



# Captain Otty's Log

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## President's Message

**W**OW! What a summer! Canoeing by the light of the full moon, Capt'n Otty was reminded that Otty Lake is the best place in the world to live, and he and Mrs. Otty would like it to remain so. The talk around the lake this summer has been low water levels, algae and weeds. We all want a clean healthy lake, fun for swimming, boating, tubing and water skiing. Experts tell us to get rid of the algae and weeds by starving the lake of phosphorus. How do you do that? Check the labels on your cleaning products and fertilizers. Promote the growth of a vegetated shoreline, which will absorb phosphates so they don't reach the lake and feed the weeds. Consider avoiding fertilizers. Capt'n Otty suggests *"Don't make the lake a phosphate ghetto; let your lawn become a meadow."* Bad poetry, but not a bad idea. The OLA Environment Committee is conducting more water testing, and evaluating ideas for improving lake quality. Got some thoughts? Let us know! *(More on the following pages.)*

It has been a great summer for activities. We had a good turnout at the AGM, with excellent presentations, displays, and door prizes! See below for articles on the BioBlitz and Septic Savvy Workshop. Again this summer Otty Lakers got together for a picnic at Maple Glen,



Photo: Paul Sturmey

with fun for all ages, including games, nature walk, and BBQ. We had hoped to have a flotilla with prizes for the best decorated boat, but only one boat showed up. *It can only get bigger next year, folks!*

We have several activities planned for 2012/13, including attending the Lake Links program in October at the Perth Civitan. See elsewhere in this newsletter and watch for future notices for info on the ongoing Shoreline Planting Program, and other activities.

Thanks to those who have paid your 2012 dues. If you haven't paid, please support the work of the OLA by sending your cheque for \$20 to:

**Otty Lake Association  
Box 20122, Perth Mews Mall  
Perth, ON  
K7H 3M6**

If you have an interesting topic for an article in the Newsletter but need help writing it up, send your notes to the Log Editor, Don Beattie, who will happily ghost write it for you. Perhaps you have some interesting stories about your family's history on the lake, or experiences of your own with local wildlife. Historical

*Continued overleaf*

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photos with captions or a write-up are a welcome addition to the website. And we are still accepting submissions for our next calendar, so send us photos of wildlife and human activities on and around the lake.

If you have suggestions or comments on OLA plans, activities or priorities, or wish to get involved with OLA activities, visit us at <http://www.ottylakeassociation.ca/>, click on "contact us", and email us your thoughts. You can direct your email to a particular Board member or to the Board in general.

Have a great autumn! I'll see you around the lake, enjoying the fall colours and the migrating flocks of geese, ducks and seasonal cottagers.

*Robert Cosh*

## Hot Times at 2012 AGM

THE OLA ANNUAL general meeting was held on Saturday 14 July at the Lions Hall in Perth. Despite the shockingly hot weather, attendance was high. Before the formal meeting began, participants renewed acquaintance, and checked out displays by BBD&E Fire Department, the OPP, Mississippi Rideau Septic Office, Tay Valley Township, Drummond/ North Elmsley Township, and the RVCA Shoreline Naturalization Program. Murray Hunt prepared an Otty Lake water quality display, and the OLA Lake Plan Action Committee set up tables and displays for drinking water testing bottles, the Turtle Workshop, the



*Derek Smith and Eric Kohlsmith discussing the finer points of septic tanks*

OLA 2014 calendar, and the shoreline planting display (with plants for sale). Superb snacks were organized by Judith George-Landles and Bill Landles.

The meeting began at 9:30. President Robert Cosh said that in 2011-12 the biggest concern expressed by Otty Lakers was the increase in algae, which he said was caused by nutrients in run-off.

Karen Hunt reported on some of the activities since last year's AGM, including the Summer Information Package, Pitch-In, shoreline planting, the Turtle Workshop, and the shoreline calendar.

Karen conducted elections for the OLA board. Kathy Kari, Roger Nuttall (who filled a Board vacancy on an interim basis since the last AGM), and Gail Read were accepted by acclamation. The continuing Board members are Phil Anderson, Darlene Bishop, Don Beattie, David

Bell, Robert Cosh, Chris Harrison, Karen Hunt, Murray Hunt, Wally Robins, David Reesor, Anne Scotton, and Rick Stojak.

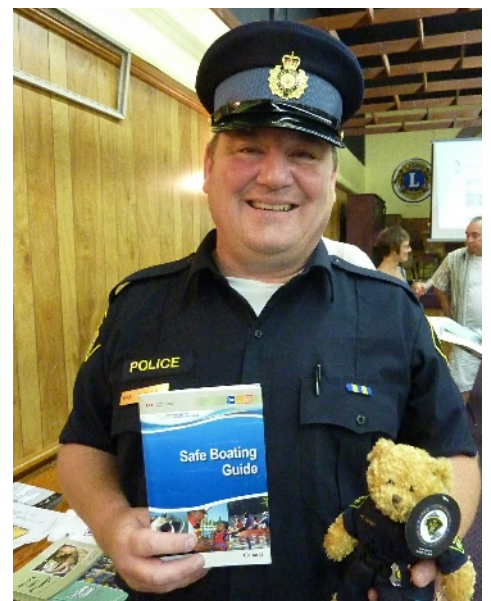
Keith Kerr, Reeve of Tay Valley Township, gave an update about TVT, including: New CAO Malcolm Morris, planning for the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016, and Neil Fennell joining the Police Services Board.

Ray Scissons, Councillor in Drummond/North Elmsley Township, gave a D/NE update, including: 55 septic re-inspections remaining on Otty Lake, new Clerk Cindy Halcrow, and new Planner Karl Grenke.

Noelle Reeve, TVT Planner, addressed the effects of land use on



*Skyla vanden Hoek presenting door prizes*



*Dave Blair, OPP Community Service Officer, with boating regulations and a fund-raising Special Olympics bear*



water quality, stressing the need for shoreline buffer zones instead of mown lawns extending to the water's edge, and septic re-inspections. She reminded TVT residents to call her office when planning renovations.

Paul Cameron from BBD&E Fire Department outlined the fire permit system, pointing out that if there is a fire ban, an announcement will be in the telephone greeting when you call to activate your permit. He spoke about smoke detectors, which are mandatory and should be checked twice per year and replaced after ten years.

Wally Robins, Chair of the Environment Committee, gave an update on Otty fishing. The number of bass held steady this year, based on his experience on the lake. He stressed that the population is threatened by illegal fishing during spawning and by keeping bass heavier than one pound. He said there are lots of pan fish in Otty Lake, and that they are excellent eating. He related the good news that for 15-20 years there has been an Otty fishing contest followed by a fish fry, but that this year the group bought their fish rather than catching them on the lake.

Lake Steward Murray Hunt reported that most of 28 samples of E.coli bacterial counts were 2 or less (the maximum measured was 12), well below the provincial level of 100 for swimming. The OLA is funding more sampling.

Although phosphorus levels have remained steady, algae appear to have increased. The algae are not harmful, but are annoying. Murray stated that because septic systems do not trap nutrients, only a vegetated shoreline buffer can stop nutrients from entering the lake. The Environment Committee is looking into the algae matter.

Sixteen door prizes were kindly provided by TVT and D/NE townships, and by the OLA. Caduceon Environmental Laboratories, who have analyzed Otty water samples for many years, donated a \$270. well-testing kit, won by Irene Waller.

# Otty Lake Water Quality

*By the OLA Environment Committee*

**G**OOD WATER QUALITY is essential to our use and enjoyment of Otty Lake. We all want a clean lake environment and the good fishing, boating, swimming, birding and other benefits that come with it.

We were very concerned to read the Tay River Subwatershed report 2011, published by the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority in March 2012, which classified Otty Lake as having "poor" water quality. In fact, the document says our lake is one of the worst in the Tay Subwatershed system.

We (the OLA Environment Committee) don't think this is the case. We have been sampling and analyzing the lake's chemistry since the early 1970s. This year we have been given an additional budget and we have expanded our sampling activities to more areas of the lake and more water quality parameters. This information will permit us to prepare an update to the Report on the State of the Lake published in 2007. Here are a few of our key findings.

1. Otty Lake does not have a bacteria problem. All of the bacterial (E. coli) tests from around the lake show

that the lake is safe for swimming everywhere. Otty Lake does not have a nutrient problem. The phosphorus and nitrogen concentrations in the lake are within the provincial water quality objectives used by the RVCA and the Ministry of the Environment for mesotrophic lakes.

2. Otty Lake does not have a physical problem. The lake's physical characteristics such as water temperature, clarity, depth to the thermocline and dissolved oxygen content are normal for our type of lake.

3. With the exception of the northern pike population which has been in poor shape for nearly three decades, the overall fishery in Otty Lake is healthy. Both largemouth and smallmouth bass populations contain a variety of year classes. Otty also houses a vibrant panfish population as well as large numbers of resident forage (lake herring, various sucker and other minnow types).

We believe that the RVCA evaluation would have indicated better water quality if additional data was considered. Some of this data is currently available such as our long

data record for E.coli. We have provided this information to the RVCA along with that from our expanded water sampling program and have asked them to reconsider their assessment. Based on what is available to us now, we believe that the water quality in Otty Lake is typical of most of the lakes in the Tay Subwatershed, and does not merit a "poor" rating.

However we must be proactive and make improvements to reduce our impact on lake water quality! We strongly support the septic re-inspection and shoreline planting programs and will work to see them expanded. We are also examining new ways to "starve the lake of phosphorus" and thereby control algal and plant growth. We are continuing our sampling program and will report our findings on a regular basis.

We invite your comments and ideas.

**OLA Environment Committee**

Wally Robins, Derek Smith, Robert Cosh, Murray Hunt, David Reesor, Roger Nuttall



# Captain Otty Day Attracts Hot Competitors

SATURDAY 4 AUGUST dawned bright, hot, and windy. The heat didn't faze the 35 adults and children who turned out for a day of fun, food, and games. Organizer Chris Harrison had arranged traditional summer picnic games, including "Washers" run by Roxanne Polk, and an obstacle course run by Darlene Bishop. David Currie placed first in Washers, closely followed by David Brinkmann and Alex MacLeod.



GLoomis Pro staffer and Otty Lake fishing guru Wally Robins gave young anglers fishing instructions and organized a fishing contest. David Currie won the contest with a 1 1/2 pound largemouth bass.

Roger Nuttall set up the shelter and passed some of his fund of wisdom about plants to kids and adults, including which plants are edible.



For those who preferred not to forage for food, Dave Bell operated the barbecue in a cloud of smoke.

Prizes for the best-decorated boat went to Roxanne Polk, who went home with a \$25.00 gift certificate from Donaldson's Shell gas station and a portable car vacuum cleaner courtesy of Rick Stojak.



*Excellent photos by Murray Hunt and Chris Harrison*







# Another Successful BioBlitz!

**B**IOBLITZ 2012 WAS held 17-18 July at Whispering Pines Scout Camp and the Mica Mine Conservation Area. The BioBlitz was a 24-hour activity that centred on recording every species of flora and fauna that could be identified in 24 consecutive hours, as well as providing education and fun for the participants. 107 participants, including 72 volunteers, experienced 20 activities with expert guides who identified 535 species! A children's program by Foley Mountain Conservation Area staff rounded out the activities.

From headquarters under a large canvas shelter, teams fanned out with scientific experts to examine specific aspects of Otty Lake's wildlife: trees,

Aleta is a commercial artist who has painted at many BioBlitzes and who with her husband has recently published a book of their journals and paintings.

The organization of this complex BioBlitz event was superb.



*Huddle by the lake*

Participants felt very positive about the whole experience, not only the scientific aspect, but also the camaraderie and sense of community. One of the participants wrote "I just am so impressed with how many experts you attracted, and what warmth and passion for nature, and for community, the whole event stimulated in everyone present."

*MNR's Jeff Ward concentrating on a sugar maple leaf*



*RVCA manager Rebecca Whitman entrancing the kids*

plants, insects, fish, invertebrates, butterflies, and birds, asking questions and recording species they found. The activities continued at night, concentrating on the sounds of the night such as the perennially annoying whippoorwill. The species were tallied in a computer database as the results came in, which will allow comparison with the tally of 292 species from BioBlitz 2010 at the other end of Otty Lake.

Some participants encountered Aleta Karstad sitting on the ground near the headquarters, creating a painting of ferns under a sugar maple.



*Waiting to measure a very small fish*

participant wrote "I just danced back to the cottage each day with my new knowledge". Many thanks to Karen Hunt and the BioBlitz Planning Committee for providing leadership in making BioBlitz so successful.

BioBlitz 2012 was supported by Scouts Canada, Rideau Valley Conservations Authority, Centre for Sustainable Watersheds, Community Stewardship Council of Lanark County, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Lanark County Camera Club, the OLA, and many expert volunteers and local field naturalists who guided groups.



*Jeff Skevington & Diane Lepage on the hunt*



# Record Attendance at Septic Savvy Workshop

THE SEPTIC SAVVY workshop attracted 77 participants on 18 August, who spoke with experts to learn what has changed in requirements for their septic systems, what new technologies are available, and what to look for when ensuring that septic systems continue to work well to protect ground water (your well) and surface water (your lake).

Moderator Lynn Preston opened the workshop on a light-hearted note by introducing the speakers as “a Who’s Who in the Septic Field” (get it?).

Speaker Mark Green from Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit then gave the view in the province of Ontario of what led to today’s regulatory status: downloading of provincial responsibilities to municipalities, the Walkerton tragedy, and transfer of regulations to the Ontario Building Code in 2011. Today at Otty Lake, the Tay Valley and Drummond/North Elmsley townships are responsible for septic



*Registrants appear to be bowing to Gail Read and Evelyn Dore at registration*

systems using standards in the Building Code. Our local Health Unit (healthunit.ca) and organizations such as Well Aware (wellaware.ca) provide educational material for landowners.


For a local perspective, Eric Kohlsmith from Mississippi-Rideau Septic System Office told the audience about changes to septic re-inspections at Otty Lake, which he has carried out for both Otty Lake townships since 2009. In 2011, 27% of Tay Valley re-inspections

revealed no problems, most required some work and only 3% required system replacement. Eric now provides a carbon copy of his report to the landowner when he inspects the system, so the landowner instantly knows the result and whether she/he needs to take any remedial action. In Tay Valley in 2011, 149 remedial actions were identified on re-inspection. The commonest remedial actions required were pumping the septic tank or holding tank, dealing with corrosion, and repairing tank baffles. Eric recommends opening the tank annually and pumping it every 3-5 years.

Noelle Reeve, Planner at Tay Valley Township, described how mandatory septic re-inspection programs began in Tay Valley Township. Since 2001, the township has operated voluntary re-inspections at no cost to landowners. In 2011 the Building Code was changed to make re-inspections mandatory in areas providing source water to municipalities, and at Lake Simcoe. For other areas, including Otty Lake, the municipalities were permitted to require mandatory re-inspections at their discretion. Tay Valley continues voluntary re-inspections, but at seven lakes, including Otty, re-inspection is mandatory. By the end of 2013, Tay Valley expects to have re-inspected all 20 remaining septic systems at Otty Lake. For other townships considering how to implement mandatory re-inspections, Noelle provided copies of Tay Valley’s re-inspection bylaw.

Noelle noted that financial assistance to landowners who are required to upgrade or replace their septic systems may be available from Lanark County, CMHC, and the Rideau Valley Rural Clean Water Program.

Speaker Terry Davidson, Director of the Ottawa Septic System Office, pointed out that septic systems are now called “on-site waste water treatment systems” by those in the know. He



## Lake Links 2012

### How Do We Build Resiliency in Our Lakes?

Are you wondering what changes we will see in Eastern Ontario lakes due to climate change? Are you interested in how we as a community can build resiliency in our lakes as climate continues to change?

**When:** Saturday 20 Oct 2012, 9:00 – 3:30  
**Where:** Perth Civitan Hall, 6787 County Road 43, Perth  
**Cost:** \$12/person, includes lunch & refreshments  
(bring a non-perishable item for the Perth Food Bank)

**Topics include provincial perspective on dealing with climate change, adaptation strategy, invasive species, vegetation changes, weather events, water levels, and water quality.**

**To register:** Centre for Sustainable Watersheds  
info@watersheds.ca or 613-272-5136

Since 2002, Lake Links has been an opportunity for representatives of lake associations and other Eastern Ontario volunteer groups to come together with government and non-government agencies to listen to speakers, share information, and discuss lake and river issues that matter most to Eastern Ontario communities



***Terry Davidson getting up close and personal with an effluent filter***

described the range of treatment systems, in which Class 4 includes the common septic tank and leaching bed. In your Class 4 traditional system, the tank does only 15-20% of the treatment, whereas the leaching bed does 80-85%. The action in the leaching bed occurs below the distribution pipes, at the boundary between the stone surrounding the pipes and the sand below. Since 2006, effluent filters, which can be retrofitted, are required in Class 4 systems to protect the leaching bed. Terry mentioned that if a resident is undergoing chemotherapy, the toilet waste may kill the action in the tank, so an effluent filter is essential.

Terry described the “sludge judge” that Eric uses when measuring whether a tank needs pumping. When sludge at the bottom of the tank and scum at the top reach 30% of total tank capacity, the pumper needs to be called. However, it’s not good practice to have the tank pumped too often because the tank needs about two years to start operating efficiently.

The septic system affects both the surface water and the ground water. Although most people know that phosphorus is harmful to surface water, they may not be aware that nitrogen threatens ground water. Tertiary systems decrease nitrogen levels in effluent.

Terry gave several handy tips, including how to check whether your toilet is slowly leaking. He puts a few drops of food colouring in the toilet tank: if it disperses quickly, the flapper valve is leaking. He also recommended being present when your septic tank is being pumped; the pumpers are knowledgeable and you can learn a lot from them.

He also informed the audience that they need to contact the township if they add a bedroom, add a plumbing fixture, or increase the area of their residence by more than 15%, all of which add to the load on the septic system.

A question was asked about the effect of “shocking” a well with bleach, which involves dumping bleach into the well and leaving it for 24 hours, then flushing out the bleach. Terry said the flushing should be done using the garden hose onto the ground, not into the septic system.

Terry also recommends against using anti-microbial soaps. Although phosphates are not present in most soaps, the anti-microbial soaps may contain ammonia, which threatens ground water.

Barb King, Executive Director of the Centre for Sustainable Watersheds,



***Helena Draper showing a model of a tertiary treatment tank***

spoke briefly about tertiary treatment equipment that is allowed under the building code (other systems may be approved on a case-by-case basis). These systems give effluent quality ten times better than traditional leaching beds. They may be useful for:

- Cottage conversion to permanent homes
- Locations near water
- Sites with shallow soil or high water table levels
- Sites with clay soil
- Sloping sites
- Small lots.

Representatives from The Septic Store, Waterloo Biofilter, and Ecoflow were present to discuss their equipment and provide documentation.

Septic Savvy was sponsored by Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority, Otty Lake Association, Pike Lake Community Association, Tay Valley Township, and the Lake Networking Group.

### **Get the Latest News From Your OLA Website**

**R**ICK STOJAK, OUR Webmaster, keeps the site up-to-date with items that arise between issues of the Log. Please visit the site to find information about:

- Photos of events and life at the lake
- Water levels and water quality measurements
- Otty Lake Management Plan
- Contact information for OLA board members and counsellors
- Minutes of AGMs
- OLA constitution
- Lost and found
- Lake and local events
- Other environmental issues
- Otty Lake history archives
- Captain Otty’s Log issues since Nov 2006 (well worth reading)

Here’s the link:  
<http://www.ottylakeassociation.ca>  
 New e-mail address:  
[ola@ottylakeassociation.ca](mailto:ola@ottylakeassociation.ca)