

the vermilion sportsman



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Did summer seem a little short this year? It sure did to me — getting my boat lift in the lake on the 4th of July weekend and pulling it out in September. Water too high in May and too low in September makes for weird fishing patterns. I hope you all did better than I did! Maybe next year! All our home projects were 2 to 3 weeks behind time and we never did catch up. As I'm writing this I'm thinking of getting ready to try some waterfowling for a change. Knowing my luck however, it'll be 2 to 3 weeks behind, too.

The State Park land acquisition is still being negotiated with U.S. Steel. Mark Holsten, DNR Commissioner, was our featured speaker at our annual meeting in August. His main topic concerned the State Park at Lake Vermilion project and State Parks in general. Mark is confident that it will become a reality and that groundbreaking work will commence next year. We'll keep you posted on the progress as it happens. Keep checking our website for updates.

The Vermilion Plan is again out to the Townships for final comments after corrections were made to the zoning map. There is a public hearing on the map scheduled for 1:30 PM on November 20, 2008, at Greenwood Town Hall located at 3000 County Rd #77. The full map can be accessed on the county website.

The Water Quality testing of the lake known as CLMP+ has been completed and our volunteers once again did an outstanding job. The weather cooperated so the samples were collected and shipped off to the DNR for evaluation on time. We expect to have the results in time for our February

newsletter. I was privileged to go along on one of the sampling runs and was really pleased to see how efficient the volunteers performed their tasks! Great job by all!

Speaking of Water Quality, we're (my wife and I) sitting in on two advisory committees dealing with Non-degradation Rules Update for the MPCA and Shoreland Management Rules update for the DNR. Both committees will generate "Reports to the Legislature" in early 2009. It has been very interesting to sit on these committees and learn about how the new rules are arrived at and implemented. If anyone wants to investigate further, you can find out what's going on from the MPCA and DNR websites.

We are making great strides in getting our membership records automated, thanks to Jeff Lovgren and Mardy Jackson. This should help us keep your mailing addresses up to date so that you won't be missing an issue of our newsletter. Jeff has also done an outstanding job with our website. We hope you visit it often and we do appreciate comments and suggestions for improvements.

Before I close, I would like to thank all who made our annual meeting a great success. It had one of the best turnouts in recent history. I also want to thank those who contributed drawing prizes for our raffle. They are greatly appreciated.

To another great year on Vermilion!
Walt Moe, President

A report from the annual meeting ...

by Paula Bloczynski, Secretary

This year's annual meeting drew nearly 200 members and guests to Fortune Bay Resort for our once-a-year gathering to review the ongoing work of the Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion, Inc.

2008 is a special year for the club and is the 40th anniversary of our founding in 1968. Board member Judy Moline marked the occasion with a splendid power point presentation that featured pictures and narrative and told the story of the club since its founding. Judy did a great job of capturing and portraying the spirit of our club leaders through the years and showing the variety of projects the club has undertaken on behalf of the lake.

We did manage to get the club's business done — following dinner and birthday cake — at a brief meeting conducted by President Walt Moe. Minutes from last year's annual meeting were approved, this year's financial report was reviewed and approved and the membership elected board members for the next three years. The slate of board members approved included Dale Lundblad, Bob Wilson and new board members Jack McCarthy and Gary Whitenack. Jack and Gary were elected to replace retiring board members Ray Harris and Ed Zottola. The composition of the board remains at 12, with an equal number of board members from the east and west ends of the lake.

Members and guests recognized Ray Harris for his 40 years as a club member and 30 years as a board member. A plaque was presented to Ray and he was thanked for the leadership he provided over the years as an officer and in chairing committees that included maintenance of navigation lights and day-use picnic sites. We're thankful that Ray will continue as a key volunteer, along with his life's partner, Vi. Thank you, Ray and Vi!

Mardy Jackson, chairman of the annual loon census and coordinator of the count taken at the east end of the lake, gave her report of the count that was taken lakewide on July 14, thanking all the volunteers and recognizing Claire Zwieg, who coordinates the count at the

west end of the lake. The numbers this year were encouraging with a total of 281 loons counted, compared with 253 the previous year. Included in the total were 239 adults (including 139 singles) and 42 chicks.

The ever-popular prize drawing was held at the close of the business meeting and was more than ably handled by Miller and Julie Friesen. Miller and Julie have been club members and volunteers for many years and continue to lend a hand, traveling from the Twin Cities and staying at Fortune Bay over the weekend that the annual meeting is held. Thanks, Miller and Julie! Included in this year's prizes were signed copies of "Willie Wall-eye," the new book penned by former board member Ed Zottola. Other prizes were wildlife prints and books, mail boat rides, Twins tickets and fishing equipment. One of the framed prints had been donated to the club by the Turn in Poachers organization, and that group's executive director Al Thomas was a guest at the annual dinner.

The featured speaker at this year's meeting was Mark Holsten, Commissioner of the MN Department of Natural Resources and, incidentally, a new Vermilion land owner on Frazer Bay. The commissioner commended the club on its work around the lake and then turned his attention to the Vermilion state park proposal, narrating a power point presentation that gave an overview of the state's current park program. He went on to articulate his vision for state parks of the future — beginning with the park on Vermilion. The commissioner spoke of his disappointment that today's young people have little or no experience fishing, hunting or camping. He sees the state parks, starting with Vermilion, as gateways to outdoor experience and said he hoped that Vermilion would lead the way in providing a landscape, program and facilities that would inspire more outdoor adventures by Minnesota families.

Before closing the meeting, President Walt Moe invited all in attendance to next year's annual meeting, scheduled for Saturday, August 8, 2009, at Fortune Bay Resort.

Been to our website lately?
www.sportsmensclublakevermilion.org

DALE & NAN VERSUS MINK

It all started when I volunteered to replace the retiring CLMP volunteer, Richard Wullschleger, who had been taking and recording Secchi disk readings in the Head O Lakes Bay area where Nan and I live. I thought it would give us the opportunity to get out on the lake together more often and enjoy watching the abundant wildlife in our bay. You know the old adage, "Be careful what you wish for?" Well, the testing was uneventful through most of the summer. The lack of rain and the fact that the lake was slow to warm up after the late ice-out kept the water pretty clear until August when some algae began to show up. Unfortunately, about the same time something else began to show up.

One sunny, calm morning, ideal for taking Secchi disk readings, we decided to go out, so I went down to the dock to prepare the boat. We have a nice Lund Tyee which we take great care to keep clean and in top running order. It sits on a covered boat lift which, I was soon to discover, makes it an attractive, sheltered hideout spot for some enterprising mink which live along our shoreline. When I got into the boat, I noticed some dried crayfish parts, fish scales and then some droppings that I recognized as belonging to a mink. Needless to say, I was not happy to see the mess in our carpeted boat. I cleaned it up and after we went out to conduct our testing, my wife and I agreed that we needed to secure the boat so the mink couldn't get in so easily. Nan put the vinyl travel cover on the boat which snaps on snugly and we thought, "problem solved."

Well, a week later, we decided to take the boat out and upon beginning to unsnap the cover noticed a foul, fishy odor. As soon as we got the cover off, we observed many large piles of mink droppings and got a huge whiff of the sickening smell. The critters had moved in, but how? There was only one slight gap between the cover and the metal it was snapped to in the outboard motor well, measuring about 1/2 inch, but that's where those little buggers apparently had gotten in. We were really upset now. I removed the piles and vacuumed, then Nan spent most of the morning cleaning and deodorizing the carpeting. We decided that providing total cover and therefore, a nice dark place for the mink, was just what they wanted so we took all covers off the boat except the bow cover. Surely the smell of Odoban and the lack of cover would deter them.



A week or so later, conditions were good to take readings so we got in the boat and looked around for any signs of our little "friends." We could still smell something unsavory, but looking up under the bow cover from inside the boat I didn't see anything. We prepared to launch the boat with Nan turning the wheel on the boat lift and me starting the motor. As 200 horses rumbled to life, I saw a furry flash in the boat. The mink! It bolted past me, out of the boat and ran right by Nan's feet on the dock, then dove into the brush along the shoreline. It scared the heck out of both of us. It was now around 8 a.m. and I had to get to work so I told Nan to jump in, assuring her that the mink was now gone. We needed to get out, take the readings and get back so I could get to an appointment. We accelerated toward Schmidts Island, our first stop. I decelerated quickly, the boat dropping off of plane. Suddenly something furry flashed past Nan on the gunwale of the boat. As our eyes focused on it, the mink stopped on the bow of the boat and looked back at us, its eyes wide. It probably saw the same thing looking at us. As we screamed, it decided it didn't want to deal with us and dove into the water. It immediately spotted the nearest land and swam, at speeds I didn't think a mink was capable of, toward Schmidts Island. We watched it until it climbed up on shore. As our heart rates returned to normal, we decided that one mink at least, now had a new home.

We finished taking our readings and returned home. Once we got the boat secured on the boat lift again, Nan suggested that I'd better remove the bow cover because she was sure that was where the mink had been hiding. With her looking on, I removed it only to hear her scream, "There's another one!" No it wasn't a mink, but what was it? It was a wet, recently killed red squirrel with its entrails hanging out. Not a pretty sight. The mink had apparently decided to add red meat to their "seafood diet." This was no longer "cute"; the mink were becoming a menace. We again cleaned up the boat. This was getting old.

How were we going to keep the little monsters out? Our neighbors and a local veterinarian recom-

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DALE & NAN VERSUS MINK

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mended mothballs. So we made sure there was nowhere left for them to hide and then spread mothballs everywhere. I hate the smell of mothballs, but checking the boat every morning and night, there didn't seem to be any new sign of them. It appeared that we had finally succeeded in discouraging them from coming in the boat.

A couple of weeks later we decided it was time to get out and take some more readings. The conditions were ideal: a calm, sunny, classic Lake Vermilion morning. No sign of any mink in the boat. We were feeling great as we picked up speed and headed toward Schmidts Island. Arriving at our destination, I decelerated rapidly. What the ... ? A furry blur flashed from behind us and headed toward the bow. Once again a mink was standing on our bow, its beady little eyes wide with fear. I jumped out of my seat and since we were still moving at a pretty good clip my favorite Sportsmen's Club hat blew off my head and overboard, never to be seen again. I yelled at the mink, it bailed out and began to swim. It wasn't sure where to go and swam in circles for a moment. I was angry at the loss of my hat and turned the boat about, expressing thoughts of running the beast down. Nan wouldn't let me. Again we watched it swim toward the same spot on Schmidts Island as the first one had done.

Then, off the northeast corner of the island where there is a rock pile and hazard buoy marking it, we saw a number of dark colored animals diving and swimming around. They appeared to be much larger than the mink. We went closer and saw a couple of them climb up on shore — a family of river otters. Thank goodness we don't have otters living in our boat! An eagle flew overhead and I hoped he would see the mink and have him for lunch. No such luck, the varmint made it to shore. We took our readings, enjoyed a nice cruise

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and headed for home, feeling like the second of a pair of mink was now relocated on the island.

As we secured the boat, we tried to figure out exactly where that darned mink had been hiding. We looked everywhere, but couldn't spot the location. Oh, well. As I gathered up our gear, I caught some movement out of the corner of my eye. There, back by the motor, another damned mink. As I moved toward it, it dove to the left and I saw it disappear into what... the rubber boot where the motor control cables entered the motor well of the boat. Aha! Now I knew where they had been hiding, but how in the world did they squeeze into that small space? Amazing, but now how to get it out of the belly of the boat? I asked Nan to bring me the hose she uses to water her flowers and turn on the pump. I'd flood the boat and it will either leave or drown. Nothing for a while, then I unscrewed an access port and stuck the hose in there. Out of the cable boot came the mink and it slipped over the transom into the lake. Victory! I stuffed a rag into the boot, pumped out the bilge and opened the main hull access to make sure there weren't any more of the critters in there. All clear.

So, what now? This was the end. No more mink would be tolerated. I borrowed a live trap from our neighbors at Whispering Winds Resort and baited it with sardines. I put it in a spot in the boat where I guessed the mink would seek cover. To be on the safe side, I called our local DNR Enforcement officer just to make sure what I was doing was legal. He said it was, but that I had to relocate the animal if I caught it, because killing it (I was thinking drowning) would be illegal. So far, no sign of the little bugger; nothing has taken the bait. My brother-in-law, who has a place in Florida and keeps his fishing boat on a trailer, said they have similar problems with palm rats getting in and chewing on wiring. He suggested that electric ultrasonic pest repellers might work for mink as well. I bought three of them and installed them in our boat. So for two weeks, no sign of mink. Then a couple of days ago, I spotted one small mink dropping in the bow of the boat. The little sucker is taunting me, just letting me know that I may have made the boat less attractive, but I have not won the battle, not yet anyway. Lately it has occurred to me that my life is becoming a Lake Vermilion version of the classic Bill Murray movie "Caddyshack."

The moral of this story? If you want to add a little excitement to your life, become a CLMP volunteer.

Dale Lundblad
Board Member

“Invasive Species”

by Bob Wilson

Some Good News from Everett Bay

In the last issue of our newsletter I talked about finding Curly Leaf pondweed in Everett Bay. Those of you on the east end of the lake know that this bay can get very weedy in a typical summer season. Earlier in the summer Duane Williams, Tower DNR, and I had scouted the shoreline in the bay for weeds, particularly Curly Leaf Pondweed, an invasive species that can trigger algal blooms and create turbid water conditions. Later in the summer Duane, Walt Moe, SCLV President, and I went out to check again. This time, the Curly Leaf plant was evidently in its mid-summer die-off period. There was only a minor showing of the leaves around the public ramp and the adjacent shoreline. Seeing fewer of these plants is a “positive,” but we will be out to check again next year. They will not just go away and still may spread further. I’ll keep you posted.

New Signs for the Private Sector

In August, the SCLV placed new Invasive Species prevention signs at 26 resorts and marinas on Lake Vermilion. These signs were recently developed by the Minnesota DNR and they provided as many as we requested at no cost to the club. Dale Lundblad and Ray Harris placed them at the west end of the lake and Mel Hintz and I covered the east end. The rationale for pushing this program was our understanding that there may be more boats launched at resort and marina ramps than at Lake Vermilion’s public ramps. That means that the private sector can be a tremendous help in keeping Lake Vermilion free of Eurasian Milfoil, Zebra Mussels, Spiny Waterfleas, etc. These businesses have even more at stake than the average lake property owner as their livelihood is intertwined with lake water quality, beauty and fishing success. I can’t imagine any one of them not being upset with their ramp and docks clogged with Eurasian Milfoil for example. Thanks

to the DNR and thanks to the resort and marina owners for their cooperation in showing the signs beside their ramps and checking their customer’s boats for Invasive Species.

“Confronting the Monster”

If there is any doubt that preventing “Invasive Species” is an absolute must-do action on the part of all property owners and visitors to this lake, read the article from the Lake Minnetonka Association titled “Confronting the Monster” by Dick Osgood in this issue, on page 7. Vision that Lake Vermilion is in the same position that Lake Minnetonka is in now. Imagine the difficulties and challenges we would have bringing the “monster” under control. Who would step-up to help solve the problem? Would the county, the towns and townships, property owners? Would taxes have to be raised further to help combat the problem? Is Lake Minnetonka today, Lake Vermilion a few years from now?

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LeRoy Forstrom, Glenmore Resort owner, and Mel Hintz, Sportsmen’s Club volunteer, stand by the latest DNR Invasive Species sign they just erected. Mr. Forstrom and his dock assistants check every boat entering Lake Vermilion through their launch ramp.

“Invasive Species”... *Continued from Page 5*

Having a clean boat before launching and disposing of leftover bait on the shore are simple and effective methods of managing this threat for all of us. Resorts and marinas can ask the customer what lake the boat was in last and how long it was out of the water. A boat that has been dry for at least 5 days is less likely to harbor “invasives.” If the boat came from Minnetonka, Mille Lacs, Lake Superior and other similarly infected water bodies, check it thoroughly. Together we can at least be partially in control if everyone pitches in.

2008 Boat Checks by the SCLV

This past summer the SCLV volunteers were busy checking boats at four public ramps as we have in the past. Not surprisingly, however, we found the number of boats launched during our watch was down from last year. We surmise the rather chilly spring and gas prices had something to do with the decline.

In 2008 we checked 242 boats and in 2007 we inspected 389 boats. That is a significant decrease with some of it due to fewer volunteers able to help during the 2008 major holiday periods. We will be at it again next year. Thanks to all of the volunteers who participated. If you can help, contact us next spring.

ESPN is getting behind Invasive Species Prevention

The ESPN outdoors writer Gregg Patterson has written an article titled “The Invasive Enemy Within.” It is posted on their website ESPNoutdoors.com. Go to their search mechanism and ask for it. In the article ESPN salutes Wildlife Forever, a non-profit organization, for taking the lead in preventing Invasive Species with special programs, billboard advertising, pushing state and federal legislation and encouraging everyone to get

involved. ESPN is encouraging all sportsmen, both in the field and on the water, to keep exotic’s prevention uppermost in their mind when active in their sport. With sportsmen more involved in this prevention program, we could have a better chance to control the problem.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) approves rules on ballast water.

The MPCA approved strict standards for ships that discharge ballast water into Lake Superior. This action should reduce the spread of harmful invasive species. The MPCA governing board hopes this will cause other states and the federal government to follow suit. For now, ships will be required to follow Coast Guard practices and by 2016 ships will be required to treat their water before dumping it in Superior’s harbors. The new standards, which may affect 300 vessels, have come while federal legislation awaits congressional approval. A University of Notre Dame July study estimates that invasive species cost the great lakes regional economies at least \$200 million annually.

Invasive Species are a very serious, nationwide, costly problem.

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The following article from the Lake Minnetonka Association and the author, Dick Osgood, well illustrates the challenges and difficulties in dealing with a large water body infested with an invasive species, in this case Eurasian Milfoil, and the people and governments involved. The article is presented here to stress the fact that "one ounce of prevention on our part here on Lake Vermilion is worth hundreds of pounds of cure down the road." Help keep Lake Vermilion clean!

CONFRONTING THE MONSTER... by Dick Osgood

Dick Osgood is Executive Director of the Lake Minnetonka Association. The Lake Minnetonka Association is the voice for Lake Minnetonka lakeshore owners and businesses. Dick is also President of the North American Lake Management Society. See www.LMAssociation.org or <http://www.lmassociation.blogspot.com/>. — August 14, 2008

In the past several months, I have taken readers through a step-wise process of articulating the Lake Minnetonka Association's vision, strategy and plan for ridding Lake Minnetonka of milfoil and keeping additional unwanted plants, animals and viruses out of the lake — summed up in our "Milfoil-Free Minnetonka" campaign.

Our role is to be advocates for the interests of lakeshore owners and businesses, consistent with our mission to assure the health of Lake Minnetonka. The Lake Minnetonka Association is devoted to thought-leadership and in this role we have invested in bringing sound science and credible policy to the fore to address the threats of aquatic invasive species, or AIS.

So, while we can go to great lengths to develop and articulate action plans, it is not our role to implement those plans. With respect to AIS management, various agencies are charged with protecting and managing Lake Minnetonka. As advocates, we see our role to move the ball forward by holding public and private entities accountable and responsible. We provide constructive criticism where appropriate, but also offer workable solutions. We are boldly confronting the AIS monster.

Our Milfoil-Free Minnetonka campaign offers a vision, comprehensive strategy and detailed plan. We go into this with the sincere belief that the health and integrity of Lake Minnetonka is important to our community and therefore investments in protecting and restoring the lake are appropriate. With community support, we sincerely believe we can rid Lake Minnetonka of milfoil and keep other AIS out.

Without this support, here is where we stand:

- We have developed a lake vegetation management plan that allows for comprehensive milfoil control, but have not received broad community buy-in, although Lake Minnetonka lakeshore residents have demonstrated they will shoulder their share. While there has been support for the first year (see below), future support is not certain. Where are the cities, the LMCD and the state with their proportionate shares?

- The LMCD has contracted video monitors at two of the dozen or so launches on the lake, and their board was recently shown videos by these monitors of two cases that I believe are

violations of state law and of the LMCD ordinance. To my knowledge, no follow up or enforcement action has been taken or is being contemplated. Where is enforcement?

- If hydrilla gets into Lake Minnetonka, the harvesting program would be forced to be suspended indefinitely to prevent spreading this nasty plant. What are the contingency plans for hydrilla (and zebra mussel, VHS, spiny waterflea, etc.)?

- Lake Minnetonka lacks a comprehensive prevention plan, an early detection & rapid response plan, adequate funding, adequate enforcement, and (apparently) the will to confront AIS. The Lake Minnetonka Association's Milfoil-Free Minnetonka plan provides for all of this and we offer it as a way road map to address these concerns. The opposite of planning is fate. Without community support, we are tempting fate.

Community support is needed. Further, financing the Milfoil-Free Minnetonka plan ought to be spread among lake residents, the cities around the lake, state and regional sources and lake users.

Lake residents have already demonstrated their willingness through the first year of the three bay milfoil treatments. The Cities of Mound, Shorewood and Minnetrista supported the first year of the Phelps Bay treatment and we hope they will continue that support. The LMCD, through the Save-the-Lake fund, supported the first year of the three bay treatment and we hope they will continue that support. The Minnesota DNR provided a grant, and we have argued, based on the size of the lake and overall usage, that Lake Minnetonka should demand even higher levels of support in the future. Finally, lake users ought to shoulder some of the support. Right now, boaters pay a boat license surcharge and only a small portion of that comes back to Lake Minnetonka. We believe fees based on use are appropriate and should be implemented.

While confronting the AIS monster is a serious challenge, we believe we can slay this monster by broad community support and spreading the financing equitably.

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."

— Winston Churchill.

Thinking about winter fishing? Read this story!

Winter fishing adventure on Trout Lake

By Paul Pollock

Paul Pollock lives in Tower, MN. He guides for winter lake trout in the Boundary Waters as well as on Burntside and Snowbank Lakes. He guides for muskies and walleyes on Lake Vermilion spring, summer, and fall. He is a contributing writer for The Next Bite/Essex Angler Magazine.

Aurora Borealis was in its final shimmering act as we started down the trail. The late February air was a crisp five below zero and we set off at an exhilarating pace, flush with the excitement of the lake trout fishing awaiting us.

With me on the trail that morning were my ten year old chocolate labrador Mookie, my friend Glenn Moore, and his two young Corgis, Benny and Checkers. Mookie's graying muzzle was further accentuated by the glistening frost, and the two young dogs were eating up trail quickly under their short, squat frames.

Our destination was Trout Lake; a large 7000 acre lake just north of Lake Vermilion. An oligotrophic lake with huge expanses of open water, Trout embodies its own unique experience. Taking a trip into the Boundary Waters means getting there under your own power; here the dogs have quite the advantage with twice as much leg power!

It also requires a light weight sled to transport your gear, and a hand auger to drill the holes through as much as three feet of late winter ice. Depending upon snow conditions, snowshoes or cross country skis may be needed, and in March, cleats may be needed for traction if bare ice conditions prevail.

Trout Lake also has a well deserved reputation for giving up its winter trout grudgingly, however, when you score, you can score big! Big lakers are great, but the aesthetic pleasure of having the wilderness to ourselves for the day is more than ample reward.

As darkness turned to light, we literally crawled up a steep rock embankment on the trail. First Glenn gave me an assist by helping push my sled up while I pulled, then I ditched my sled and reciprocated the favor. This isn't your average fishing trip! There's serious work to be done before the actual fishing begins.

Before long, we were making good time across the hard packed snow covering the ice of the main basin. One can't help but gaze in awe at the grandiose scenery of a wilderness trout lake in winter. As we traversed the massive expanse of open ice, Glenn and I immersed ourselves in amiable conversation while silently anticipating the bull work that was awaiting us. As our four legged friends amused themselves in front of us, little did we

know the enormity of the task in front of us.

The early morning sky had turned to an azure blue as we strode into our destination- a steep breaking shoreline that transitions from sand to rock bottom. We quickly unhooked the bungee cords from our long sleds and threw ourselves into the daunting task of hand drilling holes through what turned out to be about 32 inches of solid late winter ice. Our preferred method is to drill two eight inch holes side by side, then use an ice saw to create one big hole. This is no miniscule job when using a hand auger! After a ninety minute hike to get us there, it took another ninety minutes of hard labor and sweat to finish the holes and start fishing.

In short order, we had suspended live suckers below the ice, and the tip ups were operational. With the weather a bit on the cold side, we settled into our one man shelters and began jigging. My preferred tactic for winter lakers is to swim an airplane jig. I like to vary my presentation by alternately pumping the rod hard to give the jig a nice spin, and subsequently popping it to give the bait a little dart and hop. Size is a matter of personal preference, and I use small, medium, and large airplane jigs in white/red, white/silver, and brown/gold color combinations.

Jigging spoons are also effective, with a couple of our favorites being Kastmasters and Little Cleos in 1/4 to 1 ounce sizes. My favorite color combinations are silver/blue, firetiger, gold/orange, and silver/chartreuse. The hopping, darting, and fluttering actions of the airplane jigs and spoons perfectly simulate a wounded cisco or lake herring.

Tip-ups can also be very effective tools when baited with a large sucker minnow or a cisco. My preference is to suspend them in the upper half of the water column. This way, trout located deeper in the water column can see the bait above them, and the fish cruising shallow below the ice can contact the bait as well.

Locations to look for are steep breaking shorelines off of points and islands, as well as around reefs and mid-lake humps. We like to set up in forty to eighty feet of water. The trout are there to hunt pelagic (open-water) baitfish, namely ciscoes and lake herring, and these baitfish can be anywhere in lake in winter. We use our Vexilar electronics to indicate depth as well as to show concentrations of baitfish throughout the water column. It also alerts us when a trout is up close and personal and checking out our bait. It is by no means a guarantee that we'll catch it though. Lake trout are notoriously finicky!

The day rolled by idyllically with the blue skies punctuated by the occasional fast moving cloud bank. Other than a couple flags on tip-ups which turned out to be fish that ran and dropped the bait, the fishing was pretty slow. This

is quite normal with lakers. In fact, if you catch one fish in a day, you're not doing bad!

Finally, in mid afternoon I heard Glen holler, "Fish On!" I quickly snapped out of my trance of staring at the Vexilar and jigging, and hurried over to Glenn. I flipped over his shelter for him so he could fight the trout outside,

and peered down the hole, eagerly anticipating a glance of the fish. Glenn quickly exclaimed, "It's a good trout, I saw it down the hole when it was following my spoon." After a typical lake trout fight, characterized by long, powerful runs as well as headshakes and rolling, a gorgeous laker appeared about 10 feet down.

Winter fishing adventure on Trout Lake: Part 2

Rolling and shaking its head, the big fish wouldn't give up easily! Finally, he was able to get the fish turned and into the bottom of the hole and I gave him an assist to get the fish out of the hole. High fives were exchanged, as we marveled at the unique beauty of a native red fin laker. The fish was slightly over 33 inches, and we estimated its weight at 12 to 14 pounds, a dandy for an inland Minnesota water.

About an hour later, my electronics lit up with a fish right below my jig. After playing tag up and down the water column with it, I finally hooked a 3 to 4 pound lake trout right below the hole. That's one of the fun things about trout. Sometimes they take a bit of coaxing to get them to commit. In between, they'll follow the jig from top to bottom and vice versa, oftentimes hitting the jig right below the ice. When they are in the upper reaches of the water column, you can actually see them by looking down the hole into the clear water. After about 10 seconds of rolling, the trout extricated himself from the hook, and swam off unscathed. Lakers have a way of doing this! Once again, I resumed the endless cadence of pumping the rod and watching my jig on the electronics, all the while dreaming about the big catch I hoped was imminent.

A short time later, I heard Glenn yell again, and I hurried over to see what was happening. There was a parabolic bend in his rod, and it was obvious he was fighting another nice fish. After the fish made several powerful runs with the customary head shakes and rolls, I helped him ice another beautiful Boundary Waters laker. This one was a fat 27 incher we estimated at around 7 to 8 pounds. After some more congratulations, we were back to fishing again, already ecstatic with the results, but still hoping more was in store.

Things went into another lull for a couple hours, and the sun was starting to sink lower in the sky. I walked over to Glenn and we discussed how much longer we wanted to stay. Neither of us wanted to leave, but the daylight was waning. We decided to stay until dark, and a short time later, I noticed a line on my Vexilar, directly below my airplane jig. A split second later I felt a hard hit and immediately the fish took off for deeper water. Inherently knowing this was a big trout, I loosened the drag on my baitcaster reel, and the fight was on!

I yelled for Glenn to come over, and in short order, he was there, along with our 3 four legged friends. This was an epic battle, with the trout taking off on long, powerful

runs, only to have me pump and reel to gain back the line. This scenario repeated itself again and again, and soon the dogs grew bored and wandered off to do their own thing, while I continued to battle the fish. We debated about the size of the fish, both of us in awe at the sheer strength of it.

Thank goodness for a good drag system, and after about 15 minutes the fish was finally directly below us. Glenn was looking down into the hole and saw it first, and exclaimed, "Wow, big fish!" A short time later I saw it and reiterated the thought. After what seemed like an eternity, I got the big trout turned and Glenn gave an assist getting it through the hole. Into the stillness of the late afternoon air came a gorgeous laker, which I knew immediately was my personal best! The hawg stretched the tape to 37 inches and carried a 21 inch girth. We estimated the weight at 16 to 18 pounds. What a way to end what had already been a memorable trip!

Lake trout are a very powerful fish with a lot of stamina. Consequently, its very important to use rods, reels, and terminal tackle strong enough to handle them. I use 30 to 34 inch rods with heavy and medium heavy power and a fast action. They must have a lot of backbone and the butt and tip strength to handle a laker's power. I prefer a baitcaster reel with a good star drag system. When you hook into a big one, you'll really test the reel's capability.

I spool up with 12 pound test Maxima line which has very good abrasion resistance which is a must for ice fishing. I use a snap swivel with 50 pound test strength for spoons. For airplane jigs, I use a two foot leader in 15 or 17 pound test attached with a double barrel swivel in the same test strength. Don't underestimate the strength of these fish or the result will be broken rods, line, or swivels!

We decided to end the day on the big laker, as it was almost dark, and we had a long journey out. As we packed up and got ready to leave, the last of the sun was dipping below the treeline to the distant West. Not all lake trout trips pan out like this one, but when one does its really something special!

With Mookie, Benny, and Checkers leading the way, we set off across the vast expanse of frozen lake. I paused and silently reflected on how truly blessed I am to live in such a beautiful place. What a wonderful day it had been fishing with a good friend and our canine companions!



How to Fell a Tree

by Dan Armitage

Make them safely fall where you want them

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If the only time you get to cup a hand to your mouth and yell “TIMBERRRRR!” is during the annual trek to the cut-your-own Christmas tree farm, you may not be entirely prepared to tackle the real task of felling a tree on your property.

There’s a technique to downing something larger than a family room-sized fir, and you may want to become familiar with it in the event you need to topple something larger.

Safe Sawing & Chopping

Whether using a chain saw, bucksaw or dropping a tree the old-fashioned way with an axe, make sure to wear protective eyewear, gloves, long pants and boots. The pros and those in-the-know wear special Kevlar-lined boots and chaps — even hard hats — to further protect themselves in the event of an accident.

As a source of warmth, shelter and transportation, trees have been chopped down by people as long as there have been people. Those who survived the effort probably passed along those special felling genes that encouraged *safety* in a process that does have deadly potential.

Potential for Accident

Our capable tree-cutting ancestors developed a simple method for safely taking down everything from pine to pin oak. Upcoming paragraphs describe that method, which is equally effective whether you are wielding an axe, manual saw or chain saw.

The key word “safely” being somewhat slippery, I always place tree cutting and wood splitting in the same safety category as a certain north country activity: ice fishing. No matter how many precautions you may have taken, there is always the potential for an accident. So when in doubt about your ability to tackle a particular tree, don’t try it. Call in an experienced friend or a pro, then stand safely back and watch.

Most experts advise against attempting to take down a tree with a diameter of 10-plus inches; call in a pro. They also advise working your way up the skills ladder by taking on smaller stuff until you are comfortable toppling trees of 6 inches in diameter — and can make them safely fall where you want them.

Time-proven Technique

Following are the basics of the time-proven technique for hitting your felling target:

1. Check It Out. Study the tree to determine which way it is naturally leaning. Most trees develop an angle of growth, and you should never attempt to fell a tree against the direction it naturally wants to topple. If the tree looks to be standing with no apparent lean, look at its growth to determine if there are more or heavier branches on one side which might make it twist or fall in a particular direction. Make sure that the tree has a clear path in which to fall and that you have a clear path in another direction in which to step back a safe distance without tripping over anything

2. Make the Face Cut.

Using a chain saw, cut a notch on the side of the tree that faces the direction you want it to fall. Make the top cut first, angling down at about 60 degrees to a depth of about one-third the width of the tree’s trunk. Remove the saw blade and make the lower cut, horizontal to the ground, to meet the angled cut and remove the wedge of wood that is cut free.

3. Make the Back Cut.

About 2 inches above the horizontal cut on the face, make a back cut. Keep the cut horizontal to the ground and stop just before the cut is above the edge of the vee-shaped spot where the face cut ends. Make sure you don't cut all the way through. The tree should start to fall in the direction of the wedge, and the 2-inch back cut — called the "hinge" — should keep the trunk from kicking back at you as it topples.

4. Stand Back. Remove the saw from the back cut, turn it off, and back away at an angle from the direction of the tree's fall. Never stand directly behind the tree as it falls; if it does kick back, you'll be in perfect position to be punted out of the gene pool for good!

Dan Armitage is a frequent contributor to CABIN LIFE and a cabin owner from Ohio who is too cheap to buy firewood.

Hot Kicks

Experienced woodsmen will tell you that, due to fiber qualities, hickory trees are one of the hardest to cut and are the species most likely to kick back when being felled. And most agree that the wood from dead elm trees — especially the red elm — burns the hottest and longest of common North American hardwoods.



Study the target tree to find a natural lean or growth pattern to help determine which direction to direct it to fall. Beware of any dead limbs that may come crashing down while you are working below.



Make an angled face cut on the side of the tree facing the direction you want it to fall.



Make the back cut on the opposite side of the tree, about two inches above the notch and allow the tree to fall.

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SCLV Board Meetings are held monthly on the second Wednesday, and are open to all SCLV members. Check with a board member for time and location.

WHAT DO MUSKIES EAT ANYWAY?

MN DNR Fisheries Report

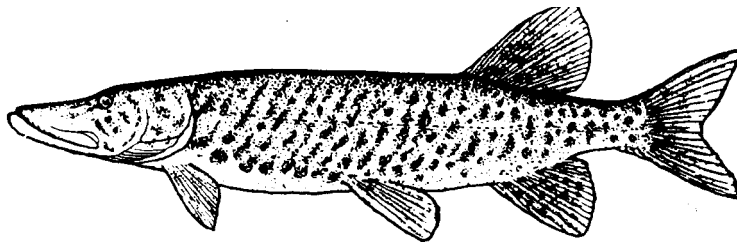
Muskie were successfully established in Lake Vermilion through a stocking program that began in 1984. The muskie population has done well and the lake is now known as one of the premier muskie fisheries in the Midwest. Some anglers occasionally express concern that the muskie introduction may have a negative impact on other fish species, particularly walleye. They are concerned that muskies will eat substantial numbers of walleye and reduce the walleye population. It certainly is wise to be cautious about introducing a new species into a lake, as such introductions are sometimes detrimental to the native fish community. The introduction of muskie into Lake Vermilion was done only after meeting stringent criteria for new muskie introductions and a thorough review of the possible consequences. Based on all the information available, it was decided that introducing muskies would provide a new trophy type of fishery while having a minimal impact on other species. Since the introduction of muskie, the walleye population has continued to do very well. In fact, several of the highest walleye catches ever observed during annual population assessments occurred during the period 2000-2007.

The decision to introduce muskie into Lake Vermilion was based in part on the abundance of tullibee and white sucker in the lake, species that are known to be preferred prey items for muskie. Research has shown that muskie prefer prey without sharp spines in their fins, such as tullibee and sucker. Perch have also been shown to be an important prey item, probably because they are small enough that their spines are not a factor and because they are found in stands of aquatic vegetation that muskie also inhabit. Walleye have not been known to be a major forage species for muskie, even in lakes with abundant walleye populations. Although muskie will certainly eat walleye occasionally, the numbers eaten are minor compared to other natural mortality and angler harvest.

A research project was conducted a number of years ago in Wisconsin that looked at the food habits of muskie. Stomach contents were examined from 1,092 muskie captured in 34 Wisconsin lakes from July 1991 to

October 1994. The muskie were captured throughout the open water season by trapnetting, electrofishing and angling. The muskie stomachs were flushed with water to disgorge the contents without injuring the fish. The captured muskie ranged in size from nine inches to 46 inches. Based on the number and size of consumed food items, yellow perch and white sucker were, by far, the most

important prey species consumed by muskies. Only five walleye were found in the 1,092 muskie stomachs examined. Sunfish, crappie and various minnow species were eaten more frequently than walleye in



the study lakes. Tullibee were not common in many of the study lakes and therefore were relatively unimportant as food items. However, previous research has shown that tullibee are an important food item for muskie in lakes where they are abundant, such as Lake Vermilion.

One interesting aspect of the study was that researchers found that muskies would feed on crayfish in lakes with a high population of rusty crayfish. Since the eastern portion of Lake Vermilion has a high population of rusty crayfish, it is likely that muskie there will also feed on crayfish, although probably not enough to decrease the rusty crayfish population.

It is important to understand that muskie and walleye have co-existed in many lakes across the northern United States and southern Canada for centuries. In fact, many of the premier muskie lakes in the region are also excellent walleye lakes. This would not be possible if muskie decimated walleye populations as is sometimes suggested. The most important strategies for maintaining walleye populations are to protect habitat, preserve water quality and prevent over-harvest.

If anyone has questions about muskie or other fish species in Lake Vermilion please feel free to contact me at our Tower office.

Duane Williams, Large Lake Specialist
DNR Fisheries Phone: 218-753-2580 ext. 224
E-mail: duane.Williams@dnr.state.mn.us

Installing Your New Generator

This is one time you definitely need an electrician

For backup power at the cabin, anyone who can plug in an extension cord can hook up a portable gas generator. But a portable generator will only power what it's plugged into — not the whole cabin.

A portable generator can be hooked into your household wiring if it's large enough to handle the load. The job means installing a manual transfer switch that toggles between the power from your utility company and your generator.

A better choice may be a standby generator. The same procedure is used to install a standby unit which will power on automatically when there's an electrical service failure.

Integrating any generator with your household wiring is not a DIY project. It requires tapping into the utility power where it enters into your cabin — a task for a qualified electrician. Improperly wiring in your generator can produce "back feed" — a dangerous current that can electrocute or critically injure you or even a lineman working on a powerline.

DIY warriors, don't despair. Other tasks for you include leveling a site for the generator, running conduit to the electrical panel and mounting the outdoor connection. But call an electrician to pull the building permit necessary for the project and to do the final hook-ups.

— Lucie B. Amundsen

POST CARD FROM THE PAST



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*A few days ago I walked along the edge of the lake and was treated to the crunch and rustle of leaves with each step I made. The acoustics of this season are different and all sounds, no matter how hushed, are as crisp as autumn air.* — Eric Sloane  
~~~~~

Muskies, Release Them Right

by Larry Ramsell, Muskie Guide

Over the past 20 to 25 years, muskie anglers have progressed from “catch and keep” to “catch and release” anglers. This great trend has done wonders to enhance North America’s muskie fisheries. In the “old days” the average size of kept muskies was in the 34-inch range. Now, due to catch and release, the average size here in the Hayward area is pushing or exceeding 40 inches! The “good ol’ days” are NOW! Not only has the average size of our muskies increased greatly, there are more “trophy” sized muskies available and being caught by anglers.

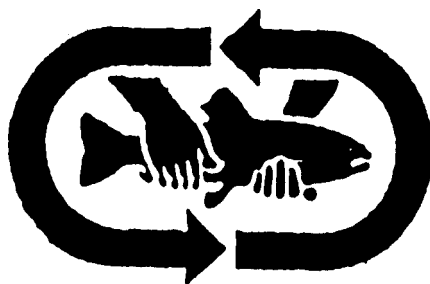
One of the biggest problems encountered along the way has been teaching anglers how to properly handle the muskie they have caught to ensure its survival once released. While capturing that long-sought-after muskie is foremost in anglers’ minds, for the majority of anglers who intend to safely release a muskie after capturing it, the “how to” is equally important, so I would like to address that here.

While the majority of muskie fisherfolks net their fish, how and what to do next is often the problem. First of all, one must make sure that they have the proper “tools” on board to accomplish this task.

The new muskie nets of today are more fish friendly, with coated netting to prevent the lure’s hooks from become hopelessly entangled. The Stowmaster or Beckman muskie nets, available at places like Pastika’s Sport Shop in Hayward, cannot be beat. They can be used like a “holding pen” for the fish, by leaving the fish in its environment, the water, at the side of the boat.

Additional tools, like the Baker Hook-out and a good set of small bolt cutters are also a necessity. The hook-out allows the angler to get at the hooks without getting hands too close to the muskie’s sharp teeth and gills. For fish that are hooked too solidly to remove with the hook-out, the bolt cutters come into play. A 25-cent hook is a small price

to pay for the safe release of King Esox! Some anglers use a “fish glove” to help handle the fish and hold it for a QUICK photo session. I STRONGLY recommend the Musky Armor Gloves (www.muskyarmor.com) — no more gill raker cuts on the backs of your fingers!



Before you remove your fish from the net, make sure to have the camera ready to shoot, and keep the fish out of the water no longer than you can hold your breath! And please, do not place your fish in or out of the net, on the bottom of the boat. Not only will this remove the layer of protective slime on the fish that protects it from bacterial disease, they will often thrash around and injure themselves, creating havoc with tackle as well.

After the photos are taken, gently place your muskie back in the water and hold them upright. If when you let them go they turn sideways or upside down, they may need to be “burped.” Muskies’ swim bladder is below center, and some tired muskies cannot overcome excess air contained therein. Should this be the case, hold your fish’s back against the side of the boat by the tail and using the other hand, gently press the stomach starting near the anal fin and push along the stomach towards the head. This will help to remove the excess air from the bladder and give the muskie a much better chance of regaining its equilibrium and swimming away in good shape.

Please remember, the best intentions aside, a released muskie’s chances of survival after release are only as good as the methods you use. Take the extra steps necessary and make sure you have the proper tools before leaving the dock, and may your next muskie be the fish of a lifetime!

Larry Ramsell is a muskie guide in the Hayward area and can be contacted at: 715-462-9880 or email at: larryramsell@hotmail.com.

CITIZEN LAKE MONITORING.....WE DID IT!!!!

By: Mel Hintz

Last spring, as we were preparing to launch the Citizen Lake Monitoring Program Plus on Lake Vermilion there were several questions running through my mind. How would we organize to tackle a lake the size of Vermilion? Would we have enough volunteers to carry out the program? Would their support wane during the later stages of the summer long program? Could we master the water sampling/processing protocols and the associated paperwork to meet the expectations of our sponsor, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency? And, could we meet the shipping deadlines and handling requirements so that our water samples arrived at the lab in St. Paul in good condition?

Now that summer is over and the sampling season has ended, I can reflect on these questions and say.....We did it! With strong emphasis on the word We. We begins with more than 25 SCLV volunteers who attended training in early May and remained dedicated to the program throughout the summer. We received sampling equipment, supplies, and expert guidance from MPCA Research Scientist, Jesse Anderson throughout the summer. Lastly, we received assistance from the DNR-Tower and U.S. Forest Service Office at Cook in shipping our water samples to the lab at St. Paul.

According to Jesse Anderson, the 2008 Lake Vermilion sampling was the largest project taken on by a

volunteer organization in the state. Each of our three volunteer teams collected water samples from their assigned sites on six different dates during the summer. All tolled, we collected and processed close to 250 water samples, devoted more than 80 hours and traveled over 300 miles by water as part of this project. Our volunteer work was supplemented by three rounds of data collected by the MPCA.

Through our collective efforts, the MPCA now has access to nine sets of data for each of the eight Lake Vermilion sites collected at 2-3 week intervals spanning from mid-May through the end of September. By contrast, the 2000 Lake Vermilion Assessment was based on only four sites where samples were collected once a month from May through September. Therefore, the agency this time has a much more extensive database to analyze the current water quality (trophic status) of Lake Vermilion. Of particular interest will be any changes or trends indicated by the current data versus the 2000 assessment. The 2000 assessment indicated that Lake Vermilion trophic status was slightly below average when compared to other lakes in the Northern Lakes Forest ecoregion. Therefore, the SCLV Board is keenly interested in the results of this new study. The MPCA report detailing their findings on Lake Vermilion will be completed later this year or early 2009. The full report will be posted on our website when it is released.

Is Your Membership Current?

You may have noticed that we've added a 4-digit number after your name on the newsletter mailing label. We want to make it easy for you to know if your membership dues are up to date. For example, "2008" indicates our records show you're paid through calendar year 2008.

In early December, you'll receive a membership renewal request for 2009. Please review your main address, seasonal address and dues status shown in the renewal letter. Let us know of any errors. We don't want you to miss a single newsletter.

Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion, Inc.

Jeff Lovgren, Member Records • P.O. Box 696 • Tower MN 55790
lovgren@frontiernet.net • (218 753-2413)

Membership year runs from Jan 1st through Dec 31st

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Join those who love Lake Vermilion as much as you do. Help us continue the many activities you've just read about.

Not sure? Check us out at our website www.sportsmensclublakevermilion.org. We're pretty sure you'll like our vision for the future and the work we have under way now to make Lake Vermilion even better.

Please use the form on this page or the form on our website. Make checks payable to the "Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion." The Sportsmen's Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Join us as we work to improve this great lake. Together we can have an even bigger impact!

HELP US MAKE A BEAUTIFUL LAKE EVEN BETTER!



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