



THE SECRET LIVES OF LOONS



I grew up in Muskoka, near Dwight, and spent much of my youth watching loons. Every summer, my family and I paddled with them, listened to their calls, and observed their nests and chicks.

As I experienced firsthand, loon watching is contagious, even addictive, in a good way, because loons do all sorts of interesting things in plain sight. It appears they have nothing to hide as they float around, seemingly without a care in the world. At least, that is what I thought.

Over the years, I expanded my loon interests to include loon science, and I admit to having 470 loon-related scientific papers in my library. Through this I realized there is much more to loons than meets the eye. For example, for a long time, many people, like me, thought loons mated for life. It turns out that loons

definitely do not mate for life. On average, Common Loons have about four partners over 10 years!

But divorces and switching partners only break the surface. One of the ways young Common Loons obtain their first breeding territory is by injuring or outright killing territory owners. Territorial battles between competing loons can be extremely violent and are rarely observed, but over the course of their long lives (a few live to see 30) they can accumulate quite a few battle scars. Remarkably, an adult loon's sternum has an average of seven bill punctures from being stabbed in territorial scraps with other loons, and one bird had 24 punctures!

The deeper you dive into the secret lives of loons, the stranger and more fascinating it gets. Common Loons have four major call

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The ice going out in April created quite a buzz and a flurry of emails from friends living on the waterfront. No matter how much we love winter, the arrival of spring and the longer, warmer days is an exciting time.

I'm very happy to report that the MLA's work over the winter has led to some great results.

MLA Government & Land Use Committee (GLUC): Huge win! Following GLUC's extensive submissions to the Ontario government — including meeting with MPP Graydon Smith (former Mayor of Bracebridge) — coupled with submissions by many MLA members, other lake associations and environmental organizations, the provincial government has reversed its position on site plan control. Its new draft now proposes that site plan control should remain with municipalities, as a key tool to ensure that shoreline development proceeds without excessive tree cutting and blasting. This is a huge win for the health of Muskoka's shorelines! You can read about GLUC's other achievements on municipal budgets and land use proposals in our monthly *NewsBites*.

MLA Community Engagement Committee (CE): CE has put together wonderful plans for the events where we gather to enjoy Muskoka, including Family Seedling Day in May and the aquatic and sailing regattas, as well as community support initiatives. I hope you will drop by one of the MLA booths CE

has organized at farmers' markets this summer, to say hello and learn about the work we are doing.

MLA Environment Committee (EC): EC monitored spring water levels closely and began issuing Flood Watch newsletters in early March to keep members informed about conditions. Our MLA representatives on the community round table continue to advise the District and push for a full Muskoka watershed plan that will be crucial for mitigating flood risk. Plans for this summer's water quality testing program are in place, which is a significant accomplishment that involves about 100 volunteer testers at more than 180 locations across the lakes.

MLA Communications and Membership Committee (C&M): This winter was particularly active for C&M, working on our Strategic Plan goal of doubling membership in five years. It's an ambitious goal that the entire Board has taken responsibility for achieving, and C&M has put together fantastic material to help us get there. Our 2023 Yearbook, also created by C&M, includes a handout that describes our membership growth strategy – the Ambassador Program – and I urge you to read and implement it.

Time and again I have seen there is strength in the MLA having a large number of members. I hope you will help us increase our numbers and make our collective voice even stronger. There are many challenges facing Muskoka, and none of us can afford to take this magnificent place for granted.

In closing, I would like to thank our amazing volunteers who work year-round to keep the MLA strong and vibrant, supported by our dedicated office staff, Erla McCaig, Chelsea Callard and – during upcoming Chelsea's maternity leave – Karianna Costa.

I wish you a safe and enjoyable summer in Muskoka!

Susan Eplett

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THE SECRET LIVES OF LOONS

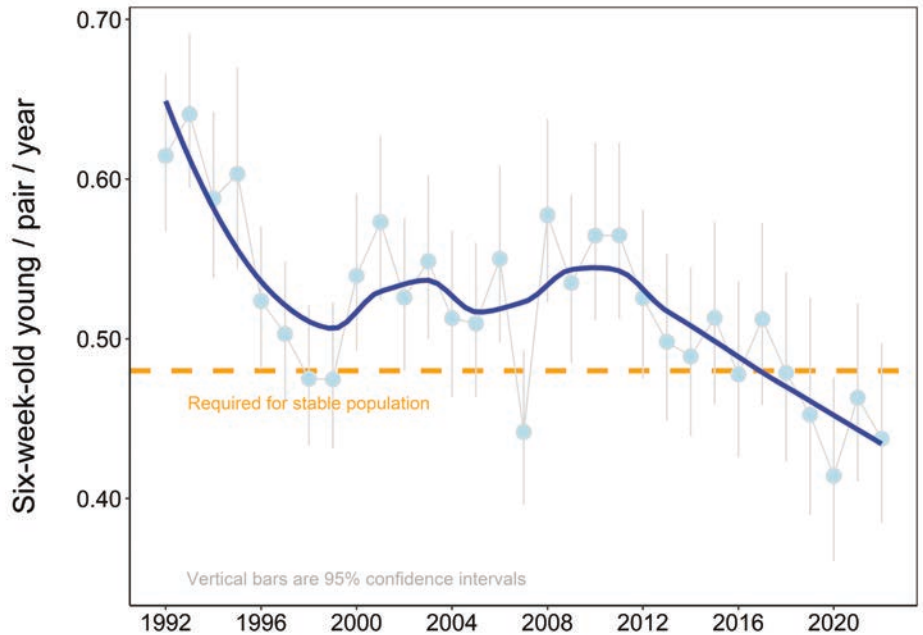
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types that have different meanings, literally a loon language. They even recognize each other as individuals: play a recording of an established, local male and nothing much happens, but play the call of a stranger from miles away and all males in the neighborhood respond vigorously. And a final doozy: in late summer they sometimes form “social gatherings,” where up to dozens of birds float around very close together gazing peacefully into each other’s eyes. Nobody knows why. There is so much more to understand about these remarkable birds than we currently know.

Unfortunately, this is also true of how loons are doing in general. The Canadian Lakes Loon Survey delivered by Birds Canada shows the number of chicks produced by Common Loons has decreased by 30 per cent across Canada since the early 1990s. I’m sad to report that nobody knows why, at least not yet.

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Canadian Lakes Loon Survey Results across Canada



DID YOU KNOW?

One tiny piece of lead from tackle swallowed by a loon will poison it leading to death.

You can stop using lead tackle and never dispose of used pieces in the lake. Get more information: <https://wolfelake.org/fish-lead-free>



We suspect the decline in the number of chicks is linked, at least in part, to past damage from acid rain, mercury pollution, decreasing water clarity due to runoff and algal blooms, and climate change. Birds Canada is working hard to get to the bottom of why our beloved loons are in trouble, and to figure out what we should do to protect them.

As responsible cottagers and lake residents, we can all help by doing the following:

- Keep your shoreline wild. Natural vegetation provides shelter and food for both fish and loons.
- Use non-toxic, non-lead fishing tackle. Ingested lead is lethal for loons.
- Slow down and steer clear. Wakes can wash out nests or separate young loons from their parents, which makes chicks easy pickings for predators.



DOUG TOZER EXAMINING THE CONTENTS OF AN EMPTY COMMON LOON NEST NEAR SUDBURY. PHOTO BY KRISTIN BIANCHINI

- Dispose of trash and fishing line responsibly. Plastics and tackle can entangle and injure loons, and misplaced food scraps may increase nest predators.
- Reduce your carbon footprint. Climate change raises lake temperatures, which can cause heavy metals to accumulate in loons, and extreme precipitation causes runoff, which reduces water clarity and loon hunting success.

Together, we can help ensure everyone has the opportunity to enjoy these fascinating birds in the future, much as I have. Find out more about how you can help at birdscanada.org/loons.

This article was adapted from material in BirdWatch Canada.

Doug Tozer

DID YOU KNOW? THE CANADIAN LAKES LOON SURVEY uses volunteers to assess breeding success of loons? The MLA is interested in adding this to our monitoring efforts. If you have an interest in being a volunteer, please email info@mla.on.ca

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MUSKOKA WATER QUALITY SUMMARY 2022

First, many thanks to our dedicated group of more than 100 volunteer citizen scientists who make the MLA Water Quality program possible. Over the summer of 2022 we took 700 samples at 55 test areas in 18 lake and river sites. The overall health of the Muskoka lakes is good. Some sites in 10 of our 55 test areas have been identified for special vigilance and one area of concern requires followup action.

MLA testing uses three colours to grade water quality: Green is [generally accepted as] good, while red [is based on] represents action triggers established by the District Municipality of

Muskoka, the Simcoe Muskoka Department Health Unit, and respected researchers in the areas of calcium decline and salt contamination. Yellow is set midway between green and red to provide an early warning of undesirable conditions, and to enable focussed monitoring and early response.

Summarizing water quality results by lake shows [Table 1] that Lake Joseph's six areas are all Green, Lake Rosseau has one yellow area out of its 13 areas, Lake Muskoka has 4 yellow and one red out its 19 areas, and Affiliate/River areas have six yellow areas out of 16 areas.

TABLE 1: WATER QUALITY RATINGS BY LAKE

LAKE AREA / RATING	GREEN	YELLOW	RED
JOSEPH	6	0	0
ROSSEAU	12	1	0
MUSKOKA	14	4	1
AFFILIATES & RIVERS	10	6	0

Table 2 shows the water quality parameter of concern for site rated yellow or red. The Red site [Willow Beach] is due to an increasing trend in phosphorus over five years. Six of the yellow sites were due to elevated bacteria readings [Beaumaris, Bruce Lake, Indian River, Minett, Muskoka River and Willow Beach].

One yellow site had elevated salt content [Muskoka Bay]. Five yellow sites reported algae blooms [Bala Bay, Boyd Bay, Brandy Lake, Leonard Lake and Silver Lake PC]. District lead causation studies are in progress for these areas.

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Congratulations to this year's Photo Contest Winners! We received over 100 entries and were impressed by the quality of the submissions. The selection wasn't easy, but a panel of judges agreed that the following pictures best reflected their respective categories. The first-place winners of each category will receive an 18"x24" plaque mounted print of their photo courtesy of Aben Graphics, which will be available for pickup at the MLA Office this summer. For those who didn't win first place, look for your photos in our publications!

MUSKOKA WILDLIFE



Nicole Lemelin



Nicole Lemelin

NATURALLY BEAUTIFUL SHORELINES



James Gjesing



Donna McNeely



Susan Crossett



YEARBOOK COVER



Eric Smith



Susan Crossett



Maureen Crabbe

HONOURABLE MENTION



Nicole Lemelin



Nicole Lemelin



James Gjesing



William Kibblewhite

2023 Entries may be submitted by MLA members and their families in the categories of:

FAMILY & FRIENDS Quiet times on the dock, boisterous play, cruising the lakes... show us how you and the people you love use the cottage.

MUSKOKA LIFE Wildlife, gorgeous sunsets, recreation, solitude, nature. Show us what life in Muskoka means to you!

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PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS 2022

MUSKOKA WATER QUALITY SUMMARY 2022 *continued from page 5*


TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF MUSKOKA AREAS EXCEEDING QUALITY CRITERIA

AREA / MEASURE	PHOSPHORUS	BACTERIA	ALGAE	SALT
BALA BAY				
BOYD BAY				
BEAUMARIS				
BRANDY LAKE				
BRUCE LAKE				
INDIAN RIVER				
LEONARD LAKE				
MINETT				
MUSKOKA BAY				
MUSKOKA RIVER				
SILVER LAKE PC				
WILLOW BEACH				




Full details of the 2022 water quality tests by area are available on the MLA website. Maps and individual location results are available in the report appendices.

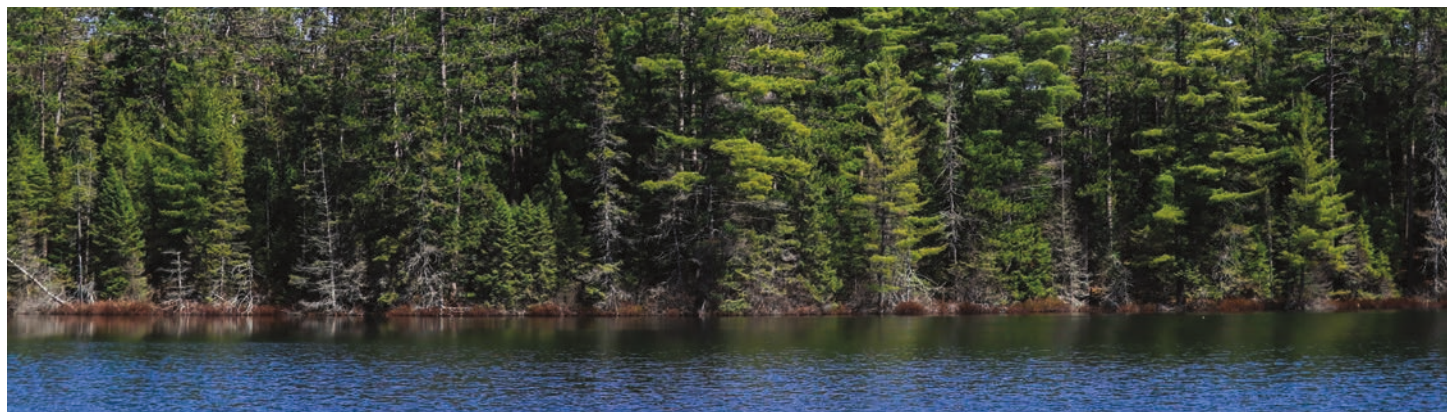
Note to Readers:

This summary is provided for informational and educational purposes. Information contained in this summary is derived in part from third-party sources and the MLA takes no responsibility for the accuracy, currency, reliability and correctness of any such information.



Boating is a popular pastime in Ontario, providing a chance to enjoy the great outdoors and spend time with friends and family. Enjoying our lakes and rivers is a lot of fun but also requires every boater to be safe and responsible. For everyone's sake, Be #WakeAware. www.bewakeaware.com



DO YOU KNOW THE RULES?

Except when you launch a water skier or kite flyer and are moving directly away from shore, a vessel in Muskoka must limit its speed to 9 KMH within 30 (about half the length of a hockey rink) of the shore, or a dock, pier, floating platform or other vessel.

The MLA is working with Safe Quiet Lakes (SQL) to promote safe boating and the 'rules of the road'. A major outcome is a co-branded NO WAKE sign.

The signs are ready now. To get one, contact the office at info@mla.on.ca, or call 705-765-5723.

A background image for Coulson Bros. Arboriculture showing a serene lakeside scene with tall trees, a path, and a small boat on the water.

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Mark your Calendars for the MUSKOKA LAKES ASSOCIATION 129TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Reconnect with the MLA

Muskoka Discovery Centre
275 Steamship Bay Road, Gravenhurst
Thursday July 20th, 2023
4:30 – 7pm

Join the Directors and members for:
COCKTAILS AND CONNECTIONS

A short AGM meeting will be followed by a cocktail hour allowing us to reconnect with members and the board plus get a sneak peak at the changes to the Muskoka Discovery Centre.

All members are welcome.

Members are encouraged to invite a non-member to the AGM.

Please RSVP by email info@mla.on.ca or by telephone 705 765-5723

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION WHICH WILL BE HELD AT THE ABOVE NOTED TIME AND PLACE BY DIRECTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MUSKOKA LAKES ASSOCIATION.

KEN PEARCE, SECRETARY





Ah spring! The ice is out, the water's up and Muskoka is going green again, growing after its long winter hibernation. We're growing too, and we need your help to reach our goal of doubling MLA membership in just five years. Just one new member from each current member will do it. So, reach out to friends and neighbours and help us bring new members to the MLA. Just call the office with a name and contact info and we'll do the rest.



HELP US ACHIEVE OUR MEMBERSHIP GOAL!
REFER A FRIEND AND BECOME AN MLA AMBASSADOR

DETAILS, TOOLS & SIGN UP
Contact us at newmembers@mla.on.ca
or by phone 705.765.5723

New Members

Please welcome the following as new members of the MLA!
From February 9, 2023 to May 1, 2023

AVANTE SECURITY INC.
Robert DeFlece
Beth BOYD
Alan BRENCHLEY
Sandra CARRINGTON

Bob CHANT
S R DENNIS
Tori HARPER
Doris HEINRICHS
David MCKILLOP

Jonathan POPPER
Mariana RAK
Robert ROSE
Sheila SHARP
SMITH FAMILY

Kim MARSH SNARE
Daniel STERN
Peter SULCS
Jennifer
SULLIVAN WILLMOT

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Jack TRAIN
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130th Annual MLA AQUATIC REGATTA

SATURDAY, AUGUST 5TH
2023

Hosted by the
MUSKOKA LAKES GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB
130TH ANNUAL



Registration OPENS at 8:00 am

Get your spot on the dock, get warmed up, register, receive your wrist bands and get your boat number
9:30 Opening Remarks Then Ready Set Go!

Local's Corner

Muskoka's Libraries

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE IN MUSKOKA'S LIBRARIES



Have you ever dropped in to one of the many libraries sprinkled throughout Muskoka? If you are a full time resident here, you probably have, but seasonal residents might be surprised at all the facilities and programs the libraries offer.

We recently spent a day in the Bracebridge library, hiding from construction at our cottage. The library has just delivered a new strategic plan for 2023 to 2026 with a mission to enrich, empower and inspire the community. Because it's a heritage building, it just doesn't have the facilities and systems needed today, so it will move from its present location, at 94 Manitoba St., to the Muskoka Lumber Community Centre in 2024. The library offers programs for all ages, special events like trivia nights, and even has a borrowing program that includes games as well as a variety of baking pans in various sizes and shape. And if your internet service is spotty or non-existent, there is no better place to go than the library. Need some copying done? Ditto!



There are also libraries in Bala, Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Port Carling, Rosseau, Parry Sound, and MacTier, as well as libraries serving Georgian Bay communities, Baysville and Dwight. Not all the libraries have the same hours, and the smaller libraries are usually only open several days a week.

Cathie Mostowyk



Contact Us

Muskoka Lakes Association, Box 298, 65 Joseph Street, Port Carling, ON P0B 1J0
P 705-765-5723 | F 705-765-3203 | E info@mla.on.ca | W www.mla.on.ca