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CAPTAIN OTTY'S LOG

Newsletter of the Otty Lake Association

OCTOBER 1997

***President*: Lorne Gold (1905 Illinois Ave., Ottawa K1H 6W5)**
***Secretary*: Leslie Del Grande (RR #5, Perth , Ont K7H 3C7)**

Food for Thought

Lorne Gold

When does a lake need a lung transplant? A short article in the October issue of *Cottage Life* describes the action taken by a lake association near Owen Sound when decreasing fish population and Provincial testing showed that increased algae caused by pollution was choking the oxygen supply for the lake.

The first cottages were built on this lake about fifty years ago and now there are more than 300. So much dead vegetation, algae and runoff from shoreline development have collected on the lake bottom that the lake can no longer provide enough oxygen to rot it away; it runs out of oxygen by late summer.

The lake association decided to install a "lake lung" recently developed from an idea by Andy Gemza, who is in charge of lake monitoring and restoring for the Ministry of Environment & Energy. It pumps oxygen into the lower waters of the lake, restoring the natural biological balance. The lung has been used successfully in two Southern Ontario lakes. The only problem is that it costs $185,000 to install and $5,000 a year to operate and maintain. But this is only one part of the solution. Property owners on the lake are being asked to replace or fix improperly functioning systems and adopt good environmental practices in the use of their property.

Regular measurements of the fecal count for Otty Lake over the past 24 years provide evidence of a slow degradation in the quality of our lake water. The flow of water through the lake is very low and consequently the cold, deeper water is naturally low in oxygen. In spite of this, the secchi disc readings indicate that the clarity of our lake is still in the upper 25% for lakes in Eastern Ontario.

There are now more than 400 developed properties on the lake, of which about one-third are permanent residents. We appear to be fortunate in having an early warning of the consequences of the lake shore development. We can slow down and hopefully meet the provincial health standards. Every property owner should have an approved and properly functioning system; old and deteriorated systems should be replaced.

Taking responsibility for our water quality is our first line of defence. A properly performing waste disposal system, using ground cover that does not need fertilizer, placing a natural buffer zone at the lake shore, are examples of actions that all can take that would be better than a $185,000 restoration project.

MORE ON THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN OTTY

Dick Atkinson

On a shelf of the Public Records Office in Kew (UK) are reference books entitled "Navy List" In the March 1816 list is entry #415 Otty, Allan seniority 1 July 1815 (Commander)". The entry was repeated in 1816 but in 1817 the name was spelled Allen. The entry provided no further information until 1854, when he was shown as "reserved, half pay." He appeared as "Commander, active" in the Sept 1854 Navy List and as "Captain, retired" in the December list. In 1855, his entry indicated that he was entitled to wear medals and that he was either retired or unfit for active service. Under "retired Captains" the following year, his seniority dates are shown as "Commander, 1 Jul 1815" and "Captain 13 Aug 1854."

OTTY LAKE PARK *Catherine Mahoney*

This property, originally known as Connaught Hotel, was owned by a Mrs Devlin and later acquired around 1918 by Dr E. C. Consitt, Captain Tom Consitt, Sylvester O'Donnell and Mr Brocklebank. Some buildings were erected during their ownership and it became the social and recreational spot to boat, dance, fish and swim. It was then taken over for back taxes by B. J. Cavanagh, brother-in-law of Dr Consitt. The story goes that Mr Cavanagh subsequently lost the property in a poker game to Ernest A. Dowsett. He and his wife Aileen (Dr Consitt's daughter and Mr Cavanagh's niece) continued the social events at the park, where there were guest cabins, a snack bar and gas facilities for the boats. Many big name bands entertained well attended dances in the pavilion by the water. In 1942, Otty Lake Park was auctioned off for $3,000 to the Zionists Camp Association and since then has been a summer camp for Jewish children. (*Catherine [Dowsett] Mahoney is the granddaughter of Dr E. C. Consitt*).

RESPECTING YOUR ALDERS

Mother Nature knows what she's doing. For example, take that unassuming band of natural vegetation along our lakes and rivers. It's probably a spongy mixture of scrub alder, bulrush, sedge, cattail, pickerel weed and something that looks like mud. It's hard to believe that this scruffy-looking shoreline area is known as the **Ribbon of Life** and is as essential to the health of the lake as your kidneys are to you.

This water shoreline area is a teeming jungle with many natural functions. Aquatic plants are right at home here. Insects, amphibians, fish, birds and mammals move in with the plants. These rich areas are breeding grounds, nurseries, food sources, hiding places and hunting grounds. They are a buffer against waves, winds and erosion. They filter nutrients washing in off the land. They are small pieces of ecological heaven.

Unfortunately, the delicate **Ribbon** often takes a beating from shoreline owners by filling, cutting and hardening of the shore. Clearly, these old-fashioned practices have let us down because the three most desirable things are at risk: clean water, varied wildlife and stable shorelines.

That doesn't mean that we can't use and enjoy the lake or river. It just means that we should take a more light-handed approach to the use of our own private shoreline properties.

It's time to start respecting your alders. What's required is a little more hands-off experience. Leave the natural vegetation along the shore alone - both in the water and on the land. Avoid using fertilizers and insecticides near the water. Watch the wake from your boat and avoid erosion along the waterway. Check that your septic system is up to standard. Build a floating dock or a wharf on metal stilts which don't interrupt the ribbon. Remember that wildflowers - which many used to call weeds - in your lawn are proof of a diverse, robust and poison-free ecosystem in action.

So use your hammock and let Mother Nature do her job. The payoff is that you can expect better recreation, better water quality, healthier waterways and a stable, vibrant **Ribbon of Life**. One day your kids will thank you. (*Rideau Valley Conservation Authority*)

FIREFIGHTERS RESPONSE

Flashing green lights and green licence plate stickers identify firefighters who respond to fires or other emergencies in their personal vehicles. The stickers are green with a white Maltese Cross, the symbol for volunteer firefighters.

THREE BAY ROAD - OFF ELM GROVE ROAD *Gus Quattrocchi*

Around 1943, Mr Joseph Quattrocchi Sr was looking for a lake property for the family to put a cottage on. A couple of spots were checked out and the lot we now have was purchased from Mr Harry Hughes who was pasturing cattle on this part of his land. The roadway was the same as it is now - except it curved steeply up the hill and over and down to the existing roadway. At that time, Mel McDougal of Canadian Tire (now Jack Lynn's), Les Smallwood of Perth Bottling Works (now Mr Taylor's) had cottages there. Lloyd Kirkham's was then purchased by Harry Haley of Ottawa, and a couple of other lots existed along the next bay.

In 1944, the Quattrocchis built the existing cottage and a stone wall to protect the shoreline from erosion. For the first few years all the cottagers here used wood stoves for cooking and lamps of various kinds for lighting. Lacking the comfort of electricity, the four owners held a meeting, hired Richard McVeety to put in poles, string lines to the cottages and wire them up. Finally around 1947, we all had the convenience of electricity in a private line. Some years later it was taken over by Ontario Hydro to the convenience of all cottagers.

A lot of visitors did not like the hill, so again permission was obtained to build around it. Jimmy DiCola used dynamite to move a lot of rock for the road bed, and all the owners worked hard to now be able to circle the hill. Finally, after putting some fill over the rocks, Gus Quattrocchi had the honour of being the first to drive over the road, as he had been using it to haul gravel. With the arrival of the new road, Mr Quattrocchi was able to purchase a little more land and square off his lot. Over the years Quattrocchis added much fill to raise the road along the lake as it usually flooded every spring. Today, the cottagers on the road (including four permanent residents), cooperate in paying $35 a year to maintain the road.

A Murder of Crows

Cathy Kari

Crows are members of the Corvidae family, along with ravens, jays, magpies and nutcrackers. It has been said that if a person can recognize only three birds, the crow will be one of them. Crows and ravens have been held sacred by almost all native peoples of the Americas. They were often thought to be messengers between the living and spirit world and they are known for their mimicry and range of vocalisation, their mischievous nature and their intelligence. Crows often mate for life and juveniles often help their parents raise new young for two or three years before they mate and raise their own families. Crows will often return to the same nest year after year. The lifespan of a crow is about twenty years.

Birds do not have a great reputation for intelligence. The term "birdbrained" is not used as a compliment! There is evidence though that birds' intelligence is comparable to that of mammals and that crows are one of the most intelligent birds. An experiment was conducted at Moscow University. A crow was shown a number of caps with some food hidden under the first cap. The crow discovered the food by accident and then the experiment was re-run with the food placed under the second cap, and after the food was found the next run had the food under the third cap and so on. Apparently the crow learned to predict where the food would be and thereby demonstrated that it could grasp the concept of an increase in number. In another instance wildlife photographers set up a blind to study crows and tried to fool them by having two people enter the blind but only one person leave. The crows were not fooled - they knew someone was left inside the blind. Crows have also demonstrated behaviour such as trying to protect injured family members and playing with toys such as shiny pieces of metal and hiding them to protect them for future use.

A group of crows is called a murder. In the Fall crows flock together into truly large groups called roosts. The roosts are made up of birds that have migrated from the north combined with local birds. Fairly small roosts can be found in coastal areas of the New England states but further south roosts of tens of thousands of birds have been documented. One reason crows congregate together probably has to do with protection, but this habit has not always proved to be to their benefit. Dynamite bombs have been used to kill thousands of birds at once and others have been shot or poisoned. To me this is a murder of crows.

NEW BIRD FOR OTTY LAKE: Double-Crested Cormorant

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Five years ago the Association had a Science & Health Committee. This was reestablished as the Environmental & Health Committee. Its members are Glen Bishop, Bob Black, Lorne Gold (chair), Huh Henderson, Alan MacMillan, Jim Montgomery, Wally Robins and Bill Schriever.

The committee held its first meeting in the latter half of August. It has undertaken two main tasks. One is to establish a good understanding of the flow of water through the lake and what controls it. This is required for a proper understanding of what affects the quality of our lake water and how we can maintain a healthy lake.

The second is to determine the best way to test the performance of a septic system. Bill Schriever gives a progress report on this task in this Newsletter. When we know the best way to check systems, we will be setting up a volunteer pilot project to see how effective it would be for Otty Lake.

This is an election year. Amalgamation of townships will take place also. North Elmsley Township is to amalgamate with Drummond, and North Burgess with Bathurst and South Sherbrooke. The old townships will be called wards and each will have two elected members on the new Council. You are urged to take the opportunity to vote and check your cottage for the winter at the same time. The future of Otty Lake depends on our wise choice for the greatly enlarged township areas. Once amalgamation is complete, there will probably be a period of uncertainty for the lake shore property owners as By-law and policies are made uniform for the wards in each township. The Board will be following this activity closely.

How to Save Your Septic System

Bill Schriever

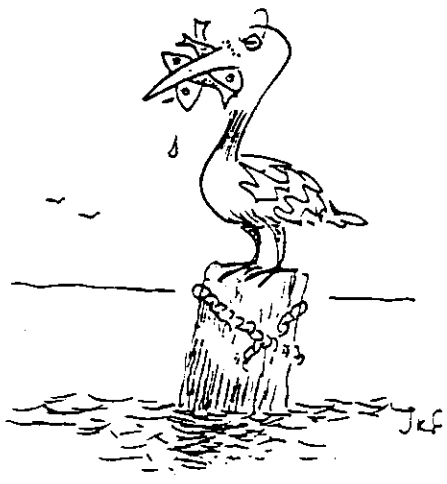
As we have reported before, our water sampling program has shown that the faecal counts in Otty Lake have increased significantly over the last 25 years. Although there has been a downward fluctuation in the last three years to roughly the level of the mid-eighties, it is too early to view this as a permanent downward trend.

We should above all be concerned over the increased "loading' of the lake by population growth and the conversion of summer cottages to year-round homes. Aging septic systems, causing leakage of effluent into the lake, are also an important factor.

To detect leakage into the lake, we had hoped to be able to use a tracer dye which would allow us to determine such leakage by finding a change in the colour of the water along the shore. Dick Atkinson and Bill Schriever carried out five experiments with dye powder in August 1997. In three experiments, the dye was introduced into septic tanks with tile beds 45, 72 and 89 feet from the lake. Samples were observed up to 48 hours after the start of the test, but no dye was discernible in the water along the shore. In the last two tests, the dye was poured into holes in the ground. In the case of a hole 15 feet from the lake, no change ion colour was detected in a series of water samples over the next 24 hours. Only in the last test, with the hole very close (approx. 1 ft) from the lake was discoloured water detected in the lake. We must conclude that the dye testing method is effective only in identifying gross pollution and cannot be used in detecting marginal or moderately defective systems.

The best solution to identify a sub-standard septic system, as research indicates, is the periodic pumping of the septic tank, combined with an inspection of the tank and the surface of the tile bed. It is emphasized that such pumping and inspection should be undertaken only by s skilled contractor. This is partly because of the oxygenless atmosphere and the presence of hamful gases in a septic tank.

For contractors, see the yellow pages under "Septic Tanks - Cleaning."



MEMBERSHIP

Dick Atkinson

The labels for this mailing were prepared as of October 1st. If you still have the envelope that this newsletter came in, you can check the label for the following: The upper right corner has a 5 digit number - the first 2 are the area number. The next is a route number or a zero if there is no route in your area. The last 2 digits are the residence number as shown on the June 1997 lake map. The year, 1997 or 1998, indicates that your fee has been received. If no year is shown, your fee has not been received, and you should find a note enclosed with your newsletter. The returns from a couple of Counselors have been delayed, so please disregard the note if you paid your fee to the Counselor this summer.

If you change your **mailing address**, please be sure to let me know so you will receive all your newsletters. Thank you for supporting the Association.

Many thanks to the Counselors who give freely of their time to deliver the information packages, and refer any questions to the Board. It's interesting to know that 23% pay their fees through the Counselor while the remainder send their fee by mail. A question asked at the AGM - What percent of Seasonal vs Permanent residents paid fees? The answer for the year 1996: Seasonal 81% Permanent 61% I'll run the data again at the end of 1997 and let you know.

We will ascertain the new signpost numbers (Emergency/911) as fees are paid next year, so that they can be added to the map. The signs are in place in N. Elmsley , but as of October 1, not in N. Burgess.

My apologies for the rush at the door for the AGM in July (over 130 attended). We will compensate for this next year.

WATER LEVELS - LOW, BUT NO RECORD
Dave Code

Few topics can excite the interest of lake residents more than the water level of their lake. It is often too high for some and too low for others. Here are a couple of facts:

1. Otty Lake levels were somewhat low this past summer, judging by the pattern of the last 15-20 years. But in the perspective of the last 50-60 years, they were not at all unusual.

2. No active steps were taken last summer by the Otty Lake Association, such as beaver dam removal, that would pull the levels down. The 1997 lake level was determined by Mother Nature, mainly through low rainfall in June and July accompanied by evaporation.

Some of us remember our lake in the 1930s and 1940s, when the water was clear and so clean that we could drink it without treatment. Of course, there were no beaver then, no blockages in Jebb's Creek, and the lake had a much smaller population. By the 1970s all that had changed; beaver had moved in and were causing severe flooding in some places; a concrete dam was holding the lake at artificial levels; and a swelling population was contributing to a pollution problem. In 1971 the Otty Lake Association was formed in order to combat this pollution. By then it was unthinkable to drink the water, and residents were noticing the algae growth in the water and a slimy brown scum on the rocks.

Bacterial pollution can be easily measured and since 1971 the OLA has monitored 32 testing stations at regular intervals. The results have been discouraging, in spite of many efforts to educate lake residents and to induce governments to enforce stricter standards, especially regarding sewage disposal. If we really want our lake to survive the pressures caused by heavy development and careless use, there are two courses of action that must be followed. One is to get really serious about enforcing the standards of development and land use, especially the 100 foot setback of all sewage systems, without delay. The second is to implement a healthy water regime for the lake, as recommended for us in 1980 by many persons including officials of the Ministry of Natural resources. The advice is to stop maintaining an artificial lake level, to let Otty rise and fall, to allow the shoreline to bake in the sun during the warm weather, to stop the spread of unwelcome vegetation.

In 1979 the *Perth Courier* reported that "Simple manipulation of water levels is proving to be the key to higher water quality and improved fish propagation on White Lake. The lake (had) deteriorated rapidly after a new dam was built on its outlet in 1968"

So in 1968, the OLA began by removing the concrete dam and occasionally clearing logs, beaver dams, castoff junk and other blockages in the creek.

Otty Lake has a slow rate of flow, so it is important a) that we not overload the lake with pollutants such as sewage and garden fertilizers; and b) that we not allow obstructions to the flow of water down Jebb's Creek. For a while, compromises were attempted, to try to meet the convenience of lakeshore residents, such as damming the lake at the July first level and letting it down later in August. But this sort of half measure failed to solve the problem. If we really want a healthy lake, if we care more about Otty Lake than we do for our own convenience, we must get serious about permitting a natural rise and fall in the water level- as it used to be when the water was clean and pure.

Some other thoughts: In 1976, the difference between spring high water and fall low water was 26.5". In 1997, that range was 20" from May to October: +10 on May 11, zero on June 9 and -10 on Thanksgiving. In 1982, it was lower than that in August, just before a bout of heavy rain. Prior to 1965 that would have been very normal.

Did you discover a beach you hadn't seen for years? Did you get the opportunity to repair docks and other facilities that are too deep to reach in June? Did the water seem more clear this summer? Are you willing to put up with a little inconvenience for the sake of the health of Otty Lake?.

The Edges of Things

Last summer, a dignified blue heron made regular visits to our bay and, in his deliberate manner, patrolled for frogs and crayfish and other shallow water delicacies. We watched his stately progress along his beat where the dappled pattern of lily pads gives way to tangle of shrubs and stumps, fallen trees and bulrushes that make the edge of the swamp.

On reaching a log that marks the limit of shallows, he generally perched and preened for a while, lost in contemplation, and then, with half a dozen flaps of his great wings, returned to his starting place to begin again his sedate stalk of the same territory.

Marvellously adapted to collecting their groceries where land and water meet, whether a ponds or a tidal estuary, herons spend most of their time on the edges of things, as do many life forms. There are a number of good reasons why this is so: the different advantages of the worlds on each side of the edge -- escape or shelter on one side, forage or sunlight or visibility on the other; the congregation of plant and animal life; the delivery of nutrients by waves and currents.

Rodents set up housekeeping in the protection of root fences and search for grain in the adjacent fields; foxes in turn hunt for mice along the hedgerows. Barnacles have their meals fetched to them twice daily by the ocean tides.

The characteristics of edges encourage a multitude of life forms to take root, to nest, to browse or prowl, or indeed to live their entire lives there. For the most part, the inhabitants of edges are small creatures which can subsist on what victuals are within their limited range, or breeding colonies taking up temporary residence. The gregarious, large grass-eaters must roam the open plains to secure enough forage, and they seek safety in flight rather than concealment.

Throughout the globe, the most distinctive and important edge is the boundary between land and sea, for few places have more abundant life than coasts. Washed by tides ranging from a few centimetres to 20 metres or more, the margins of the continents and islands are rich in biota adapted to this environment. Here there is often no sharp delineation; the coastal edge is transitional between the landward zone of dunes and beaches and where the foreshore drops off to deep water. Shorebirds rummage along the strand, crustaceans make their homes in the intertidal zone, seals and their relatives haul out on rocks and sand.

By the hundreds of thousands, breeding sea birds colonize the tiered edges of high, rugged sea cliffs in areas where ocean currents favour the abundance of marine life. Even though eggs and chicks are exploited by marauding skuas and other predatory gulls, the protection from four-footed predators and the rich source of food in the adjacent waters make the interface between land and sea a preferred habitat.

In the North, the tide creates cracks parallel to the shore between the landfast ice and the solid pack. Prowling polar bears reconnoitre these leads for seals which bear their pups in dens alongside the openings.

The edges of pastures and tilled fields, whether fenced by rails, roots, boulders, planted windbreaks or cultivated hedgerows, provide shelter for rabbits and small rodents. A foray into the open field to sample grains can be a hazardous excursion without a friendly thicket nearby.

Forest and woodland members of the deer family frequent the edges of open glades and ponds. Moose graze on pond vegetation in the shallows. Deer favour fire burns or cut-over areas where the elimination of dense forest has encouraged the growth of saplings and succulent shrubs. Man has assisted considerably by the practice of clear-cutting for timber or transmission lines, as well as the construction of roads with their rights of way and borrow pits.

Even prehistoric man tended to live on the edges of things. The advantages of water transportation, of shelter in valleys or harbours, or the ready availability of resources are easily recognizable geographical reasons. These factors are still reflected on a global scale in the concentration of settlement along rivers and coasts. And in Canada, we seem to be huddled along one favoured edge: the southern international boundary.

We watch the heron that shares the edge of our bay. His objective is dinner; our resolve is leisure. Like the heron, we too have a preference for the edges of things.

J Keith Fraser
Canadian Geographic, October 1989

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN OTTY LAKE, TOWNSHIPS AND PROVINCE *Dave Code*

Of all the laws of standards that apply to the lakes in our area, the most important is the requirement to locate sewage systems well back from the shore. The standard for the Province of Ontario has long been a mere 50 feet from shore, although other provinces long ago adopted the 100 foot rule. In 1976 the OLA urged the province and the townships to adopt 100' as the standard. Ontario would not alter the 50' rule, but the then Minister of Environment ruled that, because Otty Lake was nutrient sensitive, 100' would be the new standard for Otty. The rule was then incorporated into the Official Plans and Zoning By-laws of North Burgess and North Elmsley - for all the lakes in these townships.

In other jurisdictions, such as Frontenac County, the local 100' rule of the townships is being applied when the Provincial Health Unit inspector examines the proposed location of a septic tank and tile bed. The Otty Lake Land Use Committee is at present engaged in seeking ways whereby the same co-operation can be achieved on our lakes. In the meantime, all Otty Lake residents are urged to observe the 100' rule, regardless.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks to the contributors to this Newsletter. We would still like more on old Otty Lake log cabins, a note on the Scout camp, comments on wildlife. Don't forget about the lake during the winter and send in some items for the Spring issue.

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SPLASHES Bumper sticker: DO YOU BELIEVE IN LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT OR WILL I DRIVE BY AGAIN? ... Life may have no meaning, or even worse, it may have a meaning of which I disapprove ... RECOVERY ROOM - a place to do upholstery ... It's lonely at the top but you eat better ... Check that septic system and have a winter free from worry.

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