

# Maranacook Watershed News

## A Publication of the Maranacook Lake Association

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Issue 19



### MLA Annual Meeting was held on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012

The Annual MLA Meeting was held at the Winthrop American Legion Building. The Business Meeting was held with the election of the MLA Board of Directors.

**Guest speaker, Steve Allarie, Maine Warden Service**, Game Warden on Maranacook Lake spoke about his experiences with law enforcement on the lake, as well as fish stocking, bass tournaments, accidents, invasive species and other issues.

**Loon Count on Maranacook** In, July we participated in the loon count for the Annual Maine Audubon Loon Count. Thanks to Bonnie Urquhart and volunteers for conducting the count.

**Our count revealed 23 adults and 2 newborn Loons on Maranacook Lake.**

Maine Audubon website:

[http://www.maineaudubon.org/conserv/citsci/loon\\_mysteries.shtml](http://www.maineaudubon.org/conserv/citsci/loon_mysteries.shtml)



### **Loon Habitat Quality Assessments 2012-2013**

<http://maineaudubon.org/wildlife-habitat/the-maine-loon-project/loon-habitat-quality/>



Thank you for your interest in this citizen-science initiative launched by Maine Audubon and sponsored by TogetherGreen, a cooperative endeavor of National Audubon and Toyota to support conservation projects that engage new audiences and create tangible, on-the-ground conservation results. The goal of this project is to have volunteers across the state of Maine get out on lakes and ponds, looking for loons and documenting features of loon territories and nest sites that will help assess "habitat quality".

**If you are a volunteer looking to participate in this project, please see the "Additional Resources" below to find the instructions and data form, as well as two files you can use to look up data for your lake. These are also available at other websites, see the instructions for more information.**

**What is loon habitat?** All animals live in a habitat, a place where they get what they need to survive: food, water, shelter, and a place to raise their young. The key element of habitat for breeding loons in Maine is their territory, the area they defend from other loons. Territories are typically about 100 acres on a lake or pond. On larger lakes, loon pairs can have side-by-side territories, often with each territory having some physical boundary like a cove or island helping separate it from neighboring territories. Within each territory, a loon needs:

- **A nest site:** Loons build a nest, really just a mound of vegetation and muck, right on the water's edge. This makes it easy to slip on and off the nest undetected by predators. Nest sites have to be accessible and free from barriers that would prevent a loon from getting on-shore (like steep banks or large rocks).
- **A nursery area:** Loons need quiet areas, free from predators and disturbance, where they can focus on feeding and raising their young. This can be near the nest site or some distance away.
- **Food:** Loons eat fish as their primary food, which they find by sight and catch using their sharp, heavy beak and long, flexible neck. They can eat up to 2 pounds of fish each day to survive throughout the summer.

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### **Maranacook Lake Association - Membership**

***Your dues and contributions will be used to further our Mission to protect and improve the water quality of Maranacook Lake and its watershed for the benefit of all. Please help us to recruit new members to protect and enjoy this wonderful resource we call Maranacook Lake. If you have already paid your 2012 dues, thank you for continuing your support.***



## News from Cobboossee Watershed District

P.O. Box 418, Winthrop, ME 04364 (207)-377-2234 [cwd@fairpoint.net](mailto:cwd@fairpoint.net)

**Fifty cubic yards of sand were dredged from behind the Maranacook Lake Dam on Wednesday October 3<sup>rd</sup>.** This was a project long in the planning, and, its achievement is appreciated by the Maranacook Lake Association, the Town of Winthrop, and the Cobboossee Watershed District.

The purpose in removing the sand was to open up the channel that leads to the gate area at the dam. Now when the gate is open, water will flow unimpeded to that opening and should get out of the lake a little faster.



Earlier this year, representatives of the Town of Winthrop, CWD, and DEP made numerous visits to the site to plan the project. CWD prepared the DEP permit application, and, the Town of Winthrop paid the permit application fee. **The dredging project was conducted by the Winthrop Public Works Dept. and contractor Paul Bernier of Landworks Excavation.** The WPWD took care of site preparation, dewatering the dredged sand and transporting it off-site, clean-up of the site after dredging, and materials for shoreline stabilization. Director Matt Burnham hired Landworks to dredge the sand because the Town's excavator does not have the long reach needed to remove all the sand. The DEP permit for dredging required that heavy equipment operate from the shore, with only the arm and bucket working in the water. Tom and Pat Heiss, and Mike and Carol Hicks, abutters to the dam, agreed to use of their properties for the operation. Most of the sand was removed from the side of the channel next to the Heiss property. Two Town dump trucks were used for the project. The excavator dumped its sand-loaded bucket into one truck, and as that load was dewatered the excavator went back for another load. When the truck was full and dewatering was finished, it left the site with its load and a second truck took its place. This was repeated about five times and the dredging was done in around three hours, with site restoration taking additional time.



As dredging began, the dam's gate was closed and the boards placed across the low spillway. This was necessary to keep any sediment churned up by the dredging confined to the work area. Twenty-four hours later, the water was clear and the gate was opened and boards removed, sending clean water downstream to Annabessacook Lake. At project time Maranacook Lake was at 211.13 feet above sea level, nearly eleven inches below the center spillway. The lake level has hovered close to the 211.0 foot mark from late July into October. The lake is expected to rise from autumn rains and water from the fall drawdown at Torsey Pond which begins after October 15<sup>th</sup>.



The Friends 2012 Youth Conservation Corps members stand next to a vegetative buffer along the lake shoreline that they created.

## **We Are All Connected by Watersheds**

**By Tamara Whitmore, Education & Programs Director**  
**Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed**

Whenever I tell friends or family that I work for a watershed organization for a living they generally smile, nod and reply “oh that’s nice”. When asked what my role is and I reply that I’m an ecologist and educator that specializes in watershed issues, it’s generally received with a confused look and the question: “But what do you really DO?”.

The term watershed is one of those that is used frequently, but rarely fully understood. Most simply put, a watershed is a body of water and the area of land that drains water into it. One watershed is separated from another by the higher land that is between them, such as hills or a mountain range. Watersheds are often connected, which means water from one watershed flows into another. I like to use the analogy of those Russian nesting dolls that fit one into another from smallest doll to largest doll. Picture this: the watershed of one lake or pond (for example, Maranacook Lake), is part of a bigger watershed (Cobbossee), which is part of an even larger watershed (Kennebec River) which is part of a still larger watershed (Gulf of Maine and the Atlantic Ocean). This connection between bodies of water means that if the water in one watershed is polluted, that pollution can flow “downstream” to another watershed.

As an ecologist, I study the connections between living things and their environment, especially human actions and their affect on our natural resources. Watersheds provide an excellent frame of reference for this study, because they provide the connection between land and water, the connection between people and their local environment and the connection between one community to another. As an educator, my life’s passion is to communicate the importance of all people understanding our connections to land and water, the affect our actions can take and how we can help conserve and protect these resources.

Why are healthy watersheds important? The obvious answer is the protection of local wildlife and natural resources. Native and migrating animals depend on clean aquatic habitats for food, water, and shelter. Some bodies of water are used as a water source for towns and cities. Clean water is also important for attractive and safe recreation. Surface waters are often connected to groundwater resources, which are extremely important for household & industrial water usage.

If that wasn’t enough, there are also economic advantages. A decrease in water quality and/or infestations of invasive aquatic plants can have a severe impact on shorefront property values. Reduced property values may affect overall town or city property tax income and therefore potentially raise property taxes or have impacts on town funding budgets. Also, decreases in water quality can be connected to a reduction in numbers of tourists that visit an area, preferring more pristine lakes and ponds to visit. A decrease in tourism would have an affect on all services provided by local businesses...including lodging, restaurants, real estate and property management businesses, marinas, grocery stores, retail stores, and convenience stores.

The effects are not just local; there are even global connections. Water flows downhill...meaning any pollution that runs off of your land and into your local water body becomes the problem of the other people that own property or enjoy your lake, pond or stream. As mentioned before, the health of our local watersheds influences the health of regional bodies of water. And since oceans are connected throughout the globe, having clean local water quality impacts the quality of water throughout the earth.

The Friends of the Cobbossee Watershed (FOCW), and similar organizations, work to protect these valuable resources of land and water. Emphasis is placed on engaging citizens to do their part in protecting water quality. To start, remember that the land is connected to the water and that watersheds connect us all.

*For more information on what actions you can take, please contact the Friends at 207-621-4100, visit their website at [www.watershedfriends.com](http://www.watershedfriends.com) or email Tamara Whitmore, FOCW Education & Programs Director: [tamara@watershedfriends.com](mailto:tamara@watershedfriends.com).*

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*Photo by Sheila Dorey*

### **Loon Habitat Quality Assessments 2012-2013** (Continued from page 1)

**What is habitat “quality” and why does it matter?** For many species, the better the habitat they are in, the more successful they are surviving, feeding themselves, and raising offspring. For Maine’s loons, a clean, clear lake with abundant fish will probably be a better place to live compared to a lake with cloudy water and fewer fish. A lake with a quiet cove with fewer interruptions from boaters and kayakers may give a loon more time to focus on feeding its hungry chicks. A concealed nest site might be safer from predators compared to one out in the open. These elements of habitat “quality” could directly translate into loon productivity, or the number of chicks a loon pair successfully raises each year. This has long-term implications for how well our loons in Maine will do over the coming decades, especially as they face growing recreational use, more dramatic rain events, and warming water temperatures.

**Who can participate?** Although primarily set up for Maine Audubon’s loon count volunteers, anyone who can spend time on a lake or pond in Maine and who can provide most of the information we are asking for can participate in a habitat quality assessment.

**How much time will it take?** Depending on how much you already know about the lake and the loons where you are providing the assessment, it could take as little as a few hours or as much as a few days of time to collect the information we are looking for.

**What do I need?** Aside from a few hours of time, you’ll need a boat so you can assess the shoreline. Either motorized or non-motorized boats will work, though depending on the territory size, non-motorized boats might take some time. A digital camera for taking photos of the nest area is helpful, as is a GPS unit or Smart Phone to get coordinates for nest locations. Familiarity with the internet is needed for some of the measures, but it’s not essential for completing the assessment.

**If we can identify higher quality habitat, we can work to preserve it. And if we can identify lower quality habitat, we can work to improve it. This project takes the first steps to assess lakes and loon territories, with the long-term goal of working to keep Maine’s loon population thriving and healthy across the state. Thank you for your help collecting this important information!**

Call or e-mail project director Susan Gallo at 207-781-6180 ext. 216 or [sgallo@maineaudubon.org](mailto:sgallo@maineaudubon.org) any time with additional questions.

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