

Newsletter

Spring 2010

Volume 1, Issue 1

Association Leadership

Eb von Goeler
Marleen von Goeler
Co- Presidents
Dave Clark, Vice President
Fred Kurker, Secretary
Terri Lavoie, Treasurer
Ken Cannon, Webmaster
Paula Kuketz, Water Safety Committee
John Foye, Membership Committee
Sara Grady, Invasive Species Committee
Geri Williams, Newsletter Editor
Dave Clark, Government Liaison
Marleen von Goeler, Education Committee
Eb von Goeler and Ken Cannon, Water Quality Committee

Upcoming Meeting

May 3, 7pm
Cedarville Community Room
General Membership Meeting with a presentation on the importance of shoreline management for keeping a pond healthy.

This newsletter

is the first written for members of the Herring Ponds Watershed Association. We hope you enjoy reading it and find it contains some useful information.

Please send any comments or suggestions for future issues to Geri Williams at geri3williams@comcast.net

Birds on the Ponds

By Marleen von Goeler and Brian Harrington

This past winter the ponds were stages for daily avian performances. Among the charming players are the diving ducks that arrive in late Autumn – Golden Eyes, Buffleheads and Mergansers (both the Common and the Hooded Mergansers). These groups are often seen diving together for mollusks, insects, crustaceans, and small fish. They're frequently accompanied by several Sea Gulls, who wait to snatch a successful catch away from the ducks.

The Golden Eyes are particularly cute, looking like little paddling clowns. They have black heads with a large circular white "clown patch" on their cheeks. Their eyes are a glowing amber color. The Buffleheads, a bit smaller, also with black heads, have a white spot on the back of the male's neck. The third group, Mergansers, have longer, thinner beaks, and the Hooded Mergansers have a distinctive head with a crest like fluff in the back.

Our lakes are well known to birdwatchers for the

variety of waterfowl that visit. Other commonly seen waterfowl include Pied-billed Grebes, American Coot, Red-breasted Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, Greater and Lesser Scaups and American Coots. With luck the occasional Ruddy Duck, Redhead or Canvasback Duck might be seen, and this past winter a rare Barrows Goldeneye occasionally visited the southwest end of the lake. It appears that the healthy population of fresh water mussels that grow in our watershed may be attracting many of these species of ducks. The Herring Ponds also are home to resident Canadian Geese, Mute Swans, and of course our comical white goose and white ducks that are escaped domestic species. Cormorants, Loons, Coots, Grebes and Mallards are also here in the winter.

The most dramatic avian player of course is the American Bald Eagle - sighted on Great Herring Pond by numerous people this winter. One of our members, Julian Rothblatt, was able to snap the excellent photo below of this magnificent bird as it was perched on a branch in his back yard.



From the Presidents

We never tire of looking out on the pond and seeing it in its many guises. You must feel the same way. We want to thank all of you who've volunteered or given funds to help keep the watershed healthy and beautiful.

As we enter the Association's 3rd year we realize that to continue the work we need more of you to volunteer for committee work: to do water sampling; look for invasive plants; and work on educational projects such as the new newsletter. The Membership Committee and the Water Safety Committee would welcome more help as well. We could use people to help plan programs and to write grant proposals. If you can donate some time, please speak to us at the meetings or register on our website (www.theherringpondswatershed.org). The Association will only remain viable as long as we have dedicated volunteers.

With Best Regards, Eb and Marleen von Goeler

Invasives Committee

Sara P. Grady

Aquatic vegetation is a normal part of pond ecology, and not all the “weeds” in a pond are a problem. The important thing is to learn how to identify weeds that are problems. The name of this committee is the Invasives Committee, but other terms are used to describe organisms that did not originate here or are problematic, such as non-native and exotic. The characteristic we’re primarily concerned about is whether an organism will grow so abundantly that it will cause ecological harm. This harm comes in the form of competition for space and light, a monoculture that reduces pond diversity, and impacts to humans through impediments to recreation and reduced aesthetics.

Invasive pond weeds get into ponds many ways – people dumping aquarium plants in waterways, water gardens that are planted with invasive species, and recreational boat hulls and propellers are the most common vectors. Many of these species spread by fragmentation; pieces break off and replant themselves. That’s why it’s very important to wash your boat properly with hot, high pressure water and allow it to dry before you bring it to or from another pond.

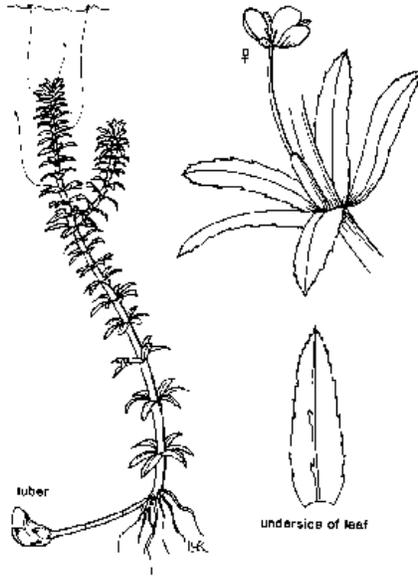
The first step in preventing an invasion is education. Fortunately, the state of Massachusetts has a Lakes and Ponds Program that produces excellent identification keys. If you are interested in obtaining one, please contact me at 781-831-1788. You can also call if you see a suspicious weed in the pond.

I’ve put some of the worst offenders below with a brief description. We will be holding an identification workshop in late June and will be conducting a comprehensive survey in July.

Eurasian Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) – reddish feathery leaves with blunt tips (as if cut off by scissors) arranged in a whorl around a submerged stem (usually 4 leaves/whorl, but 3-6 also seen), stems are reddish or pinkish.

Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*) – green triangular leaves in a rosette, floating on the surface; upper leaf surface is waxy, lower leaf surface covered with fine hairs; small white 4-petaled flowers and large spiky nuts.

South American Waterweed (*Egeria densa*) - robust 1” leaves are strap-shaped, end in a point, and are arranged in a whorl of typically 4 but up to 8 around the stem, stems are bright green.



Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) (pictured above) – leaves 5/8” long, strap-shaped and end in a point, with a distinctive midrib and sawtoothed edges in a whorl of 4-8 around the stem. Female plants have small 6-petaled flowers.

Yellow Floating Heart (*Nymphaoides peltata*) – shiny silver-dollar sized, heart-shaped leaves with a five-petaled flat yellow flower (not cup-shaped). Flower petals are fringed.

Parrot Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) – 1-2” bright blue-green serrated leaves arranged in a whorl of 4-6 around a woody stem. May protrude above water surface (looking like small fir trees).

Descriptions from Mass DCR Lakes and Ponds Program invasive plant fact sheets

Improving Pond Water Quality

By Eb and Marleen von Goeler

Water samples we've taken show too much phosphate in our ponds. Phosphate is a nutrient that promotes the growth of weeds and algae, which can lead to decreased oxygen in the water and cause the death of fish and other organisms - not to mention decreased property values.

One of the ways phosphate enters the ponds is through stormwater runoff. When it rains, water pours over lawns, driveways and streets - carrying fertilizer, sediments, and animal waste either directly into the ponds, or indirectly through storm basins. In addition to nutrients, other pollutants like oils, bacteria, toxins, and metals are also carried into the water by rain.

There are many measures homeowners can take to reduce run-off:

1. We can avoid applying fertilizer to our lawns before a storm or immediately after one. Better still we can use non- or low phosphate fertilizer, or no fertilizer at all.
2. We can plant varieties of grass that require no fertilizer and have deeper root systems.
3. We can plant buffer strips of plants (esp. native varieties) along the edge of our ponds. This buffer can trap sediments; filter out contaminants; absorb nutrients and reduce erosion and runoff.

Our Organization is working to obtain grants that will enable us to remedy severe runoff areas on steep hillsides and where inadequate storm basins exist.

We continue to monitor phosphate levels and overall water quality by taking water samples regularly and during heavy storm runoff to determine problem areas.

Working together we can protect our ponds, improve water quality and ensure our ponds are healthy today and for future generations.

THE CARE AND FEEDING OF YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

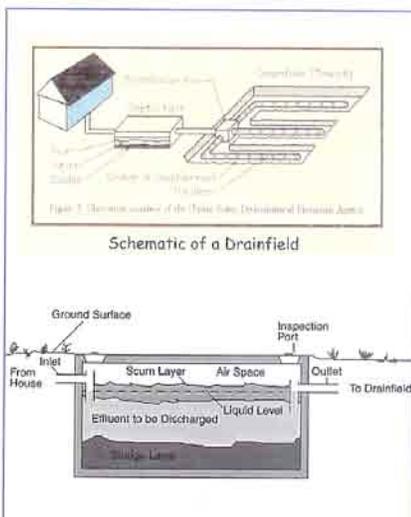
By Dave Clark

The septic system buried in the yard has to be treated as a living organism.

To begin, let's review what should and should not be put into the system.

In spite of what Dr. Oz said about dumping a cup of bleach down the kitchen sink every two weeks, please don't do it. Obviously Dr. Oz lives in the city and has never looked into a septic tank that has died and will no longer process waste. Bleach and Drano are some of the worst chemicals that could find their way into a septic system. Why? Because bleach is designed to kill bacteria and Drano is extremely caustic. Both will kill the beneficial bacteria that the septic system requires to enable it to perform as designed. Pool chemicals, water and oil based paints, fats and grease, and just about anything that you would not eat or drink should also not be sent to the system. On the bright side (no pun intended), Oxy Clean is slightly beneficial to the system as it actually adds some oxygen, which the bacteria need to thrive.

Something else to put on the list of items never to be put into a septic system would be any medications. These will not only destroy the beneficial bacteria but end up in the ground water and in our drinking water.



It is important that everyone know where the various components of the septic system are located for several reasons. It is important that vehicles not be allowed to drive or park on top of the leach field and distribution box. Please refer to the schematic for details of a typical Title V system. Shrubs and trees should not be planted in the vicinity of the septic system as their roots can enter the components and cause a costly failure. Locating the components for inspection and pumping every three to five years will make the job much easier. And, take a look at the area where the septic system is located every once in a while for signs of excess moisture as this can signal a problem is developing. The quicker a problem is caught the less potential damage will occur and the repair will not be as costly.

We should be mindful of water usage. The ability of the leach field to absorb water is time dependent and will be affected by soil conditions. Try to space out the use of the clothes washer, especially when we have wet weather. Running the dish washer only when full will also save water. And remind your children that a fifteen minute shower does not get you any cleaner than a five minute one. Lastly, do not drain a hot tub into the septic system as the volume would flush out the beneficial bacteria and also overwhelm the leach area.

Membership Committee

Submitted by John B. Foye, Chairman

Membership is the life's blood of any community organization. Our members are the volunteers who collect the water samples to be tested and collect and identify the invasive plants and species that are in our ponds. It is critical that we, the home owners and citizens of our ponds and watershed area become involved as members and take an active roll in improving the health of our ponds and watershed; we need to protect these valuable resources for future generations.

The future of our ponds and watershed area is at stake. We are threatened by:
Pollution
Storm water issues

Aquatic nuisance species
Shoreline and watershed development

Our ponds and watershed create a diverse habitat for wildlife and provides a home for hundreds of animals, including threatened species. It also provides us as citizens of the watershed with:

Drinking water, Flood control
Irrigation, Aesthetic value and Recreation

We need your help in asking your neighbors, friends, relatives and personal contacts as well as those who use our ponds on a regular basis to join our association. We are always in need of volunteers to participate in our ponds association committees. We have openings in the following committees:

- Membership
- Education Committee
- Water Quality committee
- Invasive Species Committee
- Web Services
- Water Safety Committee

Please use the application below to help us increase our membership. Your membership dues will be used to provide extra water quality tests and much needed testing equipment for the collection of data for study and analysis.

Name _____

Address _____

City/Town _____

Phone _____

Email _____

___ \$15 Member, vote & communications

___ \$25 Family, 2 voting members & communications

___ \$55 Contributing Member, vote & communications & watershed map

___ \$100 Sustaining Member, receive all of above

Make checks payable to **The Herring Ponds Watershed Association**

Mail to: Teri LaVoie
C/o TD Bank
Two Market Crossing
Plymouth, MA 02360

Government Liaison

2009 was a fairly busy year for your Government Liaison Officer. I attended numerous meetings of the Harbor Committee acting as your representative and eventually was appointed to this Committee as a full time member, giving the Association a voice. The Harbor Committee works closely with the Harbormaster, who has enforcement jurisdiction for the many ponds as well as the harbor and shores of Plymouth. On November 5th, Chad Hunter was appointed as the Plymouth Harbormaster after four years with the Department. Mr. Hunter and I have had discussions regarding the residents' concerns over the lack of enforcement on Great Herring Pond and he is committed to developing a plan to increase his Department's presence on the major ponds this year.

Your liaison and members of the Executive Board also worked with the Town in an effort to secure CZM (Coastal Zone Management) funding for an Engineering Study to remediate the storm water runoff problem in the area of Pond and Shore Roads in the Northwestern Corner of Great Herring Pond. We have to thank Ken Cannon, and especially Joe Solimini of the Great Herring Shores Association for obtaining numerous letters of support from local residents. The Town was not successful in obtaining the \$25,000 grant, but was encouraged to re-apply.

WATER SAFETY COMMITTEE

Our goal is to educate residents and visitors of our pond to promote SAFETY for all by using the RULES & REGULATIONS adopted by the Town of Plymouth on 4/16/74 and amended on 4/11/78 by the Annual town Meeting.

During the summer of 2008 volunteers hand delivered over 150 copies of the Rules to residents around Great Herring Pond. At all our General Meetings copies are available.

Our focus for 2010 is SAFETY FIRST. With an increase of recreational activity on the pond by motorized and non-motorized boaters, paddle sports, sail boats, swimmers, etc. the need for all to practice SAFETY is greater than ever.

Just a few significant rules to mention:

Safe distance is 150' from shore for motorized boats and jet skis.

According to MASS LAW for Personal Water Crafts (PWC), it is illegal to tow any person in any manner behind a Jet Ski.

Persons under 16 years of age are prohibited from operating a PWC or jet ski even if they have a Massachusetts Safe Boating Certificate.

The maximum speed is 45 mph.

Between sunset and 7:30pm (whichever comes first) to 9:00am, 7 days a week, speed is restricted to Headway Speed, which is 6 knots.

By encouraging everyone who uses our beautiful pond to observe the safety rules and use common sense when in and on the water the Association, and in particular the Water Safety Committee, hope a safe and fun filled summer will be enjoyed by all.

From Chairperson Paula Kuketz 508-888-2705

I, and several members of the Executive Board worked hard to alert and then get the Town to repair a failing storm drain at the northern tip of Eagle Hill Drive, which repeatedly channeled raw sewage into Great Herring Pond. A contract was awarded to install a liner in the pipe that should preclude the problem from recurring. This work was completed by the end of March 2010. Kudos to Eileen Walsh for her stewardship of this project.

In 2010 HPWA will continue efforts on the Pond and Shore Roads storm water runoff situation. We have been assured by Kim Michaelis of the Town's Environmental Management Office that the residents of the runoff area and HPWA will be consulted as part of any remediation design. The Town will re-apply for another grant for this area in the near future.

Respectfully submitted, Dave Clark

Where goes all the water?

This is not about flooding, but about the flow of water rising from groundwater into Little Herring Pond (LHP), continuing on through Carter's River into Great Herring Pond (GHP) and from there through Herring River into the Cape Cod Canal. Your Association has been collaborating with the State, beginning last August, when Margaret Kearns and Cindy DelPapa of the Mass. Department of Ecological Restoration (formerly Riverways Program) installed staff gauges at three points, the outflow of LHP and the in- and outflow of GHP.

Fishy News

If anyone plans to go saltwater fishing this year; they are required to sign up with NOAA for the National Saltwater Angler Registry.

This can be done by going to their website

www.countmyfish.noaa.gov .

This will not cost anything and is for this year only.

Massachusetts is going to come up with their own licensing system by 2011, which will cost if you are under 65 years old. Since there have been no enforcement plans, some members of the Harbor Committee feel that chances of getting caught this year are slim, but why chance it when it is free.

All through Fall and Winter intrepid volunteers from our Association, coordinated by Brian Harrington, have faithfully read water heights twice a week. These volunteers, including Nelson Wilder and Geri Williams, can't be stopped come rain, sleet or other calamities. Periodically, our partners from the State come down from Boston and wade right into the streams to make actual water flow measurements, in order to calibrate water height to water flow. Soon, these data will give us a much better idea of how rapidly the ponds are able to flush themselves.

Submitted by Eb von Goeler