



## SUMMER 2014

# Cormorants Still a Problem

*Rick Fernstrom and his Cormorant Committee struggle to form consensus with the DNR*



*Invasive Species Patrol begins 2014 survey program. Surprising Initial results.*



*Tom Hauer to head up new Watercraft Inspection project*

*Skip Sustacek and Ken Klehr work side by side with Meeker County and local farmer to clean up our watershed*

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**MEEKER COUNTY SHERIFF**

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*Meeker County Primary Election*



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**Committed** ★  
★ **Service-Minded**



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Paid for by the committee to elect Jon Thoma. Jon Thoma, P.O. Box 151, Litchfield, MN 55355

# SUMMER NEWSLETTER, 2014

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## Contact Us

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Lost and found  
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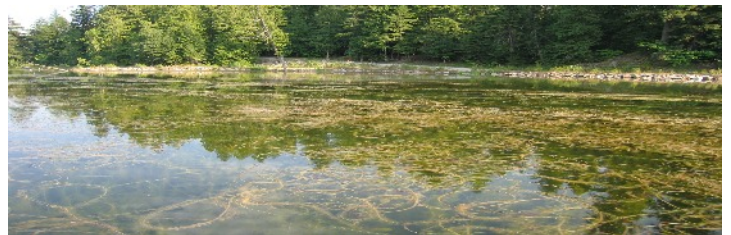
The Lake Washington Newsletter is published three times a year (Spring, Summer and Fall) by the Lake Washington Improvement Association. It is distributed free to lake property owners and friends around Lake Washington.



**5 Cover:** The Cormorant/Pelican control committee arranges for DNR visit to the LWIA summer annual get together.



**8** Tom Hauer's new Watercraft Inspection Team receives training to help monitor invasive species at boat landings.



**9** Invasive Species? What happened?

**10** Watershed Project begins this summer.

**11** Committee Reports.

## End of the Dock

With the board focusing on protecting and preserving Lake Washington, we have added two new committees. The first is the Watershed Committee headed up by Skip Sustacek. The primary goal of this committee is to reduce the amount of sediments and nutrients that enter the lake via runoff. This group is currently working on a project to upgrade a sediment pond on the southwest corner of the lake. Skip has secured a grant through Meeker County Soil and Water Conservation District and has the project moving along quite nicely. See his report in the Watershed Committee section of this newsletter.

Keep in mind that Lake Washington is part of a large watershed that begins with Lake Minnie Bell flowing thru Manuella then Stella. With Lake Darwin, along with various wetlands and farmland making up the balance of the watershed. There are a lot of contributors to this watershed.

The second group, the Watercraft Inspection Committee, is headed up by Tom Hauer. We have all heard about Eurasian water milfoil, flying carp, and zebra mussels and the negative impact they can have on lakes. These non-native species are only a part of what is called Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). To combat AIS the focus needs to be on prevention. It is too late once these critters get into Lake Washington. With this as our goal, one of the best returns on our limited resources is to focus on boat landings by means of watercraft inspections. The group's emphasis will be on educating boat owners prior to landing their boat and exiting the lake. For details about this group go to the Watercraft Inspection Committee Report in this newsletter.

One last thing is be sure to mark your calendar for Saturday, August 2nd for the Potluck Dinner at the Dassel Rod and Gun Club. **See the Social section for complete details.** This is my favorite. Get a chance to sample a great variety of foods. Also Lee Sundmark, DNR Area Fisheries, will be there to discuss **Cormorants**.

In closing I would like to thank all the members for their support thru membership dues and donations. If you are not a member please join. Looking forward to seeing you at the **Potluck, Saturday Aug 2nd**.

— Ken Klehr, *president*



# This Isn't a Problem? Ask the Cormorant Committee!

Rick Fernstrom, Ken Klehr, Dean Shaner, George Kraemer, Ray Haugland, Arlan Lovald, Milt Lueneburg, Ron Bubany



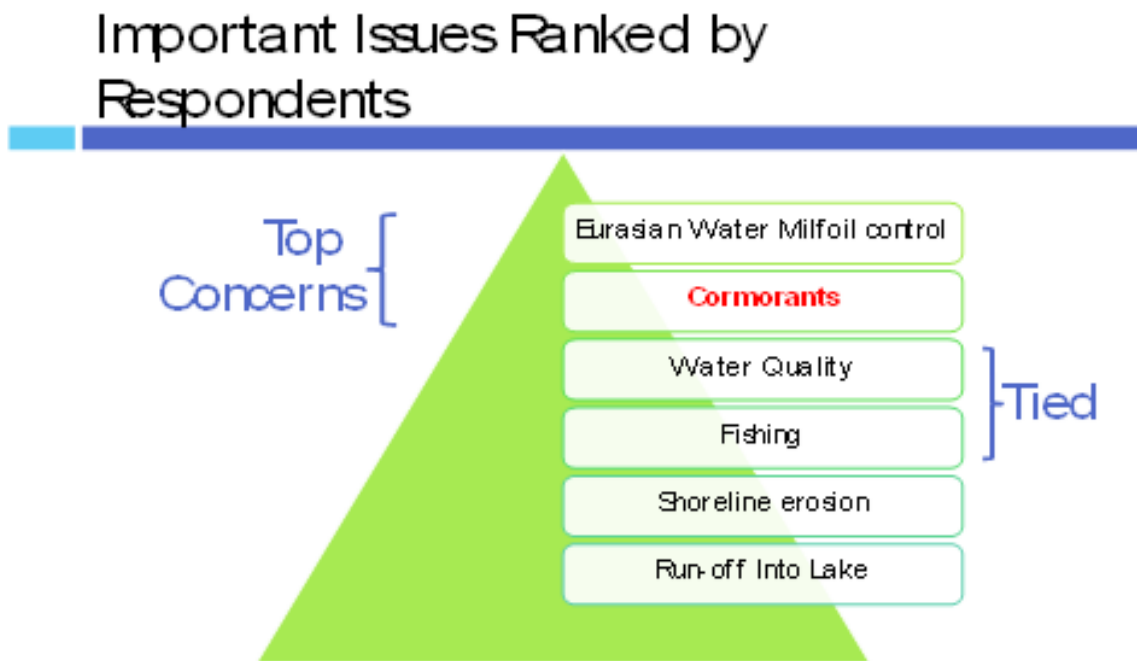
At the August 2<sup>nd</sup> Lake Washington Improvement Association potluck, Lee Sundmark, Supervisor DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, Section of Fisheries Hutchinson Fisheries Management Area, will be our guest speaker to cover the cormorant & pelican impact on area lakes. Lee has been involved in all the discussions since this committee started in 2011 and he will present the DNR assessment. You will hear from the DNR that they cannot conclude that fish stocks have been depleted by cormorants beyond the normal range of historical and lake class catch rate variability. You will hear that walleye survey abundance must be below the 25 percentile for two or more surveys before the DNR considers recommending a reduction in cormorants.

Questions we can ask:

- 1) Cormorants eat everything, not just walleye and the lake is stocked every other year with walleye. Why focus on walleye population as an indicator for cormorant impact?
- 2) How does the DNR conclude cormorants were/are a problem on Leech and Vermilion but not Pigeon?
- 3) Does it make a difference that Leech and Vermilion are resort areas and local businesses have more clout to pressure political resources to take action?
- 4) Would fishing improve if cormorant populations were lowered? Is that what was found on Leech Lake and Lake Vermilion?
- 5) Why has the DNR Nongame Wildlife group been unresponsive to the LWIA requests for 2013/2014 cormorant and pelican counts on Pigeon Lake?

## CORMORANTS (continued)

Below is an excerpt from the 2013 LWIA Survey showing cormorants as one of the TOP concerns for residents on Lake Washington.



Recently, in June 2014, a lake home resident provided the following comment:

*"I'm actually dual concerned with what the cormorants are doing to the fish population as much as I am about the swimmers itch. If you Google Minn. DNR Swimmers Itch, it pretty much says that the cormorants are probably responsible for the swimmers itch we've had the last few years. We haven't even put our dock and lifts in yet because none of my family wants to risk getting a bad dose."*

As of the last report available from the DNR regarding cormorant & pelican population (2013), Pigeon Lake is still the largest rookery population of cormorants in the state. When you add up the lake surface feeding area around Pigeon Lake and divide by the cormorant consumption during the nesting period (~1.5 lb/day from May-Sept), we get a measurement called the foraging ratio, in other words, the amount of fish that will be consumed by cormorants per season to survive. Pigeon Lake has a foraging ratio of ~95 lbs/acre as compared to Leech Lake 3.4 lbs/acre and Lake Vermilion 7.5 lbs/acre.

This metric comparison is daunting and shows how at risk our area lakes are. Yet cormorant population reductions were approved/supported by the DNR in those areas so why are we being ignored? Pigeon Lake sustains ~4200 cormorants over the season which equates to 6,300 lbs of fish consumed per day from area lakes. Over the course of one season, the 2433 acres of Lake Washington are at risk of supplying 231,135 lbs of fish to support cormorants. How many fish would that be? Consider ~231,135 fish at 1.0 lb/fish (14" walleye is ~1.0 lbs) over the season or 1540 fish/day during May through September. At a consumption rate of 1.5 lbs/day, that means approximately 1026 cormorants land and eat on Lake Washington every day (24% of the Pigeon Lake cormorants). Does that seem realistic?

## **CORMORANTS (continued)**

If you are one of the lake residents that lament daily over the carnage, do you see a thousand cormorants flying and landing on Lake Washington daily to feed? We need to equate the facts with what we think or see on our lake, merely a sanity check of the situation as we try to get our arms around the unknowns. Remember, supply, demand, and location are what drives this issue.

### FACTS:

- 1) Pigeon Lake sustains the largest cormorant population in the state (not Leech or Vermilion or LOTW)
- 2) Pigeon Lake supports 2100 nests or 4200 adult pairs between May and September
- 3) Cormorants eat 1.5 lbs/day to survive
- 4) The feeding area around Pigeon Lake is 11,431 acres, Leech Lake 102,947 acres, Lake Vermilion 39,272 acres
- 5) The current Pigeon Lake cormorant population will need 945,000 lbs of fish to survive over the season
- 6) Cormorant population reductions have been approved/supported by the DNR for Lake Vermilion, Leech Lake, and LOTW even though they have far fewer cormorant and much greater feeding areas

Here are some interesting articles/links on cormorant activity outside our area.

<http://www.dailystandard.com/archive/2014-04-22/stories/23747/cormorants-increasing-at-grand-lake>

<http://insurancenewsnet.com/oarticle/2014/03/05/migratory-bird-permits-extension-of-expiration-dates-for-double-crested-cormora-a-469430.html#.U67OnWdOVMs>

<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20140106/NEWS03/701069962>



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# WATERCRAFT INSPECTION - HOW IT'S DONE!

Tom Hauer, Ken and Cathy Klehr, Ron Bubany, Skip Sustacek, Mary Braaten

The Lake Washington Watercraft Inspection Committee attended a DNR class on June 10 at the Darwin Rod and Gun Club sponsored by the Lake Stella Association. Evan Freeman, DNR Regional Watercraft Inspection Supervisor, trained us on how to do watercraft inspections. The committee's goal is to reduce the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) into Lake Washington and educate the public on what they can do to help us achieve this goal. With this training the committee will conduct watercraft inspections at Ellsworth Public Access.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

***Q: Is this an excuse to do inspections for all sorts of things beyond just AIS?***

A: NO. Inspectors are usually not law enforcement officers and they are looking for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) only. They are looking in areas of the boat that could contain water or come into contact with the water for possible AIS. If conservation officers or other law enforcement officers perform the inspections, they will be required to deal with violations of state law that they come across even though their primary focus will be AIS.

***Q: Do the inspections take a long time or cause big traffic back-ups?***

A: NO. Most inspections are quick and can be completed in less than three minutes; however, if decontamination is required, boaters will be delayed.



*There was an unscheduled watercraft inspection on Lake Washington at Ellsworth Landing on July 3rd during normal business hours. Alex Ipsen, an intern with the DNR, did the inspections.*

***Q: Why are watercraft inspected at some locations but not others?***

A: Inspectors will be placed at a number of locations across the state based on risk, but there will never be enough money to have inspectors everywhere. That is why it is **key** that the boaters themselves practice **Clean, Drain, and Dry** and **that they inspect their own boats and report findings to the appropriate persons.**

***Q: Isn't the spread of zebra and quagga mussels inevitable anyway?***

A: NO. States that have implemented education and inspection programs have significantly slowed or even stopped the spread of these species. Even if we only slow the spread of mussels, each year they are contained could save us tens to hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money. Also, preventing the spread of zebra and quagga mussels will protect our waters, native wildlife, and fish for many more years while ongoing research develops tools to control these species.



## **WATERCRAFT INSPECTION (continued)**

**Q: How are you going to inspect and decontaminate thousands of boats?**

A: While we attempt to inspect all watercraft during inspection times at high risk locations, only the boats with obvious signs of aquatic nuisance species — plants, mud, debris, or higher risk standing water, or that have been moored for three or more days, will be decontaminated. On the whole, a relatively small number of boats will be decontaminated.

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## **HAVE WE TURNED THE CORNER WITH INVASIVE SPECIES?**

Ken Klehr, Cathy Klehr, Mary Braaten, Ron Bubany, Bill Ooley

We conducted two very intensive surveys this spring (5/28 and 6/13, 2014). Our surveys failed to detect so much as a trace of Eurasian milfoil. Minnesota DNR Invasive Species Specialist Nick Brown followed this up with their own survey and again found nothing.

**There is no milfoil.  
Where did it go?**

There is no milfoil. Where did it go?

This has happened elsewhere in North America. There seems to be a pattern that after an initial onset of extremely dense milfoil, it gradually recedes until after about 10 years it either disappears or only exists in scattered clumps. Although there are several theories, no one really understands what is happening. We think the milfoil will return, but perhaps in much less density.

An occurrence of this happened at the Fall River in California. If you want the details, go to:

<http://fallriverconservancy.org/2013/05/03/eurasian-watermilfoil-where-did-it-go/>

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## **WATERSHED IMPROVEMENTS TO BEGIN THIS SUMMER**

The members of this committee which include Ken Klehr, Rick Johnson, Rick Fernstrom and Skip Sustacek have been working on our watershed situation for the past several months. The result is a plan for a watershed cleanup project.

The project is between 215<sup>th</sup> and 217<sup>th</sup> Streets on the southwest corner of Lake Washington. It will involve construction of a bern to contain an enlargement of the current sediment pond. In conjunction with this, four drainage intakes on the adjacent Ahlgren farm will be upgraded so that water seeps slowly into the drain field. All of this work should cut down the entry of contaminants into the lake by about 35+ percent.

***Look for work to start in late August,***

Cost of the project is \$13,353 with \$8,000 funded by Meeker County and the remainder by the Lake Washington Association. We are working on other funding to offset the cost to the Lake Association.

A large part of our success is due to the cooperation of landowners, county people and the Lake Association Board. Look for the work to start in late August, weather permitting. The committee will continue to check other areas that have watershed issues.



***We owe thanks to Skip and the rest of the committee for leading the way. This duck pond will soon be upgraded to an efficient and attractive holding pond.***

# COMMITTEE REPORTS

## FINANCE / FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

Lyle Walker

Annual filings with the State of Minnesota and the IRS have been submitted for the year ended April 30, 2014. Two hundred memberships have been received through June 30, generating \$10,000 in revenue for the Lake Association. Seventy-one members have donated \$1,655 to the Dassel Fire Department through the Lake Association so far this season. There are no unpaid bills on hand and the financial position is good with total funds on hand of \$109,327.

## SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Skip Sustacek, Mike & Sandy Wosmek, Mary Braaten

The Annual Lake Washington Potluck Dinner is Saturday, August 2nd. Social hour starts at 5 PM and dinner at 6 PM. After dinner, Lee Sundmark will present a cormorant update, with an open discussion following his presentation. We will finish with a drawing for door prizes from local businesses.

BBQ sandwiches and lemonade will be provided. Bring a dish to share, your own plates, utensils, and any additional beverages.

For questions, call Skip @ 320-275-9414, Sandy or Mike @ 320-275-4662, or Mary @ 320-626-2001.

## COOKBOOKS

Cathy Klehr, Sandy Wosmek

Lake Washington cookbooks are available for \$10.00. To purchase a cookbook call Cathy @ 320-626-2056, Sandy @ 320-275-4662 or go to [info@lakewashingtonassn.com](mailto:info@lakewashingtonassn.com) and we can get a copy to you.



*Lake Washington Sunrise*

## COMMITTEE REPORTS (continued)

### SHORELINE CAPTAINS/MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Cathy Klehr, Rick Johnson, Mike & Sandy Wosmek

Thanks to all who have renewed their membership. To recognize these people, we have included a list of paid members in this newsletter. Without your support of our association we would not be able to maintain the quality and beauty of our lake. If you have not yet sent in your dues, you can still do so. Please send a check for \$50 to LWIA, Box 68, Dassel, Mn. 55325.

Our Shoreline Captains are in the process of handing out flyers with information on the importance of how we can protect our lake from aquatic invasive species (AIS). Thank You to these Volunteers who have put a lot of their time and effort into this program.

For changes of address, phone, e-mail or any other information we should be aware of, please contact us at

[membership@lakewashingtonassn.com](mailto:membership@lakewashingtonassn.com)



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## **COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Steve Ullom, Steve Grotbo, Rick Fernstrom, Tom Hauer

If you are reading this newsletter via snail mail in black and white you are missing out on the full color and being able to click the links. The online version is available at <http://www.lakewashingtonassn.com/pdfs/NewsletterSummer2014.pdf> (from home page go "Association Info" -> "Newsletter [PDF]"). Thanks to Ron Bubany, the newsletter now has a new modern look to it. I am sure Ron would love to hear any feedback you have for him.

To get to the correct LWIA member quicker a number of additional email addresses have been added that are present on the third page of this newsletter. You will also find these on the website under the "Contact Us" or just follow the <http://www.lakewashingtonassn.com/contact.php> link. Of course you can always go directly to any board member and their contact information is also present on the website.

We did get feedback that too many emails were coming from LWIA. So we have changed the policy to try and minimize the amount of email to max of one per week. Items will be grouped together when possible. All items are also available via the Facebook page as they come in ([www.facebook.com/lakewashington](http://www.facebook.com/lakewashington)) for those wanting to be in the know.

For those that attended the annual pork chop dinner you received an outstanding presentation from Caroline Ullom on the survey information you provided. This PowerPoint is available on the website at <http://www.lakewashingtonassn.com/pdfs/survey.pdf> (from home page go "Other Info" -> "Survey Presentation [PDF]"). These results have really helped LWIA focus in areas that matter most to the people on the lake. Saying that, the analysis is still happening and we expect to have full results by end of this season. One thing that I found very interesting is that for pontoon numbers the survey listed 100, but during the same period as the survey one of the board members went around the lake and counted 154. Obviously not everyone filled out the survey, but it does give an indication where numbers can be adjusted.

Ken Klehr has been the president of the association for a number of years and he would like to step down. He will continue to be an active board member, but wants someone else to take the helm. If you are interested in a rewarding position, please contact any board member for more information. You can also attend the next boarding meeting on August 12th at 7 PM at the Dassel Rod and Gun Club.

By the way, the ads in the newsletter help defray the costs of mailing out the newsletter, if you know of anyone wishing to advertise the price is \$40 1/4 page, \$60 1/2 page, and \$80 full page.



*A New Daddy*