Smiley

Thanks to contributors of articles and illustrations and to those who collate and distribute the newsletter. Website: www.kennebeclake.ca

Friends of Arden Update

If you drove into Arden this fall, you probably noticed the area opposite the millpond. The township provided 30 loads of fill, and the Matson family smoothed it out and installed drainage tiles supplied by FOA. Then sod was laid. Seasonal decorations along a "new" split rail fence added a nice touch to what will become the Kennebec Heritage Garden. The Garden will honour founding Arden families and other notable contributors to Arden; local people will be able to add a plaque in memory of a loved one. The Heritage Garden is a joint project involving the Kennebec & District Historical Society, the Kennebec Recreation Committee and the Friends of Arden.

On December 3, a tree-lighting ceremony was held at the Heritage Garden. Circle Square Ranch served hot chocolate, the Glee Club led us in carol singing, volunteers supplied cookies, and the Fire Department lit up the sky in flashing red lights to divert traffic and bring attention to this popular annual event.

The business sign just south of Highway 7 on the Arden Road is now full, with a waiting list of others wishing space. Business brochures are in the box on the sign. Thanks go to Gord Brown and Rodger MacMunn for this attractive and useful addition to our village. Also, a small crew planted Canada 150 red and white tulips at the nearby Arden sign.

FOA has contributed a basket to Festival of Trees to be held in Sharbot Lake from December 8 to 10.

The Business Boost sub-committee of FOA will spend this winter on social media to try to attract persons interested in opening a store, gas station and/or restaurant on Highway 7 in the Arden area.

Those interested in helping FOA with activities should contact Terry Kennedy at 613-335-3606.

Kennebec Lake Loons and their (lack of) chicks in the summer of 2016

by Noreen Dertinger

Another summer has come and gone without seeing at least one Kennebec chick fledge. It wasn't that the loons didn't try to raise families on our lake. In the east basin, I had some magical early mornings observing the loon pair fishing and preening. By mid-June, I was excited to spot a loon nest. The loon pair diligently took turns minding the nest. It seemed that the loon pair might soon be accompanying one or two loon babies around the lake. Unfortunately, I missed a couple weekends at the lake in July, so I am not sure how things played out in my absence. But when I resumed monitoring the loon nest, the prospect for celebrating loon chicks was not rosy at all. The nest appeared to be abandoned. When I investigated more closely, my worst fears were confirmed. I found the remains of two loon eggs, identified by their greenish colour, as well as the two membranes, under a shrub behind where the loon nest had been. We surmise that since the membranes were present, the chicks likely hatched. Since no reports were received regarding sightings of the adult loons and their chicks, the chicks do not appear to have survived for any length of time. A pair of adult loons continued to be observed in the general vicinity of the nest for some time.



In recent years, Kennebec Lake has had a second loon pair establish a nest in the west basin. This year, this second loon nest was also abandoned.

It is thought that the low water levels contributed to the loon pair giving up on their nest.

Despite the low water levels, adult loons were seen in both the east and west basins until late October. To me it seemed that the overall number of loons spotted on Kennebec Lake was down somewhat. I would like to thank those who have continued to send me reports about their loon sightings. The 2016 Loon Survey information has been submitted to Bird Studies Canada.

Two galleries dedicated to the 2016 Loons of Kennebec Lake are available at <http://kennebeclake.ca/EastBasinLoons2016> and <http://kennebeclake.ca/WestBasinLoons2016>.

Frog and Turtle populations are a beacon of the state of our environment

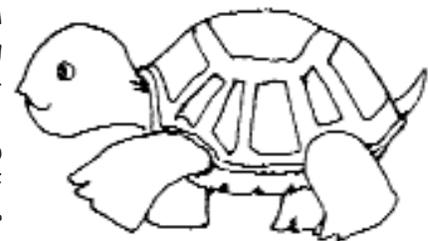
by Noreen Dertinger

By taking a little bit of extra care and being cognizant of how we are impacting our surroundings, we can help the wildlife that shares our space. This will contribute to our collective enjoyment of the lake and enable us to continue to contribute to our long-term well-being. Information about our impact on nature is reflected in the abundance or lack of amphibians and reptiles and other species.

Over the summer, I observed a relatively healthy population of frogs — mainly "Green frogs," an actual species of frog, some Leopard frogs and the occasional bull frog. On one kayak excursion in Crooked Creek, a Green frog hopped on deck and kept me company. Green and Leopard frogs sometimes crossbreed. At the 2016 KLA AGM, Christine Harvey showed me a photo she took of a frog; its markings strongly suggest that it is a Green frog-Leopard frog mix.

In some years, I have also spotted various turtles at Kennebec Lake. On a couple of occasions, I have been lucky enough to spot a rare Musk, aka Stinkpot, turtle. But this year, I saw no turtles. That doesn't mean they were not present. I am hoping that they were well concealed. A scarier reason for not seeing them could be that the low water levels contributed to the lack of sightings in 2016. Hopefully this is not an indicator of a forthcoming trend.

Frogs and toads eat mosquitoes and garden pests. Turtles clean up animal and fish remains. Frogs and turtles are a beacon of the state of our environment. Lets all work together to help frogs, turtles and other reptiles and amphibians survive. For more information about Ontario's frogs and turtles, please visit www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond.



Send feedback regarding Loon, Frog, Turtle and other Kennebec Lake-related sightings via our "contact us" page at <http://kennebeclake.ca/contact> or email to kennebeclakeinfo@kennebeclake.ca.

How long do you want your lake to live?

by Tony Downs, Chair, SWG

The life of a lake depends on how it is used. Nutrient input is one of the largest factors involved. High nutrient input from land runoff and groundwater can build up, resulting in increased vegetation and silting, eventually slowly turning the lake into a swamp and then land. This process, called eutrophication, is a normal pattern of a lake's life over thousands of years. Human nutrient input from poorly maintained septic systems, fertilization and contaminants such as weed killer can decrease this timeline significantly. So your Lake Stewardship Working Group (SWG) monitors those factors which can lead to an early demise of the lake.

Part of this is the capacity of a lake to absorb the activities of humans around it. Shoreline development then becomes a key factor. The more people, the greater the impact. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change calculates lake capacity based upon the concentration of phosphorus in the lake, the assumption being that people add phosphorus through their normal activities. However, we believe many more factors can play a role in lake life and need to be addressed by authorities. We are part of our lake's environment now, and so we need to be aware of what we value most about our lake and how our activities impact on those qualities.

Things like noise, aesthetics, wave action, safety, quiet contentment and partying can also be subjective factors in determining the capacity of a lake. In the next newsletter, we will include a survey to find out what is important to you about your lake. This will be a first step in perhaps changing our view of the single factor for lake capacity now used by authorities. At the very least, it can show us what our neighbours think is important and influence the things we do day to day that will protect and even enhance our lake. So please start thinking about it now.

Why Not Create a Sandy Beach?

Many property owners want to change their shorelines — clear vegetation, add fill, rock or sand and build docks or retaining walls — often without understanding the environmental impacts. Unfortunately, these “improvements” do not benefit a waterway's natural inhabitants. Shoreline alterations can upset the delicate natural balance and negatively impact fish and fish habitat. That is why alterations to a shoreline require approval from Quinte Conservation.

One harmful shoreline alteration is creating an artificial sand beach. It is important to retain the natural substrate composition. Many people either dump sand to create a beach area or clear the natural vegetation. Sand beaches are vulnerable to erosion and kill the vegetation underneath; and sand is easily washed away by receding wave action. If a sandy surface is desired, it should be placed well away from the zone affected by wave action, with a wide vegetated buffer strip. Removing native vegetation and too many fallen logs and branches increases erosion and harms the ecosystem of the body of water. Roots from vegetation hold the shore together and provide food and shelter for aquatic mammals, birds, turtles and insects. Also, since the sand is imported from elsewhere, it may contain contaminants or parasites that could contribute to spoiling our water quality.

Before you begin any development, call Quinte Conservation (613-968-3434, ext. 129) or email regulations@quinteconservation.ca for advice on permits or approvals and on how to best plan the project and protect our water and wetland resources. They can guide you through the process.

— Gloria Smiley

Sources: Fisheries and Oceans Canada and www.quinteconservation.ca

Don't Move Firewood!

Firewood should be bought and used locally to prevent the spread of pests from accidentally entering new areas. The emerald ash borer has killed millions of ash trees since it first arrived from Asia. Hiding in firewood, it can travel vast distances when that wood is moved by people. It is illegal to remove potentially infested materials from areas in Canada that are quarantined for pests such as Asian longhorned beetle, brown spruce longhorn beetle, gypsy moth and emerald ash borer. This is important in Quebec, Nova Scotia and Ontario, where infestations of these pests are currently known and regulated.

— Gloria Smiley

Source: www.dontmovefirewood.org

Be Bear Wise

A few sightings of black bears have occurred around the lake this summer. Smart and powerful, they can move quickly and be dangerous. They are opportunistic omnivores, eating practically anything that is easy to get at. If natural foods are not available, black bears will travel up to 100 kilometres to find other food. Once they know where to find a non-natural food source, they will return again and again.

Garbage is the main reason bears are drawn into communities, followed closely by birdseed, suet and nectar. Handling your garbage appropriately, feeding birds only in winter and scrubbing out your barbecue are simple things you can do to eliminate those non-natural food sources. Visit Ontario's Bear Wise Program at www.bears.mnr.gov.on.ca to discover how to coexist safely with black bears.

—Gloria Smiley

Source: Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Ontario

Report on Lake Stewardship Activities

On a gorgeous day in mid-October, we headed out in our boat to the small bay just west of the mouth of the Salmon River. Several years ago, we had anchored a **loon nesting platform** just east of the island in that bay. Late in the summer, we noticed that it was missing. It had broken away from its mooring and was beached on the shore. We purchased chain this time, rather than rope, as well as a new cement block to re-anchor it beside the island after wrestling it away from the shore. Mission accomplished! It is the tuft you see at left in the photo. Maybe the loons will find it attractive soon!

Next, we checked on the **beaver baffler** placed in the beaver dam in Beaver Creek to allow the walleye to swim upstream to spawn in the spring, and the fry to swim down to the lake. It was in good shape, though totally high and dry with the very low water levels. It should survive the winter well and be operative in the spring.

Secchi disc readings in the lake were completed for the year in mid-October. Over the spring, summer and fall, one or two readings a month are taken, and the results are sent to the Dorset Environmental Centre for recording. Secchi disc readings measure the clarity of the water. Algae and tannins from decomposition of evergreens control the clarity. Although it is difficult to relate Secchi readings to algal populations, Lake Partners asks us to measure clarity for comparison with many Ontario lakes to sense broad trends in water quality. Many measurements taken this year are between 3.0 and 4.9 metres. This year's were at the high end — more clarity in both ends of the lake. This indicates lower than usual algal production and may indicate low rainfall, with less tannins flowing in and less disturbance of particles by rain. It is difficult to relate Secchi readings to the nutrient status of individual lakes, but work by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change shows that Kennebec Lake's nutrient status is still moderate, requiring us to continue to guard against any increase.



Photo: Gloria Smiley

—Gloria Smiley

— Gray Merriam

Banning of the Beads

In the KLA winter newsletter of 2014, Noreen Dertinger made us aware of the dangers of microbeads found in cosmetics and some toothpastes. The tiny beads are not filtered out of waste water and don't biodegrade, so plastic accumulating in our oceans, lakes and rivers are harming ecosystems and aquatic life.

This past June, the federal government officially listed microbeads as a "toxic substance" under the Environmental Protection Act, clearing the way to actually banning the sale of shower gels, toothpaste and facial scrubs that contain plastic microbeads effective July 1, 2018. Microbeads in natural health products and non-prescription drugs will be prohibited a year later, on July 1, 2019.

Environment Canada has been studying the impacts of microbeads for nearly two years. Recognizing the way the wind was blowing, a majority of Canadian manufacturers of plastic microbeads have already committed to a voluntary phase-out by the time the federal prohibition comes into force.

In the meantime, however, it would be a good idea to stay away from products that contain microbeads.

For more information, visit www.Globalnews.ca and search Microbeads.

— Charlotte DuChene

Reflecting on Fluctuations

Guenther Nitsche has been recording the highs and lows of water levels in Kennebec Lake for many years. Fluctuating water levels are good for the lake and its natural processes.

Lately, the rate of change seems to have sped up and the variation is wider. In the spring of 2014, our lake reached its highest level since we began keeping records. This year, we have had the driest summer and fall on record — Level 3 drought. In many places, the Salmon River became a rocky valley with no water flowing. Even the attempts of the beavers on the upper Salmon River did not have an effect. The water never even reached the top of their dam!

Most years we have been recording levels, the lake level has varied just under or over 1 metre. But in just 18 months, between April 2014 and October 2016, the lake level varied by 2.24 metres.

Is this variation a reflection of climate change and the more extreme weather it has caused? If so, we need to consider placement of water input pipes and what type of dock suits fluctuating water levels. We also need to protect the Kennebec Lake Wetland Complex in the watershed above the lake so that it will continue to replenish the groundwater that supplies underwater springs in the lakebed.

— Aileen Merriam 5

NATURE NOTES

SWAN SONGS — Return of the Trumpeters

Our native **Trumpeter Swans** — *Cygnus buccinator* — are the world's largest species of water bird. They are native to much of North America, but until very recently, few people were able to see them in the wild. By the early 1700s they had all but become extinct.

Trumpeter Swans were an important source of food for First Nations peoples in this part of Ontario. When European settlers began to arrive, swans were still found and hunted for food. But swan numbers began to decline as early as the late 1600s when market hunters killed swans by the thousands for meat, feathers for hats and quills, and the soft leather made from their skins. Loss of wetland habitat and disturbances by humans contributed to the decline. As few as 1000 remained in western North America. By the late 1800s swans were no longer found in Ontario — the last wild Trumpeter was reported in 1886.

We have this grand bird again today largely as a result of work by Harry Lumsden, who served as District Biologist in Tweed in the 1950s. In 1982 he took up the challenge of restoring a breeding population of Trumpeter Swans to eastern Ontario. Using eggs from western birds, Harry and the Trumpeter Swan Society have, in 30 years, brought the population in eastern Ontario from zero to some thousands of wild swans.

And these beautiful birds have come to waterways near you! Three years ago, four Trumpeters spent some time on the Salmon River near Kennebec Lake, and this fall, two groups of around 20 adult and young swans were seen on McGowan Lake.



Trumpeter Swans on the Salmon River: Guenter Nitsche

Life History

At three to four years, adult Trumpeter Swans usually mate for life — some forming lasting bonds as young as two. A pair will defend the territory where they build a nest on beaver lodges and dams and on muskrat houses. They will also nest on land and have used rafts. The large nests are constructed from the surrounding vegetation and are built by both sexes.

Female swans lay 4 to 6 eggs (some as many as 10). Although incubation is done mostly by females, males share care of the cygnets. Trumpeter Swans have an unusual style of incubation — they warm the eggs with their feet!

Cygnets hatch in 32 to 37 days, down-covered and ready to swim and feed, and after 3 to 4 months are ready to fly. They remain with their parents for most of their first year. Large young of the year are darker in colour than their snow-white parents.

Adult Trumpeters skim vegetation from the surface of the water and forage underwater, reaching down with their long necks to dig up roots, stems, tubers and leaves of aquatic vegetation. In deeper water they tip up, tails in the air. They also pull plants out of damp ground. Cygnets start by eating mostly aquatic insects. After about five weeks they will be eating mostly plants.

Challenges remain for local birds:

- Trumpeter Swans have not relearned to migrate, so some still need supplemental food in winter
- Lead poisoning from shotgun pellets and fishing sinkers kills swans that swallow them with their food
- Escaped Mute Swans, introduced from Eurasia, compete for habitat, including nest sites

In winter, two kinds of wild swans can be seen nearby on Lake Ontario:

Native **Trumpeter Swans** with black bills

Mute Swans (*Cygnus olor*) with orange-red bills with black knob

Native **Tundra Swans**

(*Cygnus columbianus*) also have black bills, but are smaller than Trumpeters and are here during spring and fall migration only.

Swan Stats:

Adult:

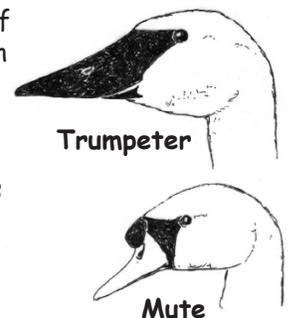
length: 1.4-1.6 m wingspan: 1.8-2.6 m

weight: ~ 8-13 kg

take-off distance required: ~ 100 m

Nest: 3 m diameter

Eggs: ~ 12 x 8 cm, creamy to off- white



by Aileen Merriam