



The Voice of Leech Lake

Our Mission: To be good stewards of Leech Lake and its environs, recognizing the vulnerability of the lake, and the need for citizens -- both individually and collectively -- to assume responsibility for its care.

Letter from the President,

After a cold and almost non-existent spring, summer finally arrived, and a fine one at that. How could one improve on our fantastic July 4th weekend, with its perfect weather and the spectacular fireworks display over Walker Bay, with hundreds of boats adding their multi-colored lights to that spectacle.?



Now August is upon us, and soon autumn, which the Poet John Keats called "the season of mellow fruitfulness." This continues a busy time for Leech Lake Association volunteers, particularly with State funding tight, and the work of volunteers more important than ever.

Volunteer efforts began in early May, when members of the Leech Lake Association and the Leech Lake Fishing Task Force assisted the DNR with walleye egg stripping operations, and then helped stock the hatched walleye fry (some 22 million) in the various bays of Leech Lake. In late May and early June, volunteers assisted the DNR in the live trapping of muskies as part of a long term muskie study. Later this fall, volunteers will assist the DNR in seining and trawling operations for young-of-year walleye, and with test netting operations to determine fish populations and size distribution.

But Leech Lake Association efforts are not limited to improving the Leech Lake walleye fishery, as important as that effort is. We continue to collect Leech Lake water samples for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and have recently put strong emphasis on trying to prevent the introduction of Aquatic Hitchhikers into Leech Lake. The DNR places warning signs at all public boat landings, and our volunteers are augmenting this effort by contacting and placing warning signs at the boat landings at all Leech Lake resorts.



Fortunately, the DNR and the Leech Lake Tribe have added experienced Invasive Species Specialists to their staffs, and these people are working closely with us, providing us with educational materials on specific threats. We also monitor proposed developments around Leech Lake to ensure that environmental and zoning ordinances are complied with. Leech Lake Association Board Members often visit each site and report potential concerns to our Board of Directors for follow-up action.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

August 7-8

Walker Bay Days

August 8-10

Leech Lake Regatta

August 20-23

Cajun Fest
 Northern Lights

September 11-13

Muskies Inc Tournament

Saturday, September 12

Ethnic Fest

Saturday, September 19

27th North Country
 Marathon, 10K



In closing, I want to thank the more than 100 new members who recently joined the Leech Lake Association as a result of a recent mailing of our newsletter and a Lake Stewardship Brochure to all property owners on Leech Lake. There is strength in numbers, and your participation and input are essential. Please let us know how we might assist you, and if you would like to become more involved in our work. The way to begin is to attend one of our Board Meetings which are held the second Monday of each month at 9:30 in the Cass County Courthouse.

Robert Gisvold, President

THE LEECH LAKE TERN POPULATION: AN UPDATE

Little Pelican Island has long been famous as a nesting site for the Common Tern, a graceful waterbird a little smaller than a gull. Leech Lake is one of only four places in Minnesota where these birds nest. During the 1990's their population fell so low that they were added to the State and Tribal Threatened Species List. Since then, under the jurisdiction and protection of the Leech Lake Tribe, the population has recovered, despite the bird's competition from gulls and cormorants.



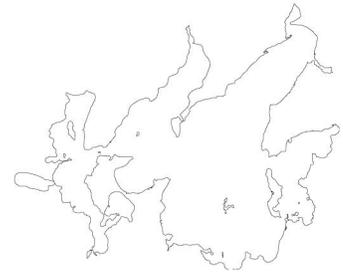
This year, probably due to the late spring, the first nesting attempts of the Common Tern were unsuccessful. The birds have since re-nested and there were 252 nests at last count. However, only a few hatched young have been observed, which leads one to conclude that 2009 will be a poor year for Common Tern reproduction.



The Caspian Terns are another story. This is a larger tern, about the size of a small gull. Up until recently, Caspian Terns had never nested successfully in Minnesota. Then, in 2007, a small colony of Caspian Terns was discovered on Little Pelican Island. These new arrivals established 28 nests, with 11 young successfully fledged. This year 25 nests were established, containing 20 chicks at last count (mid July), with 18 eggs still to hatch. (Information provided by Steve Mortensen, Leech Lake Tribal Biologist).



Leech Lake Update 7/15/2009
 Walker Area Fisheries Office
 07316 State Hwy. 371 NW
 Walker, MN 56484
 218-547-1683



Greetings!

This update is part of a series of reports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is sending to Leech Lake area resorts, businesses and others interested in DNR activities on Leech Lake. The goal of these messages is to keep you up to date with our findings and current activities on the lake. Earlier updates are available by visiting <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/areas/fisheries/walker/index.html>. Feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or comments, would like copies of previous updates not posted on the website, or if you would like to be added to the mailing list.

2009 Fishing Season

- Walleye fishing on Leech Lake continues to be tremendous. Preliminary creel statistics through mid-June indicate angler success has been similar to last year. Targeting anglers have been catching fish at a rate of approximately 1.2 walleye/hour, a very high statistic for any walleye fishery, and fish exceeding 30 inches in length have been reported. Reports from guides indicate that the preferred approaches at this time are crawler/spinner rigs or crankbaits.
- The current walleye regulation is an 18-26" protected slot limit (18.0-26.0 must be immediately released) with 4 fish in possession, only one of which can be longer than 26.0 inches. The regulation was originally due for review this winter. However, to accommodate the broader statewide evaluation of slot limits across all of Minnesota's large walleye lakes as well as to obtain an additional year of information, the Leech Lake walleye slot limit will be formally reviewed prior to the 2011 fishing season. At this time there are no pre-conceived conclusions as to whether the regulation will change or remain the same.
- Other notables thus far include quality-sized panfish and largemouth bass being caught and harvested when anglers choose to do so, and the muskie action is beginning to heat up.
- The Walker community hosted three walleye tournaments during May – the local Leech Lake tournament, the FLW Walleye League, and the FLW Walleye Tour. All three events were very successful.
- The number of fish registered during all three tournaments was 2,235; reported mortalities at the three weigh-ins totaled 241 fish. There was no attempt to estimate post-release mortality.
- For comparison, estimated walleye harvest during the Opening weekend alone was approximately 8,700 walleye. As of June 15, 2009, the estimated total number of walleye caught by Leech Lake anglers (tournaments included) was nearly 151,000 fish and total harvest was approximately 46,000 walleye.



Photo courtesy of FLW Outdoors

2009 Sampling

- Seining for young-of-year walleye and yellow perch started July 6. Five locations are seined weekly during July to index growth rates of young fish.
- Trawling, the best index of potential walleye year class strength, is scheduled for the weeks of August 17 and August 24. Weather-permitting, trawling will be conducted during the first two days of each week.
- The annual gillnet assessment is anticipated to begin Monday, September 7 (Labor Day, set nets only) and conclude Friday, September 18 (lift nets only).
- Electrofishing will be conducted during the last two weeks of September, weather- and schedule-permitting.
- We welcome volunteers to assist with trawling (rather physical lifting), gillnetting (need assistance picking fish from nets), and electrofishing (observation only). Persons interested should contact Doug Schultz, Large Lake Specialist. Your participation would be appreciated!



Trawling for young-of-year walleye in Leech Lake

2009-2010 Muskie Assessment Update

- Reports from anglers indicate vegetation beds are more prolific than they have been in recent years, particularly in Sucker and Portage bays. Water temperature as of 7/13/2009 was 73 °F.
- If participating in the muskie study, **REMEMBER TO TAKE SCALE SAMPLES** from fish you catch! We cannot do a population estimate without them!



Photo courtesy of Bill Linder Productions

Double-crested cormorant control (from Steve Mortensen, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe)

- Under the supervision of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, culling efforts ended on June 30 as the target level of 500 nesting pairs had been reached. A total of 3,084 birds were removed from Leech Lake this spring.
- A telemetry study that will track cormorant movements and usage of Leech Lake is also underway. Details can be obtained from Steve Mortensen, LLBO Division of Resources Management, 115 6th St. NW, Cass Lake, MN 56633; 218-335-7423. Reports from previous control work as well as cormorant research are available on their website (www.lldrm.org).

Fish diseases

- Anglers have reported catching fish with signs of lymphosarcoma (northern pike and muskellunge) and dermal sarcoma (walleye), a red sore and/or warty growth on the body. These diseases are caused by a viral infection and are fairly common in Leech and other lakes.
- Consumption of affected parts is not advised. As always, be sure to cook fish thoroughly before consuming.
- Information about these and other diseases can be found on the DNR website (www.dnr.state.mn.us/fish_diseases/index.html).



A northern pike suspected to be infected with lymphosarcoma from a Walker area lake (photo by MN DNR, 07/06/2009).

Invasive Species Watch

- Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) was discovered in Leech Lake in 2004 and has been expanding every year since. Extensive searches have not discovered rooted EWM outside of artificial harbors to date, however, this invasive species continues to be discovered in new locations. Follow-up inspections found EWM in 22 harbors throughout Leech Lake in 2008. Inspection and treatments are underway.
- Boaters can help prevent further spread invasive species by taking a few simple extra precautions:
 - inspect and remove all visible aquatic plants, animals and mud from boats, trailers and equipment such as anchors before leaving a water access;
 - inspect and remove all visible aquatic plants, animals or mud from docks, boat lifts and swim rafts before transporting to another water;
 - drain all water from boats - including live wells, bilges and bait buckets - before leaving a water access;
 - spray or rinse boats with high pressure and/or hot water, or let them dry thoroughly for five days before transporting to another water.
- Precautions for anglers and boaters can be found at: www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/preventspread.html
- Further details on aquatic invasive species and the DNR Invasive Species Program can be found at: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/eco/invasives/index.html>

BOG WATER BLUES

by Susan Kedzie

Leech Lake Division of Resource Management
July 2009

Every morning Lynda greets me with a wide smile. The sparkle in her eyes reflect curiosity and compassion. She is a supervisor's dream: motivated, dedicated, enthusiastic, and reliable. So far this summer, Lynda Morrison – an intern from the Leech Lake Tribal College – has risen to each occasion the Invasive Species Program has thrown at her: Mind-numbing hours spent pulling garlic mustard amidst throngs of mosquitoes and ticks; Cutting and pulling wild parsnip—a nasty plant with “sap” that can blister and scar your skin; Extracting spotted knapweed with the strength of her arms and back in the mid-day heat. But here at the edge of the floating bog, she turns toward me with an apprehensive look. What? What's wrong?

We are here at the eastern edge of Bog Island just north of Sand Point in Leech Lake preparing to release *Galerucella* beetles, a biocontrol agent. Our target for the day is purple loosestrife, an invasive plant of wetland habitats. Purple loosestrife was imported from Europe without its natural predators, giving it an advantage over our native wetland plants. Once it's established, purple loosestrife can form dense stands replacing native plants, thus degrading food, shelter and nesting sites for wildlife. The negative and cumulative impacts of this species on native plants and animals are but one example of how non-native invasives are altering ecosystems and why they are a huge concern for compulsive weed managers, like myself. Lynda is already well on her way to suffering from the same condition, an obsession: the demise of invasive species. So, why the hesitation?

“You go first. I don't like wetlands,” she informs me. These are no ordinary wetlands. Bog Island is essentially a floating

mat of vegetation with holes to the water below. I have been warned—people have fallen through. I have been teased—I might be the next victim of the bog. But the only victims I want today are purple loosestrife plants.

Setting fear aside, I grab the jar of our greenhouse-reared beetles and clamber over the side of the boat onto a wobbling mass of moss, tangles of sedges and grass, cattails, willows, and purple loosestrife. Each step I take will be my last, I think, as I move to avoid an open hole. A beer can bobs in the water, unopened. I cannot see the bottom of the hole. Once I reach my chosen destination,

I gently sweep the bugs from the jar using a flowering spike of loosestrife. Some of the bugs immediately fly away. A few cling to my shirt. Others start crawling onto their new living and eating quarters. In due course, they will begin feeding on the leaf tissue of loosestrife leaving only the main veins, creating a “window-pane” affect and wearing down the plant's reserves to produce seeds. Over time the population of loosestrife will shrink. This is the primary objective.

For over a dozen years, the Invasive Species Program of the Leech Lake Division of Resource Management has been controlling the density and spread of purple loosestrife on the Leech Lake Reservation in this way. The whole operation requires accommodating the life cycle of both the beetles and purple loosestrife. In early spring, loosestrife transplants are started in our greenhouse from overwintered root crowns. Next, beetles are collected from a few known outdoor locations and delivered to our greenhouse “beetle spa”. With any luck, they will respond to the call of nature and reproduce in large numbers on our fresh stock



(Above) *Galerucella* beetles (a biocontrol agent)

(Below) Purple Loosestrif
(an invasive plant of wetland habitats)



of loosestrife. As beetle numbers grow and populations of loosestrife bloom across the waterscape, time for release approaches. Then we wait for good weather—not too hot, rainy, or windy.

Sometimes the weather prevails as it did this year; needed rains flood my plans week after week. Finally a break arrives! Lynda and I grab gear, scrounge for a boat and captain, and launch into Leech Lake. The skies are blue-bird blue and cumulus clouds wear tall leaning hats.

For a few moments I am lost in the beauty of the lake and sky. Stillness and calm enter me. I am for once not thinking about the proliferating roadside weeds or all of the careless ways we treat the land and water.

For a moment, I just am.

Minutes after we return to Cass Lake the heavens burst but we are safely in the office, laughing. We just missed the soaking of our lives.

The rain drums intensely on the metal roof overhead. I am quietly considering the fate of the beetles, when Lynda pipes up, “Will the beetles be okay out there...in the wind and rain?” Oh, yes. Of course! I hope. Spared beetles dumped into the wild...hum. Well, I am

somewhat elevated by the knowledge we released roughly 500 individuals in one morning; with time permitting we will return later this summer to deliver more.

But time is precious, and there is so little time.

Lynda and I intuitively understand one another’s sense of urgency; we share it. We struggle daily to deter the conversion of our native landscapes to a tangle of “weeds”. We struggle knowing that we cannot, alone, avert the burgeoning populations of invasive species. We yearn to build a passionate community of stewards with a similar obsession.

I think back to the beer can bobbing in the bog water. How long it will be there?

MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to join the efforts of the Leech Lake Invasive Species Program, please contact Susan Kedzie (Invasive Species Program Coordinator) at 218-335-7442. She will be happy to assist you with discovering your own passion for stewardship.

LEECH LAKE WATER QUALITY REPORT

Cass County Environmental Services, working with a number of organizations, including the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the DNR, The Leech Lake Association, and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, has prepared detailed reports on water quality and shoreline data on a number of Cass County Lakes, including Leech Lake. The 16-page report on Leech Lake provides a wealth of information about water quality, drainage areas, invasive species, and other data of interest to anyone living on Leech Lake.

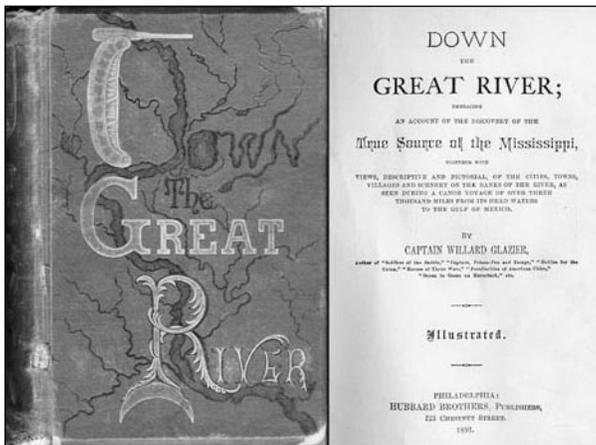
The complete report can be viewed at the Cass County website:

http://www.co.cass.mn.us/esd/water_quality.html.



LEECH LAKE IN ANTIQUITY

In 1884 Captain Willard Glazier, a Civil War Veteran and explorer, traveled by way of Leech Lake to find the “true source” of the Mississippi River. While Schoolcraft had identified Lake Itasca as the river’s source as early as 1832, Glazier had heard rumors that there were waters flowing into Lake Itasca from somewhere beyond, and that this “somewhere beyond” was the “true source.” He believed that discovering the “true source” would make him famous, and also give him material for a book., which he did in fact write. He recounts his adventures in the book titled “Down the Great River; An Account of the Discovery of the True Source of the Mississippi,” published by Hubbard Publishers of Philadelphia in 1891.



His book provides an interesting picture of the Leech Lake country as it was in 1884, before the arrival of the loggers and homesteaders. Excerpts from his book will be included in this Newsletter from time to time. The book also includes an 1880’s map of the Leech Lake area, which seems surprisingly accurate for its time (enclosed).

From Brainerd to Leech Lake (in the words of Captain Glazier):

A careful study of the route to Leech lake, with a few valuable suggestions from Warren Leland, an old resident of Brainerd, led me to seek wagon conveyance to the former place (Leech Lake) over what is known in Minnesota as the Government Road. This road stretches for 75 miles through immense pine forests and almost impenetrable underbrush, and the only habitations to be seen from it are the half-way houses, erected for the accommodation of teamsters who are engaged in hauling government supplies, and the occasional wigwams of wandering Indians. It was opened in 1856, by James Macaboy, for the convenience of Indian agents and fur traders.”

Fully equipped with a driver celebrated for his knowledge of the frontier, we commenced at eight o’clock on the morning of July 12 our wagon journey to Leech Lake, the third objective in my expedition to the head waters of the Mississippi. John Monahan, who held the reins on this 75 -mile journey over one of the roughest roads in Minnesota, need not take a back seat to any of the famous drivers of the border.

A ride of between three and four hours brought our little party to Gull Lake, where a halt was made for rest and refreshments. Gull Lake was for many years the home and headquarters of the noted Chippewa chief, Hole in the Day, and was the scene of many struggles between his braves and those of the equally celebrated Sioux chief, Little Crow. The remnant of a block house, fragments of wigwams, and a few scattered graves, are all that is now left to tell the tale of its aboriginal conflicts.

A family of four persons, domiciled in a log house, constitute the entire white population of the place. Reuben Gray, the genial patriarch who presides over this solitary household in the wilderness, delights in the title of landlord, and his hotel has become somewhat famous as one of the pioneer half-way houses between Brainerd and Leech Lake. Our arrival at Gull Lake was duly celebrated by launching a canoe, which soon returned with a fine mess of fish. These, with such fruits and vegetables as were in season, afforded a dinner which our appetites, whetted by a forenoon’s jolting in a country wagon, had fully prepared us to enjoy.

After dinner we resumed our journey, with Pine River as the evening destination. Sometimes in the road, sometimes out of it; now driving along the shore of a lake, and again over huge logs and boulders, it was voted that our ride to Pine River was unlike anything we had ever elsewhere experienced.

The ranch of George Barclay, the only white habitation between Gull Lake and Leech Lake, was reached at five o’clock in the evening. Here we were most agreeably surprised to find very good accommodations for both man and beast. Barclay is a decided favorite with the Indians, and his prosperity in this isolated corner of Minnesota is largely due to his friendly relations with them. He is always supplied with guns, knives, beads, tobacco, and other goods as are in demand by his Indian neighbors, for which he receives in exchange furs, game, snake-root and other products from the forest which find a ready market in Brainerd or Saint Paul.



US Army Corps of Engineers

LEECH RESERVOIR WATER LEVELS

As of July 27, 2009, the water level on Leech Lake is 1294.19 feet. This is approximately 3.5 inches below the summer band. The current discharge from the dam is approximately 130 cfs.

After the spring snow melt, the lake level was able to reach the middle of the summer band. However, the continued below normal rainfall has caused the lake to continue falling. From the middle of May until the beginning of July, the discharges from the dam have been decreased continually to help with the lack of rainfall.

CLIMATE

The normal rainfall over the Leech Lake area for May, June and July is 2.87, 3.79, 3.72 inches, respectively. For 2009, actual rainfall totals for May, June and July are 1.55, 2.66, 1.60 inches, respectively. Another contributing factor is that during the month of June, July and August the lake level can decrease by 3 to 5 inches per month due to evaporation alone.

As for August, the normal rainfall amount is approximately 3 inches. Without normal rainfall, the lake level could (and most likely) will continue to fall. With above average rainfall, it is possible that the lake level could reach the bottom of the summer band before the end of the recreation season. However, lake owners should be prepared for the possibility of the lake level not increasing from where it is today.

EFFECTS

Studies have shown that lower water levels stimulate native aquatic vegetation growth. There have been anecdotal reports from fisherman that submerged "weed beds" are showing signs of recovery. Lower water levels from recent droughts may be a contributing factor. If you would like to comment regarding how low lake levels are affecting you please email:



timm.v.rennecke@usace.army.mil.

HEADWATERS ROPE STUDY

The Headwaters ROPE Study is expected to wrap up by the end of September 2009. The results of the study WILL NOT have the lake levels being lowered starting the middle of July. The current summer operation will stay in effect for Leech Lake. For any additional information on the ROPE Study please contact the Project Manager,



Steve Clark at 651-290-5278 or steven.j.clark@usace.army.mil.

MORE INFORMATION

You can visit the Corps of Engineers Water Control, Web site at <http://www.mvp-wc.usace.army.mil> for more information on the regulation of Leech Lake Reservoir.



Questions on the regulation of the Headwaters reservoir can be directed to Jodi Kormanik-Sonterre at 651-290-5646 or Tim Rennecke at 218-654-3145 at Leech Lake Dam.





PLEASE RECYCLE

Recycling is an important way for us to conserve energy, reduce waste in our landfills and conserve our natural resources for many years to come. Please take a moment to recycle that water bottle, aluminum can, or glass spaghetti jar instead of tossing it into the garbage. Our earth will thank you for it. For more information go to <http://www.environment-green.com/>



Costs for printing and distribution of the summer edition of the LLA Newsletter have been donated by the First National Bank of Walke, and Hummingbird Press.

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WELCOMES NEW SPONSORS

Following the May mailing of our Newsletter to all Leech Lake Property Owners, we were very gratified to have several of you join the Association at the Sponsorship level (\$100 and above). Our special thanks to:

- . Ron & Sharon Palmer at Agency Bay Lodge
- . Ann Burns, Edina, MN
- . Jack & Mary Szczepek, Charlotte, NC
- . Robert & Nita-Eagle Frink, Rock Island, IL
- . Paul & Lori Bethun, Grand Forks, ND
- . Robert & Patricia Thompson, Grand Forks, ND
- . Robert & Mary Sue Poirier, Dayton, MN
- . Israel Moe, Walker, MN
- . Thomas & Mary Peterson, Eden Prairie, MN
- . Richard Breda at Acorn Hill Resort
- . Le Roy & Marilyn Rademacher, Jordan, MN

A special welcome to all our new members, and to all of you who have supported us over the years during lean and difficult times, some recent.



Because our fiscal year runs from July to July, the date of our Annual Meeting is when memberships expire and dues are collected for the coming year. We sincerely hope that you will renew your membership, and encourage your friends and neighbors to do likewise. There is strength in numbers, and your dues allow our volunteers to carry on their work, which is to protect Leech Lake, guard your interests, and communicate with you through press releases and this newsletter.

Please take a moment to fill out the enclosed application form and return it along with your check in the attached self-addressed envelope. The notation '08 or '09 beside your name on the mailing label means that your membership has expired, or is about to. Those of you with a 10 beside your name are paid up through July 2010. If you have already paid your dues for 2010, simply let us know on the Application Form and we will update our records.

Thank you in advance,
The Membership Committee

A REMINDER: TIME TO RENEW MEMBERSHIPS FOR 2009-2010

Because our fiscal year runs from July to July, the date of our Annual Meeting is when memberships expire and dues are collected for the coming year. We sincerely hope that you will renew your membership, and encourage your friends and neighbors to do likewise.

There is strength in numbers, and your dues allow our volunteers to carry on their work, which is to protect Leech Lake, guard your interests, and communicate with you through press releases and this newsletter.

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Thank you in advance,
The Membership Committee

LLA Board Meetings are the second Monday of each month 9:30 AM at the courthouse. Members & Guests welcome!



Leech Lake Association
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Walker, MN 56484

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