

CAPTAIN OTTY'S LOG

Newsletter of the Otty Lake Association
Spring 1998

President's Report

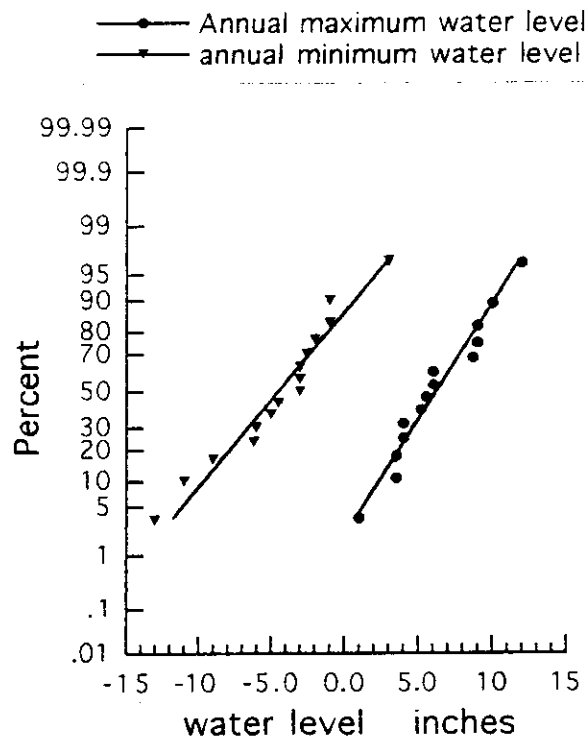
Lorne Gold

El Nino appears to have visited Otty Lake during the past year. Last summer, which was dry with greater than normal winds, was also one with low water levels. During the winter we had a record ice storm that caused considerable damage, particularly to trees. We will not know the full extent of the damage until the snow is gone and people are able to inspect their property.

In response to the experience last summer, the Environment & Health Committee has started a study of the factors that control lake levels. Information in the files on Otty Lake at the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and at the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources has been reviewed and copies made of what we do not have already. The information shows that there are three periods with characteristic water levels since development began on the lake. The **first** is prior to the construction of a dam at the entrance to Jebb's Creek in 1966; the **second** is from that time to the removal of the dam in 1980; and the **third** is since that removal. A report based on the information in the files on water levels for the lake and on Jebb's Creek will be given to every property owner by the Area Counsellor in the spring. We would greatly appreciate having your comments on the report and any personal experiences concerning past water levels, particularly prior to 1966.

One of our members, Dave Code, has been measuring water levels relative to a datum established before 1980. The maximum and minimum levels for each summer since the dam was removed have been obtained from his records and plotted on a normal probability graph. The result is given in the following figure. It shows that the low water levels for 1997 were normal; there is a 15% chance that the lake can have that level or lower. There have been two years since 1980 when the minimum level was lower than in 1997.

OTTY LAKE
maximum and minimum water levels
Relative to Dave Code's reference
1981 - 1997
(1991, 1992, 1993 missing)



Jebb's Creek is the only outlet for the lake. There are questions on its control of water levels. A small committee being formed by the E & H Committee to look at how the creek affects the water balance for the lake will prepare recommendations for the Association on what management practices, if any, may be appropriate to minimize these effects for both high and low water conditions and for water quality.

We are seeking two individuals for each of these three areas of concern to serve on the committee. Would anyone with an interest please contact me or another member of the Board. We expect to have technical assistance from the RCVA and the MNR.

We will all be faced with a cleanup job as a result of the ice storm. Many of us would like to have help. The Board would welcome any information on individuals who may be available for this and under what terms. It may be more efficient for groups of property owners to join together and perhaps we can organize this through the Area Counsellors or other means. Names of individuals and an indication of interest in group action can be given to your Area Counsellor or a member of the Board. We will do what we can to help.

Here are numbers for two Ottawa groups available to remove brush, etc. at hourly rates:
Youth Enterprises - call John @ 562.3864
New Beginnings for Youth - call J Magede @ 723-3337. See also at Manotick, page 3.

PROPERTY ASSESSMENT AND TAXES

Dave Code

Your Board of Directors has been getting calls from lake residents with queries about their 1998. **tax assessment.** Some report that their properties have been valued higher than in 1996, and some say they have been assessed lower. Anyone who feels their assessment is incorrect is free to appeal it, as described in the notice.

The **tax rate** is another matter. The uncertainty facing us now arises from changes made by the Ontario Government, including the shift of education taxes and costs from the municipalities to the Province. It was intended to be revenue neutral, but there is no guarantee. The method of assessing municipalities for police costs is also under review. So this leaves municipal councils almost as unsure as the rest of us.

Not until June will Councils know the new County rates, the School Board rates and the Police rates. Meanwhile, both Bathurst/Burgess/Sherbrooke and Drummond/Elmsley - have announced an interim levy of 30% of last year's tax. No doubt our municipal councillors will be able to explain the matter better when the Otty Lake annual meeting rolls around in July.

HELP FOR BROKEN TREES AND SHRUBS

Amy Pokorny

As soon as you can, avoid further damage to people or trees by cleanly cutting off broken-down, hanging branches within easy reach. For high areas, and for your own safety, accept only trained, insured, chainsaw-certified workers with the necessary equipment. For less urgent work, it is probably cheaper to get it done later but while the tree is still dormant, or wait until the tree is in leaf and the flow of sap less powerful. Maples and birches bleed very heavily and should be attended to as soon as possible.

One danger in delay is that a partly broken-off trunk or branch may later cause a serious tearing of bark below the break. It is advisable to make an initial cut in the bark below the shattered area so that the main (upper) cut will not create a long tearing of bark below the offside of the cut.

There are basic rules to help trees or shrubs over these brutal amputations. Cut on a slight slant so that rain can roll off the wound. Always cut just above the node (leaf scar) or slight protuberance which indicates the site of an old fallen branch. The experts now say that there is normally no need for pruning paint as it inhibits Nature's healing processes.

Shrubs and trees weighted down under ice can be further damaged by unwise efforts to hack off the ice. Do a rough pruning of partly broken branches. When the ground thaws, stake those that need it. A hedge can be helped by stretching and tightening a rope between trees or a fence. Some shrubs such as those that bloom on new wood, like *Potentilla* and certain bushy spireas, survive even if cut back to Mother Earth. Loss of sap may weaken but generally does not kill a tree but it is wise to do repair work during dormancy.

ICE STORM BRUSH -

TO BURN OR HAUL AWAY? *Dave Code*

Many residents of Otty Lake will have a lot of broken trees and branches to dispose of.

DO NOT BURN IT ON THE ICE. Many of us already know that brush burned on the ice in winter will mean ashes on the lake bottom in summer and an increase in weed growth for years to come. But it is also against the law. The Ministry of Environment forbids burning brush on the ice and so does the Fisheries Act of Ontario.

Ministry of Natural Resources conservation officers have already left notices to this effect at cottages and homes where brush piles were observed. If you have already burned brush on the ice, you must remove the ashes and remnanas before the ice melts. But take care during breakup. In North Burgess, residents may take any amount of brush free of charge to the Stanleyville landfill site in May. In North Elmsley, brush can be taken to the Perth landfill site until the end of March; after that it can be taken to the Drummond/North Elmsley municipal office near Port Elmsley, also free of charge.

ICE STORM NOTES

Early estimates show as much as 70% of the trees in the Perth area were damaged by ice.

Shrubs that grow along shorelines are used to being damaged by ice and are extremely resilient. Don't be too quick to completely remove these shoreline plants.

For a pamphlet entitled *Caring for Ice Damaged Trees* - call (613) 692-2390 or 1-800-387-5304 or pick up a copy at 5524 Dickinson St, Manotick or see it on www.lrc@sympatico.ca

Fire permits are required March 1 - November 30. If you have an appropriate site **and have contacted your local fire department**, you may proceed with burning brush with extreme caution. Otherwise the brush may be deposited at the waste disposal sites. (*From the BBS Twp March Newsletter*).

And a cheer for the hydro workers and military who opened up roads soon after the storm.

DOCTORS LAKE *Susan Code*

Named after Dr Alexander Thom, an army surgeon who was the first doctor in Perth. He was granted extensive land holdings including this area, and Caroline Village, which is now a part of Perth (Lewis, Thom St area). He also had the first mill in town where the dam at Haggart House is, at the top of Mill St. A man of great temper, possessing more interest in commerce than medicine, he fought a duel against Col. McMillan, another half pay army officer, nearly six months before the last fatal duel. There were no casualties in the Thom/McMillan duel, which arose because the Thoms invited Col. McMillan but not his wife (a former servant) to a Christmas party.

THE 1997 REGATTA

Dave Code

The day dawned fine; in the morning a light breeze gave promise of more wind to come; and by the early afternoon of September 1st the sailors were beginning to assemble. There were little boats - Lasers, Sunfish, a Mistral. And there were big boats (by Otty Lake standards) - Albacore, Hobie Cat and Laser II. And there were Windsurfers too.

The 2 pm start was a smooth one. So smooth, in fact, that it was barely noticeable to the spectators on shore. This year's racing start was very easy for the gallery to observe. Not that it was without its interesting moments; at about the one-minute mark some of the boats even managed the amazing feat of drifting back across the start line! In short, the wind had all but disappeared; and for the next couple of hours, it was a matter of catching what breezes came along, leaving the crews plenty of time for conversation with neighbouring boats.

Finally, one hour, 40 minutes and 51 seconds later, **Dave Friesen** crossed the finish line in his Laser II to claim the Commander's Trophy for Otty Lake sailing supremacy. Other top finishers in this handicap event were **Brian and Jessie Robertson** - Albacore and **Peter Code** - Mistral. **Chris Tyler** took the Windsurfer prize. Other patient sailors included **Herb Robertson**, **Dave Code**, **Dan Maxwell**, **Doug Overhill**, **Craig Robertson**, **Buttram**, and **Brian Burrell**.

FEATHERS *Cathy Kari* GIVE A HOOT, YOU MIGHT GET ONE BACK



This time of year, with many birds starting to return from their wintering grounds, many owls are already back and the younger ones are busy forming pairs while paired owls who mate for life are renewing their vows. Owls get an early start on raising a family, probably timing the hatching of the young to when a large number of prey are emerging from winter burrows.

Otty Lake is in the breeding range of seven species of owls: **Great Horned Owl**, **Barred Owl**, **Eastern Screech Owl**, **Northern Saw-Whet Owl**, **Short Eared Owl**, **Long Eared Owl** and **Northern Hawk Owl**. Other owls are visitors in the winter, including the **Snowy Owl** and the **Great Grey Owl**.

Owls are difficult to spot because they are largely nocturnal, although some, including the **Snowy** and the **Short Eared Owls**, are crepuscular, hunting at dawn and dusk and on gloomy days. Only the **Hawk Owl** and **Pygmy Owl** (a western

bird) are truly diurnal. Spotting owls can be an interesting challenge. In early spring, if you can spare a bit of sleep, you can often hear owls calling to one another at night, especially in early evening and just before dawn. Some people attempt to imitate the sound of injured mice by sucking the back of their hand to produce a squeaking sound. But using taped owl calls to lure them can be very disruptive to nesting owls and is banned in many areas, especially during breeding season. But use the tapes to familiarize yourself with owl calls - you may be surprised that most owls do not "hoot".

During the day, most owls are asleep and extremely inconspicuous, though in spring you may be able to locate them by finding their nests. Great Horned Owls and Long Eared Owls nest in open platform nests, often abandoned by hawks, crows or ravens, or even squirrel nests. They are usually located high in a lone evergreen, often near water. Many of the smaller owls are cavity nesters, in hollow trees in holes abandoned by woodpeckers. By looking carefully, you may see an owl sunning itself at the edge of a hole, or if you scratch or tap on the bark below the hole, you may be rewarded by an owl peering out to see what the commotion is all about.

On your property at Otty Lake, consider the needs of wildlife. Many animals, as well as birds, use brush piles for cover. Standing dead trees, called "snags", provide insect food for woodpeckers, which in turn excavate cavities for other birds, including owls, Chickadees and Wood Ducks, as well as flying squirrels. You can also make nest

boxes and the Saw-Whet and Screech owls adapt readily to properly made boxes. Use unpainted cedar and **cut the size of the entrance hole carefully** - this is the most important dimension. All nest boxes should have ventilation holes on the tops of the side walls, a drainage hole in the floor, and a rough or scored area below the entrance to make it easier for the young to get out. It is advisable to hinge one side for easier cleaning.

SAW-WHET OWL

Floor 7x7 inches
Hole 2 1/2" diam
Depth 10-12 inches
Height to hole 8-10 inches
Height above ground 10-20 feet
Line with 2-3 inches of wood chips

SCREECH OWL

8x8"
3" diam.
12-15"
9-12"
10-30"
Same

Location: Saw-Whet, forest clearing or edges

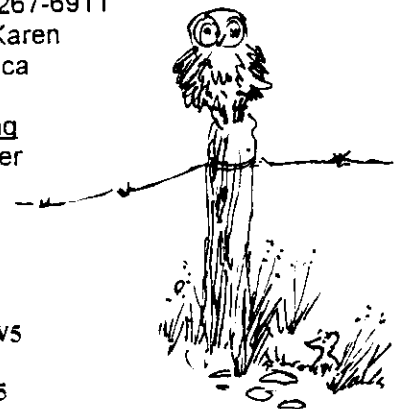
Screech, in woods, farmlands, orchards

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Thanks again to columnists. The next Newsletter will be in June. We continue to seek notes on old Otty Lake cabins. We have hopes of a note on the Scout camp. How about comments on how your resident wildlife survived the ice storm? Contributions and comments to:

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