



PARKER POND ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PARKER POND ASSOCIATION

MAY, 1991

1991 SPECIAL MEETING

A Special Meeting of the Parker Pond Association will be held at the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Vestry at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, July 13, 1991. The purpose of the meeting is to bring members together early in the season and enable the various new committees to meet and begin their work while there is time left to accomplish something. Any presentation at this meeting will be brief, since the focus will be committee work. Refreshments will be served.

1990 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Parker Pond Association was held on August 24, 1990 at the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Vestry. President, Steve Cowperthwaite opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. The membership indicated an interest in discussing three areas of concern: (1) networking to increase membership, (2) water quality, (3) By-Laws revision.

The Secretary's and Treasurer's reports were read and accepted. Committee reports followed.

Dam Committee - The Dam Committee reported that the dam appears to be in very good condition. The alders growing on the dam help stabilize the earthen structure, and no erosion is evident. The spillway also appears to be in good condition.

During the discussion that followed the report, several members questioned the wisdom of having laymen responsible for evaluating the integrity of the dam. The membership voted to have the Association seek professional analysis and inspection of the dam. No money was

appropriated for this examination, and the officers were instructed to seek the services of a state agency.

At this time a discussion took place concerning the committees of the Association and their responsibilities, and membership voted to create a new committee, Dam and Water Quality Committee, to look after the dam and the water quality of the lake.

Water Quality Report - The water quality report noted that 1990 was the third year we have had professional testing done at Parker Pond. The testing was scaled back this year because of tight finances; however, Scott Williams conducted tests in May, July, and September for water clarity, oxygen and phosphorus content and also cruised the shore looking for harmful shoreland development or procedures. Ray Anderson has been taking bi-weekly Secchi Disk readings in the north end of the lake, and his efforts have helped maintain the data we are collecting.

The May readings indicated excellent clarity (8 meters), good oxygen content, and low phosphorus content. The July readings also indicated good clarity (7.1 meters); however, the oxygen content in the very deepest parts of the lake had decreased to 2.5 parts per million. Scott Williams characterizes Parker Pond as a lake that is "relatively fragile" but "doing well". (A more complete report of the 1990 Water Quality Monitoring can be found on page 4.)

Gull Report - The increasing population of gulls roosting on the islands at the north end of the lake

was discussed at length. Many reported counting as many as 250 and 300 gulls in an evening, and about a half dozen reported seeing gulls harass loons, osprey, or herons. One member reported seeing a gull snatch and devour a loon chick last summer.

The Association membership voted overwhelmingly in favor of supporting Ray Anderson in his effort to acquire a permit to shoot some of the gulls. Steve Cowperthwaite agreed to write a letter on behalf of the Association and Mr. Anderson requesting such a permit from the Department of the Interior.

Election of Officers - The following officers were elected to serve for 1990-91:

President - Marty Arnold
 Vice-President - Ray Anderson
 Treasurer - Waine Whittier
 Secretary - Steve Cowperthwaite
 Assistant Secretary -
 Jeremiah Healy III
 Trustees - Chig Shuster 1 year
 Beverly Shaw 2 years
 John Peterson 3 years

The mission or purpose of the Parker Pond Association was questioned and discussed at length. The consensus of those present was that the Parker Pond Association should serve as a strong advocate for the lake and be vigilant in looking out for the best interests of the lake. The officers and trustees were authorized to examine the By-Laws and to revise them where necessary to conform with the general purpose and goals of the Association in the 1990's. The following new committees were formed:

Fish, Wildlife, and Boating
 Dam and Water Quality
 Newsletter, Membership, Mailing,
 and Refreshments
 New Programs and Issues
 Land Acquisition
 Enforcement and Zoning

It was decided that the Newsletter would be mailed in June, 1991 and that a Special Meeting of the Association would be held on Saturday, July 13, 1991. The membership believed that an early meeting would enable the new committees to meet and to accomplish something before the summer is over.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

WATCH FOR LOONS

The period from mid May through mid July is a critical time for the loons here on Parker Pond. By mid May they are involved in their courtship rituals and preparing to nest. The incubation period for loons is about 29 days, and nesting time is usually from late May to late June or early July. This is the time when loons are most wary and easily driven from their nests. Unfortunately this is also a time of a great amount of human activity on the lake because of the Memorial Day and July 4th weekends. An unattended egg can be snatched by a wily gull or raccoon.

Loon chicks are precocious and leave the nest with the parents within a few hours of hatching. This is when we see those tiny black balls of fur bobbing in the water between doting parents or riding upon the back of one. Tiny chicks are very vulnerable, and one separated from its parents is easy prey for gulls, large fish, or turtles.

We had 5-7 loon chicks survive in 1989 here on Parker Pond. In 1990 we had only one survive. We don't know why so few survived last year, but it is clear that we can help them to survive by leaving them alone.

PHONE NUMBERS

The following phone numbers are listed for your convenience:

President
 Martin Arnold - 293-2549 or 377-6688
 Vice-President
 Raymond Anderson - 293-2679
 Treasurer and Dam and Water Quality
 Waine Whittier - 293-2072
 Secretary and Newsletter
 Steve Cowperthwaite - 293-2809 or 685-3604
 Fish, Wildlife, and Boating
 John Peterson - 293-2680 or 549-7225
 Membership
 Beverly Shaw - 293-2058
 Inland Fishing and Wildlife 289-2535

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Now that the Annual Meeting is to be held in July, we may have finally put the horse before the cart. This is no big achievement, but members can now design committee projects and work on them during the summer, perhaps to some satisfactory conclusion.

We've listed the names and phone numbers of our committee chairpeople. Contact them and get involved. If you have questions, problems, complaints or ideas, join a committee and help create a solution.

Recently I was told that our last application to "take" a few gulls has been approved at the Federal level. The request is now in the hands of State officials. Hopefully, our action to reduce the gull presence at Parker Pond will commence before the summer is over. Our mandate is not to kill large numbers of gulls but to "persuade" them to roost elsewhere by the selective killing of some.

Ice fishing this winter was slow. We have accepted a downturn in the fishing because of the new trap and fish limits. Even so, some first class brook trout were taken. Despite the reduction in activity, the clean, wild environment and beautiful scenery make this a great sport.

Please make every effort to attend the Special Meeting of the Parker Pond Association on July 13th. We need your support.

Marty Arnold

FISH, WILDLIFE and BOATING COMMITTEE

The Fish, Wildlife and Boating Committee has met several times this year.

We have continued our efforts to obtain a permit to control gulls on the lake. Calls to the Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Law Enforcement were made to check on the status of the permit application, and we were told that our original application had been lost. We had to begin again, and the permit is not yet in our hands.

In spite of continual harassment by gulls and frequent disturbance by curious, well meaning people, the ospreys successfully nested in a great

tree on an island near the Chesterville shore, and one chick fledged. Members of this committee felt that the island should be posted to encourage people to keep away.

Bats are much maligned creatures that are truly beneficial because of the vast number of insects they consume. The committee considered building bat roosting boxes to provide housing for the bats and to help reduce local insect populations; however, we decided it was probably best to encourage individuals to do so. Plans to build the boxes are available from the Parker Pond Association.

The loon census of Parker was taken last July in cooperation with the statewide census coordinated by the Maine Audubon Society. Although fourteen adults were counted, only one chick was observed. We do not know if 1990 was a poor year for chick survival in general or if there is a problem unique to Parker Pond. The committee decided that more nesting platforms should be built and placed in area where loons have traditionally nested and predation would be minimal. These areas will be posted to help keep people from disturbing the loons during the critical nesting period. One platform was built and placed in the water this spring.

In December, 1990 the chairman of the committee met with Dennis McNeish, Maine Regional Fishery Biologist, and discussed the state fishery management goals and objectives for Parker Pond. The lake is being managed primarily for two game species: landlocked salmon and bass. Experimental releases of sub-legal trout made in the spring of 1989 and of 1990 are being evaluated. The state would like fisherman who are genuinely interested in keeping personal fishing records on Parker Pond to contact the district fishery biologist for instructions. Mr. McNeish also said that he would like some length, weight, and scale samples from Parker Pond for age and growth studies. The 1990 fall netting of salmon yielded a total of 113 fish; 54 averaged 15 inches and were 2+ years old, 49 averaged 17.7

inches and were 3+ years old. Copies of Mr. McNeish's assessment of the Parker Pond salmon fishery are available through the Parker Pond Association.

White perch were captured in nets in Parker for the first time. They probably gained access to Parker via the outlet, as both Echo Lake and Taylor Pond contain this species. White perch compete with smelts, the primary forage species for salmon.

John Peterson

1990 WATER QUALITY MONITORING

The lake monitoring assessment for Parker Pond was received from Scott Williams in April, 1991. The report indicated that the water clarity of the lake is very good and appears to be stable. Water clarity can be a function of sediments in suspension, natural dissolved organic material, or algal growth in lake water and is often affected to a degree by all of these factors; however, algal growth is the primary influence on the water clarity of most Maine lakes. Data collected over the past 15 years shows that the water clarity of Parker Pond tends to vary during the five month period of May - September. The minimum was 5.9 meters in 1989, and the maximum was 7.0 meters in both 1980 and 1983. An unusually heavy rain in May, 1989 caused severe watershed erosion and heavy concentrations of silt and phosphorus to the runoff of a great many Maine lakes.

The total phosphorus concentration of the lake ranged from low to low-moderate during the summer of 1990; however, some readings indicated that some phosphorus was being recycled from bottom sediments. Core samples from the upper region of the water column ranged from 6 parts per billion (ppb) in May, to 7 ppb in July, and 5 ppb in August. These concentrations are consistent with the good water clarity observed in Parker Pond. A September sample of 13 ppb taken near the bottom of the lake may be due to phosphorus being released from bottom sediments and may be an indication of internal phosphorus recycling.

Dissolved oxygen levels were low,

critically low, during August and September. In spite of the visual indication that the water quality of Parker Pond is presently very good, a rapid change in the lake could occur if the oxygen deficit becomes worse. In May the lake was only weakly stratified, and no significant changes in the oxygen profile of the water column. By July, there was oxygen depression (less than 5 parts per million (ppm)) below a depth of 13 meters. On September 24 there was significant oxygen depletion (less 1 ppm) from 11 meters depth to the bottom of the lake at about 17 meters.

Oxygen depression and/or depletion can seriously compromise a cold water fishery like the salmon fishery on Parker Pond, and any loss of oxygen should be viewed as a threat to that resource. Oxygen loss can seriously affect lake water quality. When oxygen near the bottom is depleted, phosphorus can be released from bottom sediments and stimulate algal growth. Algae eventually die and decompose, creating additional biological demand for oxygen. Testing during the last few years has shown that there is significant oxygen depletion in Parker Pond during August and September. Historical data extending back to 1940 suggests that there has been loss of oxygen in the waters of Parker Pond during that period.

The documented oxygen depletion may be slowed through land-use planning. Land use in the lake watershed is linked to sediment and phosphorus export to the lake. Efforts should be made for towns around Parker Pond to establish a long-term water quality protection plan for the lake.

TO DRINK, OR NOT TO DRINK...

The water quality monitoring that is done each year in Parker Pond is done to determine the overall health of the lake and is not done to determine the drinkability of the water. Different tests and different standards are used to determine whether or not water is safe to drink.

The question of whether the lake water was safe to drink or not came

up at the Annual Meeting last year. A fair number of people said that they drank the lake water untreated and had been doing so for many years. Others were aghast to think that someone would drink from the lake. It is not a good idea.

Hikers in the wilds of Baxter Park and canoers in the most remote regions of the Allagash are cautioned not to drink untreated water from a source such as a lake, brook, or pond. Even hearty souls living in the Alaska bush are warned not to drink from such sources; anyone considering drinking water from Parker Pond should certainly receive the same caution.

There are dozens of good reasons why one should not drink the untreated lake water. A dead and decaying animal could be floating near your intake pipe, and we have no idea of what pathogens the many gulls may be contributing to the lake water. There are a great many other possibilities; however, one that should be quite sufficient is a ubiquitous, tiny protozoon called Giardia lamblia that causes a dysentery-like illness called giardiasis (pronounced-gee-are-DI-a-sis) or "beaver fever."

At the onset of giardiasis one feels extreme intestinal discomfort. Shortly, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, and nausea become unbearable; the victim becomes dehydrated and needs to be hospitalized. Giardiasis is sometimes fatal and can be debilitating, but the symptoms usually subside after a few days of rest and treatment.

The bug enters the body as a tiny cyst (16,500 can fit on the head of a pin). The size makes it difficult to filter out in water treatment systems, and its toughness makes it resistant to normal concentrations of chemicals. Once inside a host, the cyst changes and is able to move around and attach itself to the lining of the intestine and reproduces after a two-week incubation period. Beavers, muskrats, and other fur bearers were blamed for hosting the Giardia casting off the cyst into the environment; however, recent studies show that human waste contamination is the probable cause.

An article entitled "A Bum Rap for Beaver?" can be found in the Spring 1990 issue of Maine Fish and Wildlife.

Regardless of the source of the Giardia cyst, beaver, muskrat, or human, it is best not to drink the lake water from Parker Pond or any other Maine lake.

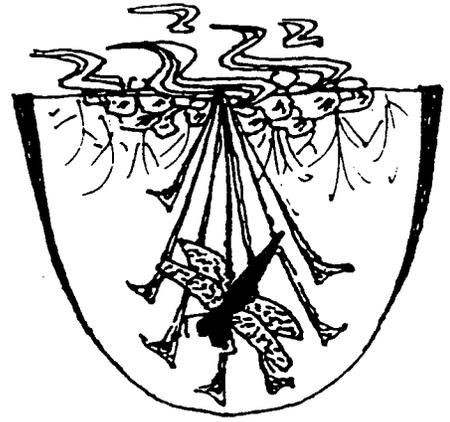
YOU AND ME AND THE LAKE

The low oxygen readings that we have been getting from the depths of Parker Pond during August and September during recent years indicate that we have a situation that is potentially very serious. The monitoring report stresses that a land use plan should be implemented that will reduce sediment and phosphorus "export" to the lake. A land use plan sounds like something for a town, or the county, or some state bureaucracy to come up with, and perhaps fumble with; it seems to be something quite beyond us as individuals, and at times it is difficult not to feel just a bit helpless. Is there anything we can do as individuals to halt this trend that seems depressing in more ways than one?

Those of us who live, work, or play within the boundaries of the Parker Pond watershed hold the future of the lake in our hands. We hold the future of the lake in our hands quite literally. The roads that we build, the trees and vegetation that we cut, the rocks and soil that we move, the septic system that we maintain or neglect, the detergents or chemicals that we use all have a direct effect upon the lake. "Land use" involves what each of us does with our land as well as what the farmer does with his, the developer does with hers, or the state does with ours.

The Association has obtained several fine publications to help people understand just how they personally affect the lake and how that effect can be minimized.

"For Your Lake's Sake" is a small but detailed pamphlet published by the D.E.P. with a list of "do's and don'ts" to help the individual minimize lake disturbance. "The Lake Book" was published earlier this year and is similar but more comprehensive.



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Parker Pond Association

BY-LAWS REVISION

The officers and trustees of the Parker Pond Association were authorized by the membership at the last Annual Meeting to examine the Association By-Laws and to recommend changes that the committee considered to be necessary.

The By-Laws Committee met several times during the winter; however, only one recommendation came from the review.

The By-Laws Committee recommends changing the date of the Annual Meeting from August to July. We will be voting on the recommendation at a Special Meeting to be held on Saturday, July 13, 1991 at the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church Vestry.