

# Leech Lake

ASSOCIATION



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,*

## Short & Sweet

“Short and sweet” is certainly an apt description of the summer just past. An ice-bound lake made the Walleye Opener a lost weekend for area resorts and local businesses – a loss that our tourist-dependent area could ill afford. Still, there were some positives. Once fishermen could access the lake, fishing proved good, and remained so for most of the summer. There were enough warm days to delight boaters and swimmers, and enough perfect days in the 70's to please us old folk.

Though it is too soon to know for sure, the late spring probably will affect this year’s walleye year class, both stocked fish and naturally hatched. A short, cool summer negatively impacts young walleye growth rates, and survival through their first winter. Fortunately, Leech Lake has had excellent walleye year classes the past few years, which should ensure good fishing for years to come. Also, discussions are now underway between the DNR and the public to discuss relaxation of the existing 18-26 protected walleye slot. It is likely that fishermen will be allowed to keep larger walleyes in 2014.

Leech Lake Association Board Members have been busy this summer as volunteers with DNR Fish-

### Leech Lake Fishing Opener May 11th, 2013



eries and as members of a county/ State-wide task force to develop a master plan for dealing with Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Both zebra mussels and spiny water fleas are right on our doorstep, and others -- some still unknown -- are likely on their way. The plan will prioritize threats, develop an action plan, and identify funding sources and man-

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

**November 18th, 2013**

*LLA Meeting*

**November 29th-Dec 1st**

**Festival of Lights Weekend:**

*Parade of Lights - 29th*

*Festival of Lights Run - 30th*

*Santa Clause - 30th*

*Holiday in Song - 1st*

**December 12th, 2013**

*Leech Lake Association*

*Annual Christmas Party*

**February 20-23, 2014**

*Eel Pout Festival*

*(Letter from the President continued to page 2)*

*(Letter from the President continued from page 1)*

power required to implement the plan. The Association of Cass County Lakes (ACCL) has been heavily involved in the development of the Plan, along with members of city and local government, the DNR, and the Leech Lake Tribe.

As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, we are still seeking people to serve on our Board of Directors to replace people who have served for many years but are now retiring. If you share our goals and can attend one meeting a month I would like to hear from you. Simply drop me a line expressing

your interest. Also, we encourage you to attend a meeting or two to get a feel for our general philosophy and what we do. Our meetings are held the third Monday of each month at 9:30 AM in the Commissioner's Board Room at the Cass County Courthouse.

***May you all enjoy the holiday season and the winter!***

*Robert Gisvold, President*

# Love Leech Lake, Help It Thrive!

## BOARD MEMBERS SOUGHT



Due to illness and retirements, we are still looking for two or more individuals who may have an interest in serving on the Leech

Lake Association Board of Directors. The main qualifications are a passion for protecting Leech Lake lands and waters, and the time to attend our Board Meetings which are held the third Monday of most months at 9:30 AM in the Cass County Courthouse. These are interesting and informative meetings, which are regularly attended by representatives from Walker DNR Fisheries, the Corps of Engineers, and the Leech Lake Tribe. Our Board Members head up various commit-

tees directed at maintaining the quality of life on Leech Lake, including Invasive Species Prevention, Shoreland protections, Natural Resources, Lake Safety, Legislative issues, among others.

Our Board also works closely with Cass County Environmental Services, U.S Forestry, the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, The Association of Cass County Lakes, and other like-minded groups.

If you have an interest in serving on our Board, please write a letter stating your interest and background to:

Robert Gisvold, President  
PO Box 1613  
Walker, MN 56484

Or send your letter by e-mail to Dave Laursen, Secretary/Treasurer, at [dlaurs@arvig.net](mailto:dlaurs@arvig.net).



## Leech Lake Update, November 2013

Walker Area Fisheries Office  
07316 State Hwy 371  
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.

### Recent Changes

- Tanner Stevens was recently hired as a Fisheries Specialist and will start December 6, 2013. Tanner received a B.S. degree from University of Nebraska, Lincoln in 2011 in Fisheries and Wildlife Management-Fisheries Management emphasis. He also received a M.S. degree from South Dakota State University in 2013 in Fisheries Management. Tanner will bring the Walker Area Fisheries office up to a full staffing level for the first time since the fall of 2010.

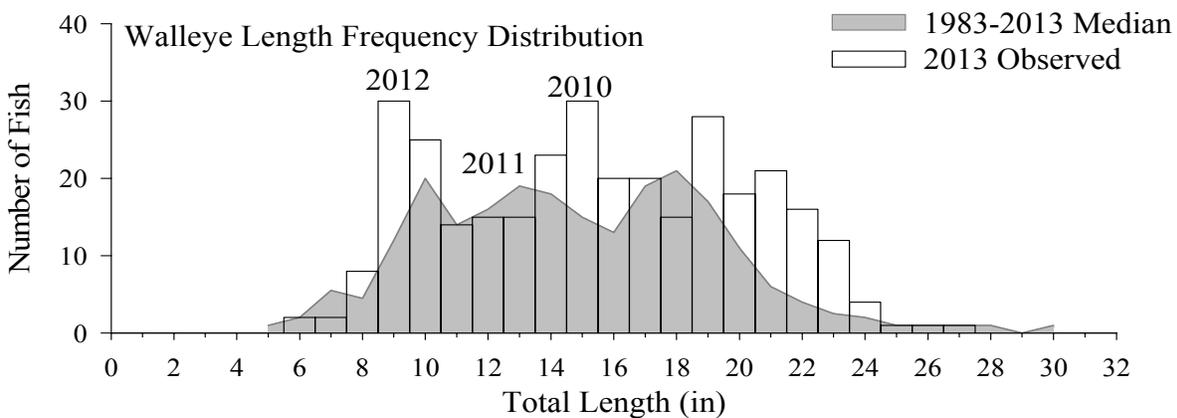
### 2013 survey work completed and to be completed on Leech Lake

- From May 31-June 1, the third of four programmed fry stockings was completed (7,527,478, OTC-marked). The programmed fry stocking in 2014 is 22.0 million fry.
- Double-crested cormorant management continued under the supervision of the Division of Resource Management, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. Spring cormorant counts have continued to decline with a peak spring population of 1,455. The fall population, which includes this year's production, was 1,028 or about half the target level. Due to the lower number of cormorants this past spring only 478 were removed. This dropped us below the goal of maintaining 500 nests on the lake.
- From July 15-23, twenty seine hauls were conducted at the five standard locations (Photo 1). The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per acre (18) was lower than the long-term average (61). The number of young-of-year yellow perch sampled per acre (536) was also lower than the long-term average (850). The average length of these fish was 2.7 inches, and was lower than the long-term average (3.8 inches).
- From August 13-22, twenty trawls were conducted at the three standard locations. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (346) was higher than the long-term average (145). The number of young-of-year yellow perch sampled per hour (6,049) was lower than the long-term average (9,274). The average length of these fish was 5.1 inches, and was lower than the long-term average (5.5 inches).
- From September 9-20, the annual gill netting survey was completed at 36 locations around the lake. Walleye catch rate (8.9 fish/net) exceeded the management objective (8.5 fish/net) and was the seventh consecutive year catch rates were above the long-term average (7.7 fish/net). Walleye size structure indicated good numbers of fish from the 2010, 2011, and 2012 year classes. These fish are currently between 9 and 16 inches, many of which are large enough for harvest. Additionally, 36% of walleye sampled were within the protected slot and will continue to provide anglers an opportunity to catch larger fish (Figure 1). Other game fish species targeted with test nets include yellow perch, and northern pike. The yellow perch catch rate (fish/net) was the lowest observed over the past 31 years, was below the management objective, and decreased for the sixth consecutive year.

*(DNR Report continued on page 4)*

(DNR Report continued from page 3)

- From September 12-19, twelve standard night time electrofishing stations were sampled for young-of-year walleye. The number of young-of-year walleye sampled per hour (88) was slightly lower than the long-term average (98). The average length of these fish was 5.9 inches, and slightly lower than the long-term average (6.1 inches).
- Monthly zooplankton sampling at five standard locations lakewide has been completed from mid-May through mid-September, with only the mid-October sample remaining at this time. The mid-October sample will conclude all sampling on Leech Lake for the year.
- If you would like to volunteer next year to assist with any of the assessments just described, or if you have questions, comments, or requests please contact: Matt Ward ([matt.ward@state.mn.us](mailto:matt.ward@state.mn.us)) Large Lake Specialist at 218-547-1683, or Doug Schultz ([doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us](mailto:doug.w.schultz@state.mn.us)) Walker Area Fisheries Supervisor.



**Figure 1.** Length-frequency distribution of walleye sampled with experimental gillnets in Leech Lake, 2013. The 2010-12 year classes are indicated, as is the 1983-2013 median.



**Photo 1.** Volunteers John Eaton, Alex Eaton, and Doug Strecker assist Matt Ward with seining on July 15, 2013.



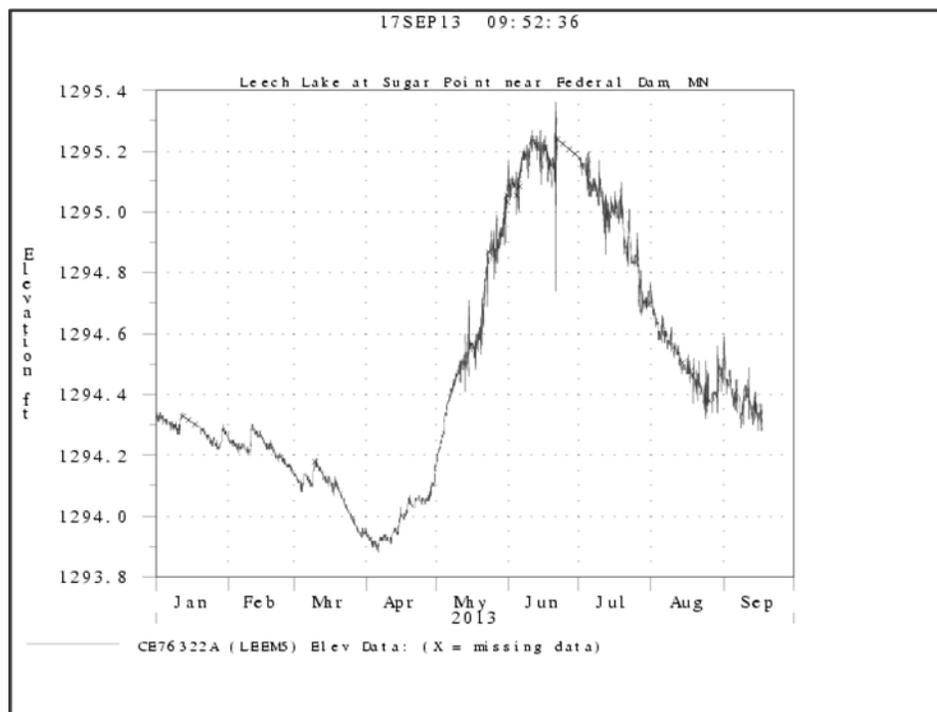
**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

## LEECH RESERVOIR WATER LEVELS

On September 17, 2013, the water elevation (level) on Leech Lake is 1294.35 feet. The current discharge from the dam, in accordance with the congressionally approved water control plan, is at or near the minimum out-flow due to abnormally dry weather conditions occurring within our area. Leech Lake has several different operating limits and targets contained within its operating plan. These limits and ranges vary in accordance with climate conditions and time of year. For example the desirable summer range of 1294.50 to 1294.90 is simply a desirable target that we strive to achieve within the total operating limit of 1292.70-1297.94. All elevations are referenced in 1929 NGVD. (See Figure 1 below.)



Leech Lake Dam is operated for several purposes; Flood Damage Reduction, Tribal Trust, Environmental Stewardship, Recreation, and Navigation although that purpose has diminished since construction of the major locks and dams downstream of Minneapolis on the Mississippi River.



### OPERATION SUMMARY CORRELATING TO THE LEECH LAKE WATER LEVEL HYDROGRAPH:

- \* **Jan – Feb:** Very slow and cautious winter drawdown occurring.
- \* **Feb – Apr:** Drawdown rate increased due to increasing precipitation.
- \* **Apr:** Leech Lake and Winnie Dams halt winter drawdown to allow for drainage of the downstream Mississippi River due to potential spring flooding. This cause Leech lake to begin rising.
- \* **Apr-Jun:** Leech Lake Dam is operated for Flood Damage Reduction.
- \* **Jul:** Leech Lake returns to desirable summer band of 1294.50 – 1294.90.

*(US Army Corps of Engineers continued on page 6)*

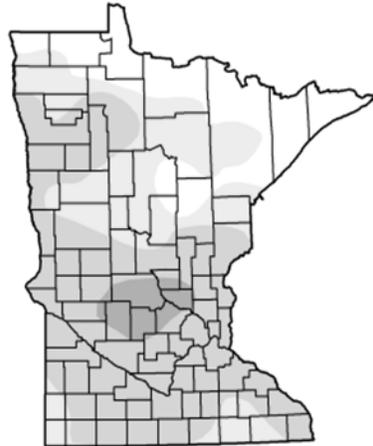
*(US Army Corps of Engineers continued from page 5)*

**\* Jul – Sep:** Lake evaporation and lack of rain accelerates Leech Lake downward trend. North Central MN is classified by the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center as “Abnormally Dry”:

# U.S. Drought Monitor September 3, 2013 Valid 7 a.m. EST

## Minnesota

	Drought Conditions (Percent Area)					
	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	20.51	79.49	53.26	4.62	0.00	0.00
Last Week <small>(08/27/2013 map)</small>	14.64	85.36	54.90	0.00	0.00	0.00
3 Months Ago <small>(06/04/2013 map)</small>	60.62	39.38	19.72	3.15	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year <small>(01/01/2013 map)</small>	0.00	100.00	97.84	83.44	25.17	0.00
Start of Water Year <small>(09/25/2012 map)</small>	1.92	98.08	77.45	35.36	18.51	0.00
One Year Ago <small>(08/28/2012 map)</small>	46.13	53.87	37.98	19.91	0.00	0.00



*The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.*

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, September 5, 2013  
National Drought Mitigation Center,

## 2012 AND 2013 IN REVIEW

Weather during the second half of 2012 presented drought conditions to much of our area along with corresponding low water levels. At that time the 90-day precipitation outlook for January through March, provided by the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center (CPC), tilted toward normal or above normal conditions across north central Minnesota. Accordingly we augmented a very slow and cautious drawdown of Leech Lake last December 2012 into February 2013 because we were not receiving an over abundant amount of precipitation. But then winter flourished in March, April, and depending on your view point, even May of 2013. We vastly increased the outflow to hasten the draw-down of Leech Lake to make room for spring runoff and potential flood water storage. (In my last newsletter article in early March, I was concerned that if we received above normal moisture conditions during late winter 2013; it could create spring flood conditions in the Aitkin area that could cause Leech and Winnie reservoirs to provide flood water storage for downstream flood damage reduction.) Spring 2013 runoff and wet conditions raised Leech Lake to 1295.20 before cresting in June then finally returning to the desirable summer range near the end of July. However Mother Nature still had more plans. Rather than returning to normal precipitation conditions; we headed into what is now classified by the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center as “Abnormally Dry”. Leech Lake Dam discharge was reduced accordingly throughout the summer.

## WHERE WE STAND NOW

The 30-day precipitation outlook for September, provided by the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center (CPC), tilts toward equal chances for below normal, normal, or above normal conditions across north central Minnesota.

*(US Army Corps of Engineers continued on page 7)*

*(US Army Corps of Engineers continued from page 6)*

Leech Lake Dam will remain at or near the minimum discharge hoping to raise Leech Lake back into the desirable summer range through the end of September to provide enjoyable recreational boating but that is entirely dependent on precipitation amounts that we receive.

## LOOKING FORWARD

As always fall will slowly turn to winter with the gift of snow, ice, and cold temperatures that may be painful to some but tranquil and beautiful to others. Corps of Engineers employees will be conducting snow surveys, monitoring water levels, frosts depth, snow water content, and weather predictions, to make drawdown decisions that will determine your water level next spring.

## OPERATING FOR FLOOD DAMAGE REDUCTION

When operating headwaters reservoirs for flood control at Aitkin, each of the reservoir levels are monitored along with the stage at Aitkin. A guide curve has been developed that when followed, the damages at the reservoirs are balanced with the damages at Aitkin. Operating the Headwaters Reservoirs is a system wide operation and each event can produce different results, so the guide curve is used to help, but cannot always be followed.

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Aquatic vegetation helps to reduce shoreline erosion that in turn improves water quality and preserves healthy fish habitat. Anyone familiar with Leech Lake readily recognizes wild rice growing along shorelines however there are many bays that propagate large beds of wild rice important to the Leech Lake Indian Reservation. Also of high importance is the MN DNR Mud/Goose Lake Wild Life Management Area located downstream of Leech Lake Dam and is often dependent on Leech Lake Dam for suitable water conditions. Anyone familiar with hydrology of dams will know how difficult it is to balance upstream AND downstream water levels to suit both areas.



## LEECH LAKE DAM

Leech Lake Dam is located on the North East corner of Portage Bay and forms the Leech Lake River. The Leech flows into the Mississippi south of US HWY 2 downstream of the MN DNR Mud/Goose Wildlife Management Area. The Corps of Engineers provides recreation facilities such as boat ramps, campgrounds, picnic areas, trails and other services within the grounds at Leech Lake Dam. Check us out and click on "recreation" at [www.mvp.usace.army.mil](http://www.mvp.usace.army.mil)



## MORE INFORMATION

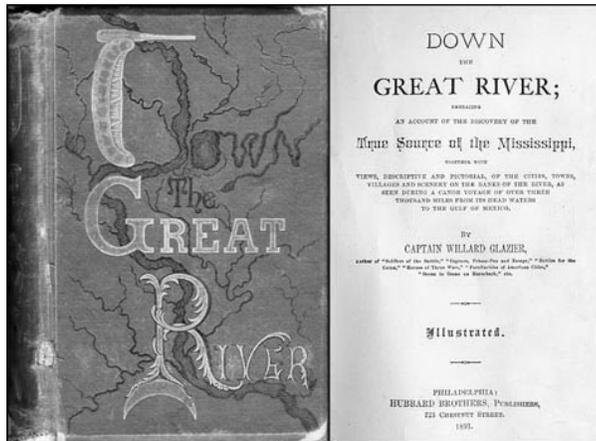
You can visit the Corps of Engineers Water Control, Web site at <http://www.mvp-wc.usace.army.mil> for more information on the regulation of Leech Lake Reservoir. Questions can be directed to Timm Rennecke at Leech Lake Dam, 651-290-5470. If you would like to comment regarding how lake levels are affecting you please email: [timmm.v.renncke@usace.army.mil](mailto:timmm.v.renncke@usace.army.mil)



## 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). In prior issues, Captain Glazier described his trip from Brainerd to Leech Lake, his stay at Agency Bay while awaiting Indian guides, and their arduous journey to Lake Itasca. They have now arrived at Itasca, and points beyond, but their food is gone and starvation begins.

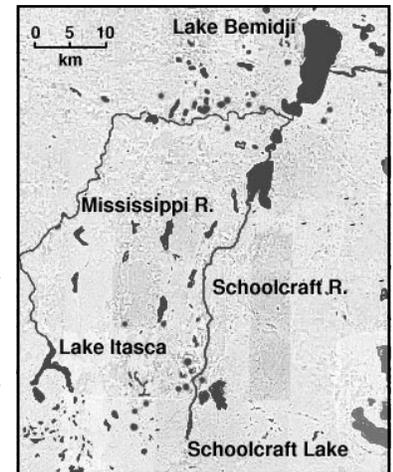
## THE JOURNEY CONTINUES (IN THE WORDS OF CAPTAIN GLAZIER)

**Camp Starvation, July 25<sup>th</sup>.** All were astir at dawn. The much coveted fish and ducks were hastily dressed and broiled. A very simple calculation showed me that if four ducks of nearly equal size were to be divided fairly between six persons, each should receive four-sixths of one duck, and upon this basis I quickly

*A very simple calculation showed me that if four ducks of nearly equal size were to be divided fairly between six persons, each should receive four-sixths of one duck.*

made the apportionment. As to the fish, which could not have weighed more than a half pound, it was somewhat difficult to divide, and so it was voted that the leader of the expedition should have the entire fish ration. This courtesy on the part of my companions was gratefully acknowledged, and I venture to say that I regarded it at the time as one of the highest compliments ever paid to leadership

It is perhaps needless to add that fish and ducks were speedily disposed of, tents struck, and canoes again put into the water. We were now within two days of Lake Bemidji, which we had looked forward to as a post of relief since leaving Itasca. The only obstacle to rapid progress in the descent of the river was our exhausted condition, which seriously interfered with a vigorous use of the paddles.

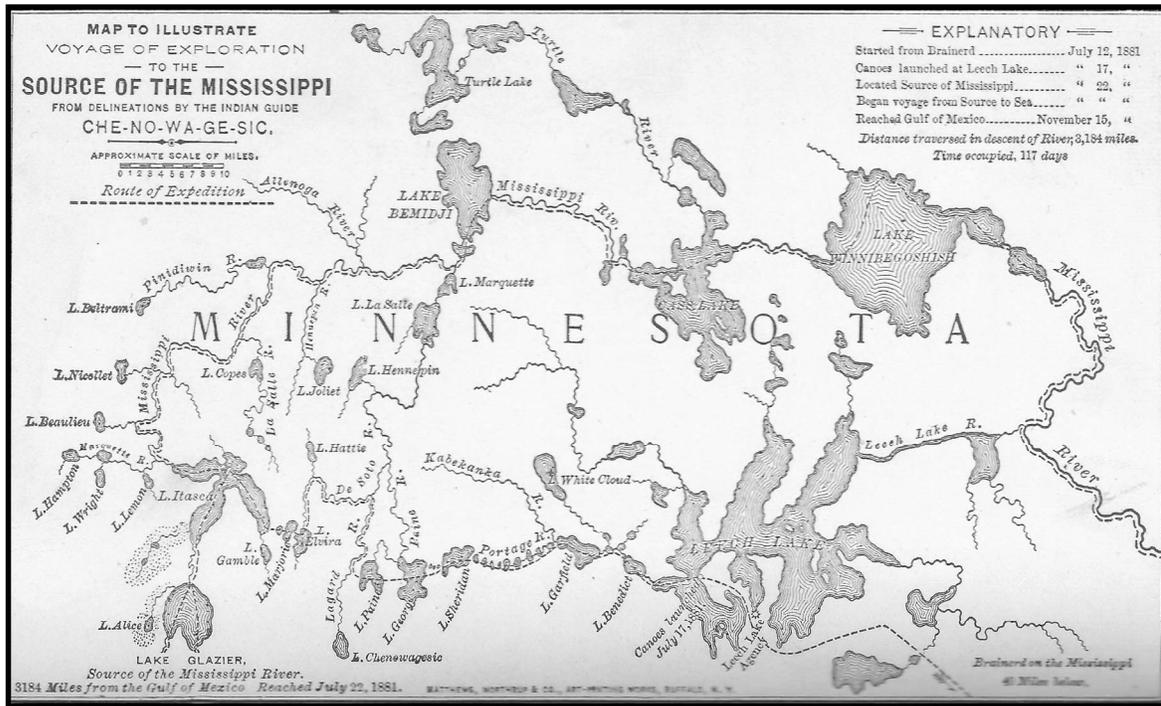


A few yards below our last encampment, on turning a bend in the river, we came suddenly upon an old duck of the onzig species and her brood, which at this season are unfledged. This seemed a providential interposition, and I at once sent a charge from the shot gun after them, but with no other effect than to kill one young duck and apparently wound its mother. As to the parent bird, however, I was greatly deceived; it affected for the moment to be disabled, flapped its wings upon the water as

*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued on page 9)*

*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued from page 8)*

## 1880'S MAP: HEADWATERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI



if it could not rise, in order to allow her young to escape, when she suddenly arose and winged her flight beyond the reach of my fowling piece. Following the shotgun, the Indians closed up, gesticulating and screaming loudly, thereby frightening and keeping several of the ducks under water. An instant later, Chenowagesic sent his paddle straight home to the back of a juvenile duck, which, as soon as it came to the surface, was thrown into my canoe amid the shouts of the entire party. We were now two ducks ahead and hopeful for a further reinforcement of our commissariat before nightfall.



Several flocks of pigeons passed over our heads early in the afternoon, but as they were so far above us as to be out of shot range, I did not think it advisable to waste ammunition. My brother noticed a deer grazing at some distance from a point where we landed to search for blueberries; but while he crept up cautiously to within a few yards, he failed in his shot, either from the distance or

want of practice. He immediately threw a fresh cartridge into his gun and fired again, before the animal had made many leaps, but of no purpose.

A halt was made at three o'clock for rest and refreshment, for we were so much exhausted by this time from paddling and want of food that we could proceed no further. Lagard helped me out of my canoe and led me to the shade of a small tree, for on attempting to walk I found I was too weak to do so without assistance. The two ducks killed in the morning, together with a mud turtle caged by Chenowagesic, were quickly broiled, and as quickly devoured. A few blueberries were gathered by George, which he divided equally among his companions

At four o'clock the canoes were again put into the water and the descent of the river continued. Our progress for some miles was greatly retarded by sluggish current, the route lying through wild rice savan-



*(Leech Lake in Antiquity continued on page 10)*

(*Leech Lake in Antiquity continued from page 9*)

nas, the most extensive we had yet seen. These rice savannas seem indispensable to the Indian tribes on the Upper Mississippi, who rely upon them largely for their winter sustenance. Toward evening we came to the junction of a considerable stream, known among the Indians as the Pinidiwin River. Just below the mouth of the Pinidiwin a flock of wild geese passed over our heads. This was, under the circumstances, a very great temptation, and, while they were apparently beyond shot range, I ventured a round of ammunition upon them, without effect. This was a hard blow. The sun was sinking behind the distant hills, and although we had eaten nothing since six o'clock in the morning, there was now no prospect of securing food before reaching Lake Bemidji. It was suggested that we should continue the descent during the night, but this was considered impracticable, as the channel we so torturous and unsettled as to render navigation extremely difficult except in daylight. We were still passing through wild rice and blue grass savannas where the

river is constantly changing its course, and the channel with which Chenowagesic was formerly familiar was now in many places filled up and overgrown with reeds and rushes.



WILD-GESE SHOOTING—DRAWS BY A. B. FRIST

We disembarked at eight o'clock, about ten miles below the mouth of the Pinidiwin, and pitched our tents in a pine grove on the left bank. The day's descent was indeed an arduous one. George and Paine estimated it at twenty miles. Taking into consideration a sluggish current and lack of rations, it must be admitted that our progress was all that could have been expected.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Engaging in all activities to preserve the environment of Leech Lake and the surrounding watershed.

WELCOME

Leech Lake Association

...Website!

Our mission is to provide stewardship of Leech Lake and its environs, to preserve and continue the viability of Leech Lake as vital to area residents, vacationers, seasonal residents, sportsmen, lovers of nature and the entire community.

Helpful hints to guide you through this LLA website:

- Clicking on "MN WATERS HOME" at top left side menu will take you to MN WATERS website (see note below).
- Clicking on any other menu items at the left side will take you to that LLA website page.
- Clicking on the small or big "A" at the top right will change the text size for easier reading and/or printing.
- It is suggested to save this website under your "Favorites"/"Bookmarks" for easy access.

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VISIT OUR LLA WEBSITE AT:

[www.minnesotawaters.org/group/leech/home](http://www.minnesotawaters.org/group/leech/home)

Hosted by Minnesota Waters/Conservation Minnesota

The website has been recently updated to include current newsletters, current board members and a notice of the recent change in the date of the board meetings; from the second to the third Monday of each month at 9:30 am at the Cass County Courthouse in Walker. Also, under the heading "Links", a lot of local information is available which includes fishing reports, local weather reports, local news, calendar of events and much more.



**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 Walker, and Hummingbird Press.

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# Leech Lake

## ASSOCIATION INC

*Reminder!*

### MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER:

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. The notation '14' beside your name on the mailing label means that your membership is up to date through July 2014. Those with an 11, 12 or 13 beside your name means your membership has expired. Those with expired memberships will receive a self-addressed envelope and renewal form along with this newsletter. 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.

Thank you in advance,  
*The Membership Committee*

### LEECH LAKE ASSOCIATION SPONSORS

We are very grateful to all those who have chosen to become or remain sponsors of the Leech Lake Association (\$100 and above). Your generous donations, plus the annual dues of all our members, allow us to continue our mission of protecting Leech Lake and environs. A special thank you to:

#### 2013-2014 SPONSORS:

- J. Richard Simpson, Chanhassen, MN
- Dan & Shirley Sheldon, Chanhassen, MN
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- Roger & Connie Underwood, Davenport, IA
- Richard & Shirley Olson, Garden Grove, CA



#### LIFETIME MEMBER (\$1000 OR MORE)

- Dale & Harriet Jones, Walker, MN
- Isobel Brown, Whipholt, MN
- Robert Eddy, Big Lake, MN
- Robert & Patti Gisvold, Walker, MN

A special welcome to all our new members, and to all of you who have continued to support us over the years as the walleye fishery has recovered.



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Walker, MN 56484

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