

THE VERMILION



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*To Protect and
Improve Lake
Vermilion*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It is late June and it seems like we have skipped spring and moved to summer. After having nearly 3 to 4 feet of ice on the lake at the beginning of May, we had ice out before the fishing opener. With temperatures into the high 80s in May, spawning by most fish species occurred rapidly and if you were lucky to find crappies in mid-May, you caught a lot of fish. According to the guides and local fishermen, walleye fishing has been good with some very nice eating fish. Good luck to all you anglers.



Terry Grosshauser
VLA President

We continue to be very proud of the new format of the newsletter and based upon comments we have received, members are certainly enjoying the picture-friendly format and the always interesting articles. In an effort to get our messages to more property owners on the lake, we mailed a letter and the May newsletter to non-members to hopefully convince more people to join. We believe the price of membership is very reasonable and the newsletter alone creates a value that property owners would be interested in. While we have added approximately 60 new members, we were hoping for a much higher number. If you have the opportunity and believe in our activities, please mention your support to your neighbors who may be non-members. It could be very important in the future if we have a need to contact property owners if there is some emergency related to invasive species or other issues important to everyone having property in the area. Our efforts continue to be directed at protecting and improving Lake Vermilion.

In the fishery area, we are patiently waiting for the new fishery lake management plan to be finalized by the DNR. The last conversation indicated that it is close to being ready to publicize. Also please see the articles about the PIT tag reader and a new study on

Lake Vermilion this summer by Dr. Gretchen Hanson which will start approximately the third week of July. Remember that the northern pike regulation this summer is a slot from 24 - 36 inches where all fish must be released with a limit of three fish and only one can be greater than 36 inches. There will be a DNR public meeting in late August in the evening at the civic center in Tower to review potential regulation changes for northern pike in 2019. This meeting is to obtain public input on a potential change to the regulation and it is important that the public participate in this meeting.

See the article in this newsletter on new news on cormorant controls and potential new legislation being proposed on controlling cormorants. Nest counts on Potato Island this year were approximately the same as last year. However sixty of the nests showed no activity this year which means that overall numbers seem to be down this year compared to last year, but we will not know the number of cormorants until the loon and cormorant count in July. The DNR has indicated that cormorants are only nesting on Potato Island currently and that is consistent with our surveys.

On the aquatic invasive species (AIS) front, we have continued to expand our efforts in the key areas: fishing tournaments, public landings, private landings including resorts, campgrounds and marinas, and our volunteer sentry operation. We feel these operations are the best approach to preventing new AIS from getting into Lake Vermilion and identifying any new weed infestation early enough to try to remove it. Please see the articles on the sentry program and what you can do to help by looking for a change in weeds in the area around your property. Jeff Lovgren continues to lead these efforts and they are very substantial; he deserves your thanks if you see him out and about.

This is our 50th anniversary and we are holding the annual meeting at Camp Vermilion on August 11 (more details included in the newsletter). The food will be free and it is a great chance to see all of your friends and meet us and our partners who work at protecting Lake Vermilion. We will have people available who can answer just about any question

See President's Message...page 4

Celebrating our 50th Year



Vermilion Lake Association 50th Anniversary Celebration Picnic & Information Fair on Saturday, August 11

All Lake Vermilion Association members are invited to the 50th Anniversary Celebration Picnic hosted by the VLA on Saturday, August 11. The picnic will be held at Camp Vermilion, 2555 Vermilion Camp Rd. in Cook and is free to our members.



Jeff Stebbins
VLA Member

“The goal of this picnic is to celebrate our first 50 years and to increase awareness of the challenges ahead,” said celebration committee chair Jeff Stebbins. “It will also be a time to highlight initiatives being taken by the association to preserve the lake environment in the future.”

Attendees can see all the VLA has to offer, and how members have helped improve and preserve lake quality over the past 50 years.

With the outdoor location at Camp Vermilion, which sits on

the shores of the lake, the organization is hoping to attract many families, young and old, for an afternoon celebrating the lake we all love.

A fabulous picnic menu is planned: Fried chicken, corn on the cob, potato salad, vegetarian options and lots of desserts; coffee, tea, lemonade, and water, with adult beverages available for purchase.

We are having two serving times to accommodate as many people as possible; a buffet lunch open from 12:00 – 2:30 and a dinner buffet from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

The event is part of a year-long celebration for the lake association, which was founded back in 1968.

The anniversary picnic will have activities for the whole family, including raffles and giveaways throughout the afternoon, with the chance to win some amazing prizes.

In addition to the picnic, we are featuring educational booths, information from the DNR and St. Louis County, exhibits and plenty of VLA members on hand to answer questions about the lake, its fishery, and dangers from aquatic invasive species.

To reply contact one of the following:

- Jeff & Nancy Stebbins at 218-666-5556
- Rob & Rhonda Joki at 218-666-6147
- Marge McPeak at 218-753-3503
- Mel & Ellen Hintz at 218-753-2410
- Or by email to RSVP@vermilionlakeassociation.org

Thank You To Our 50th Anniversary Picnic Sponsors

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Vermilion Land Office- Barb Hegg



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Walleye fry stocked in Lake Vermilion in 2018

Jeff Eibler, manager at the Pike River Hatchery, reported last week that 6,200,000 walleye fry had been stocked in Lake Vermilion. The following is a breakdown of the stocking by lake area:

Pike Bay: 600,000

Big Bay: 2,300,000

Daisy Bay: 300,000

Pine Island: 400,000

Frazer/Smart Bays:
700,000

Niles Bay: 600,000

Wakemup Bay: 600,000

Norwegian Bay: 300,000

Head of the Lakes:
400,000.

The egg take and fry hatching season was very short, only three weeks, one of the shortest on record. According to the DNR, fry survival from both stocking and natural reproduction is low; often less than one percent of fry survive to become adults.



Jeff Eibler
DNR Fisheries



President's Message...from page 2

about Lake Vermilion, from fisheries to water quality and many other important areas of interest to people using Lake Vermilion. Pictures entered in the photo contest will be voted on by the attendees and there will be prizes: First Place - \$100; Second Place - \$75 and Third Place - \$50.

We are always looking for volunteers or potential board members who are looking for a challenge to run a project for the organization and have a desire to protect one of the most beautiful lakes in Minnesota. Pat Michaelson is the new coordinator of recruiting volunteers. She works with board members to determine our volunteer needs and matches them with potential new volunteers. Contact Pat (plmichaelson@gmail.com) or Terry (terrygrosshauser@gmail.com).

Photographing Loons

My hobby of taking pictures has really blossomed since my retirement from the Post Office. I have always loved and admired nature, but now I have a way to share what I see with others.

Many people ask me “What’s your secret?” No secret, really, just get out there!

I love to get my kayak out as soon as I can after the ice goes out. I paddle quietly to discover as much beauty as possible without bothering my subject. I stay quite a distance away, so as not to disturb any of their daily routines. I have a long lens on my camera which makes for some great images while staying at a distance.

I find my favorite images at dawn and dusk—that’s when there’s the most animal activity and lighting is best. The loon is so beautiful and it’s a treasure to find a nest where Momma loon is sitting patiently waiting for the birth of her new little ones.

I smile when I see the everyday teachings of Mom



Carol Bowman

and Dad loon to their babies. These things are so fun to witness and so easy to see when out in a canoe or kayak. If you are lucky enough to see wildlife, make sure to respect their space so as not to disturb them.

Don’t think you need any special camera. Just know the limitations of the one you have—even if it’s your phone.

Practice and practice some more.

Enjoy our lake area and have fun taking special photos of your own. Happy paddling!

The Vermilion Lake Association would like to thank Carol Bowman for letting us use the loon photograph on the cover. You can see more of Carol’s photography at the Northwoods Friends of the Arts Gallery in Cook.

Loon Nesting Platforms...Maybe Next Year

As of the end of June, it is looking more and more like year two of our loon nesting platform deployment is another “swing and a miss”. No interest whatsoever in our east platform. On the west side, a loon pair actually got up on the platform, but elected to move on to another nest site. A recent inspection of this platform found it occupied by two turtles...how rude! So, after two years of deploying two platforms, we still have failed to attract any loons...frustrating.

I consulted federal loon researcher, Kevin Kenow, for advice on how we might improve our odds of success. Kevin donated one of the platforms to our lake association and he has viewed pictures of them as deployed with the eagle guard and nesting vegetation. He said the design of the platforms looked fine, but sometimes it takes a number of years before the loons adapt to a new platform. He added, it is encouraging that a pair of loons has been sizing up our west platform so patience would be the best strategy here. Kevin recommended that we find a more sheltered location for our east platform that provides protection

from the wind and waves. The photo shows that much of the screening and nesting material present on this platform upon deployment in mid-May had been swept away by wave action when inspected in late June.

Next year is a new ball game, when we will resume our quest to attract Minnesota’s state bird to our nesting platforms. Following Kevin’s advice, we will continue with patience and

a new location affording more shelter for the platform on the east end of the lake.

East platform showing where wave action has removed some of the nesting material.



Understanding the impacts of invasive species on walleye in Minnesota's large lakes



Biologists from the Minnesota DNR examine their catch from a seine haul on Upper Red Lake.

Minnesota's walleye fisheries are vulnerable to ecosystem changes following the introduction of invasive species such as zebra mussels and spiny water flea. For example, zebra mussels reduce zooplankton, an important prey item for many fish species, while at the same time increasing the abundance of bottom-dwelling plants and animals. Spiny water fleas also reduce the biomass of other zooplankton, and the long spines of the spiny water flea mean that many fish cannot eat them to replace the prey that have been lost. These zooplankton declines are likely to affect walleye, because both young walleye and many of their prey species rely on zooplankton as food during early life stages. However, the impacts of zebra mussels and spiny water fleas



on sport fish populations are not well-known. Impacts likely depend upon the capacity of fish to switch to alternative food sources when zooplankton become scarce. Whether or not fish can make this switch likely depends on lake characteristics including size and depths, nutrient status, and fish community composition. Understanding how these invasive species disrupt the flow of energy to walleye and identifying characteristics of resilient walleye populations will allow managers to set realistic goals for future walleye production and harvest, and to assess the likely impacts of future invasions.

To understand the impacts of these invasive species

Continued on next page

Shore Lunch Sites Get New Signs

Mel Hintz, VLA Board Member

With the help of VLA volunteers Dick Johnson and John Zwieg, new aluminum signs depicting the Vermilion Lake Association name and logo have been installed at our eight shore lunch sites located on the lake. The signs are mounted on the ends of our docks so they can be easily viewed by boaters approaching these water-access sites. The public is welcome to use the sites to stop for lunch, stretch your legs, or use the latrine. They are day use only and out of courtesy to others, please limit the length of your stay. No camping or houseboat mooring is allowed. For a map showing the location of the eight shore lunch sites, please visit our website www.VermilionLakeAssociation.org.

New sign at the Black Bay Shore Lunch site.

VLA volunteer John Zwieg installing the new sign at the Norwegian Bay North site.



on Minnesota's walleye fisheries, we will examine fish of all kinds, zooplankton, and other invertebrates to understand who is eating whom and how that is disrupted by invasion in Minnesota's large lakes. We will also look at historical growth rates of young walleye and yellow perch to assess if changes in their zooplankton prey are causing declines in their growth. We will sample Lake Vermilion this July and September, and our study also includes Cass, Winnibigoshish, Leech, Kabetogama, Rainy, Mille Lacs, Lake of the Woods, and Red Lake.

Lake Vermilion provides an ideal system for studying the effects of spiny water fleas on fish. Spiny water

fleas were found in 2014 in the Eastern basin, and native zooplankton have declined in this basin in the past year. However, no spiny water fleas have been found in the Western basin, which means it can serve as a kind of reference system to which we can compare our results from the invaded basin. Our research team consists of scientists from the Minnesota DNR and the Natural Resources Research Institute of the University of Minnesota-Duluth, with funding from the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC), supported by the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Results will be available in 2019.

Lilacs



Like people, the blooming rite of spring repeats.
Buds appear, heralding the event.
The hint of what is to come is there
But only first suggested.

Magically.... within a day it seems, we witness the new birth.
Like fireworks exploding over the horizon,
Blooms everywhere, swaying, easy on one's eyes.
The new life bringing hints of soft smiles to faces.

And their fragrance,
Nature's aphrodisiac
So familiar but, yet....oh so mysterious.
The imagination runs.....what might come?

And yet, like our life, all so fragile.
Too soon taken by nature's force.
Or by events never contemplated.
The delicate little petal is gone....hard to grasp.

One wonders, were there ever any lasting markers?
Any way to discern true value to this time, our time?
Or, like the lilac, is this chronicling arc of our journey,
Its own beauty, its embraces of the senses, its demise....
gift enough?

Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade

Before the formation of the Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade (LVFB), emergencies on Vermilion's 1,200 miles of shoreline were reported through 911, with local volunteers traveling up to 30 miles by road to respond. Water-access-only properties on the west end of the lake required that responders travel to emergencies in borrowed boats. During the fall of 2009, a group of residents began organizing, planning, and fundraising for the purchase of a fire boat for the west end of the lake, and the LVFB was incorporated as a Minnesota non-profit organization. The Brigade now has a fire boat, an airboat, and a support boat, allowing us to provide fire, medical, and search-and-rescue emergency aid with year-round support and transportation. We're an all-volunteer community service organization and are funded entirely through the generosity of our lake community. There is truly no other organization like ours in Minnesota, or the rest of the country.



Don & Laurie Potter
LVFB Volunteers

During this past year, we have been paged for mutual aid on multiple fire, medical, and search/rescue events. At last year's Antique Boat Show, the LVFB was paged for mutual aid on an EMS call. We were able to respond, quickly, as we were already positioned in the water near the public landing. We picked up, delivered, and assisted the Cook Ambulance Service with the medical emergency.

The LVFB continues to support the USFS and DNR in prescribed fire, wildfire, and training. The LVFB participated in two days of prescribed burns with the USFS in May. The main purpose of the burn was to reduce heavy fuel loads adjacent to a day-use site and campsite in Norwegian Bay. A wildfire in dense dead and live balsam could be widespread and difficult to control. The LVFB was there to assist in containing the fire, to reduce fire intensity, and to provide public outreach.

Within the last year, LVFB has added five new members to our organization, including individuals in boat operations, firefighting, and EMS. We actively train with CAS and CVFD and will participate in two joint water emergency scenarios this summer on Lake Vermilion and Elbow Lake. We may also train with the U. S. Forest Service and other agencies later this summer, depending on the fire season here and



out west, and the availability of the fire crews.

The Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade (LVFB) held our first (annual) pig roast and fundraiser on the Saturday before Memorial Day this year. The event was successful in large part due to the great support we received from our local community, our friends and our neighbors, in addition to various natural resource agencies and service organizations. Participants included Cook Ambulance Service (CAS), Cook Volunteer Fire Department (CVFD), Cook Hospital and Care Center, St. Louis County Sheriff's Department, U. S. Forest Service, and the Vermilion Lake Association. Numerous volunteers, including the Boys Scouts and National Honor Society students, helped serve food and beverages and run the fabulously fun Bounce House and the silent and live auctions.

We are a 100-percent volunteer-driven non-profit organization. You are welcome to send donations to the LVFB @ 8025 Oak Narrows in Cook, MN 55723. Also, you can follow us on Facebook or our website, facebook.com/LakeVermilionFireBrigade, and lakevermilionfirebrigade.com.



The AIS Detector program is provided by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center in partnership with the University of Minnesota/Extension. The role of an AIS Detector is to report on new occurrences of AIS found in water bodies in Minnesota. Catching a new AIS occurrence early in the invasion provides the best chance for preventing the AIS from establishing, controlling the new AIS within that lake, and preventing further spread to other water bodies.



Wayne Suoja
VLA Board Member

Last year, the only certified AIS Detector on Vermilion was Frank Siskar. This year, four more volunteers are now certified. Pictured during their training in Duluth,



from left to right, Steve Lindberg (Head of Lakes Bay), Mary McNellis (north side of Niles Bay), and Wayne Suoja (south side of Pike Bay). Bob McNamara

(Portage Bay) is shown separately checking the Rice Bay public access.

Continued on next page

Early AIS Detection Relies on a Team

Early detection of new aquatic invasive species (AIS) infestations is a team effort. Key to our success is property owners, lake visitors, volunteer access sentries, and AIS Detectors all working together.

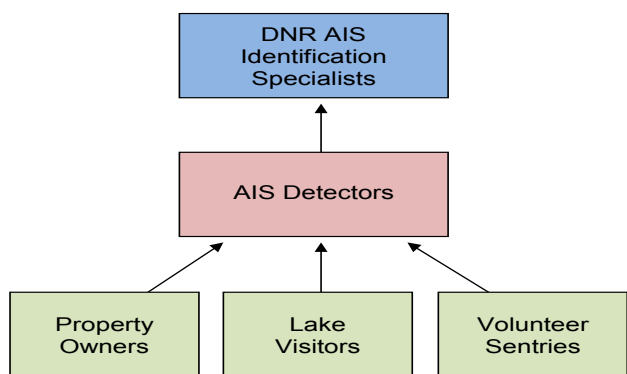
Property owners and lake visitors are encouraged to report any suspicious aquatic vegetation or invertebrates which they do not recognize as native to Lake Vermilion to our AIS Detectors.



Jeff Lovgren
VLA Board Member

Because our highest priority threats are vegetation that tend to be noticed first where introduced to Lake Vermilion, volunteer sentries monitor Vermilion's public and private accesses for new vegetation. Suspicious newcomers are reported to our AIS Detectors.

AIS Detectors (see adjacent article) follow up on all reports, make tentative identification, and forward possible AIS discoveries to Minnesota DNR experts for review and confirmation.



Reporting Potential AIS Discoveries at Lake Vermilion



These four volunteers just recently completed training sessions, both an online course series and an 8 hour in-person workshop. Completion of the training includes passing a knowledge assessment prior to receiving the certification as an AIS Detector. To maintain the status as an AIS Detector, the volunteer must complete 8 hours of refresher or advanced training each year and complete 25 hours of volunteer AIS related service annually.

Your AIS Detectors on Lake Vermilion will work closely with our sentry volunteers, and other citizens when they report a suspicious AIS specimen. If the

AIS Detector cannot confirm the identity of the specimen, they will take your contact information,

and send a detailed report to the DNR for confirmation.

How to Report Possible AIS Discoveries

Property owners and lake visitors are encouraged to report any suspicious aquatic vegetation or invertebrates which they do not recognize as native to Lake Vermilion to one of the following AIS Detectors:

Steve Lindberg • srlind@usfamily.net • 651-600-4638

Bob McNamara • bob@bobmcnamara.com • 612-743-8124

Mary McNellis • mmcnellis@stcroixre.com • 612-804-8604

Wayne Suoja • wsuoja@frontiernet.net • 218-753-2162



VLA President Terry Grosshauser presents the new PIT Tag reader to Matt Hennen, Tower DNR Fisheries office.

Vermilion Resort Association and VLA purchase PIT Tag reader for the DNR

The Vermilion Lake Association and Lake Vermilion Resort Association joined forces to purchase a PIT Tag reader for the local Tower DNR to use.

The PIT tag reader gift from the Vermilion Lake Association and the Lake Vermilion Resort Association is greatly appreciated by the fish crew at Tower DNR. We were working with a borrowed one last fall, so thank you!



Edie Evarts
DNR Fisheries

a PIT tag is a microchip (like you can get inserted under a pet's skin). The tag is about the size of a grain of rice, is injected into the muscle behind the dorsal fin, and is not visible from the outside. Each tag is coded with a unique number so each tagged fish then gets a "name". This allows us to create a database with information on each tagged fish. The PIT tag reader reads the tag number so we can identify each fish when it is recaptured and then look it up in our stored data. The data recorded at tagging is: size, sex, and age at stocking, and when and where the fish was stocked. Size, maturity, location and date will be

PIT is short for Passive Integrated Transponder and

Continued on next page

recorded if a fish is recaptured.

We have started tagging all muskie fingerlings that we stock so we can distinguish stocked fish from naturally reproduced muskies. We will also have definite age and growth information as we will know how old each fish is when we recatch them. Muskies are difficult to age otherwise (and aging normally requires killing the fish). Getting a handle on the amount of natural reproduction is a long-term analysis because we will have to tag stocked muskies for a number of years. Most of these fish will not be recaptured until they are mature because our best method to assess muskies is in spring trap nets during the spawning period. This means we may not see some of these fish again for a few years, unless they happen into a gill net or seine.

We will be doing a spawning assessment using large trap nets in spring of 2019 which allows us to compare the size and sex distribution of muskellunge to other years. In 2019, we will also tag all of the adult fish caught in the trap nets in an effort to get a population estimate. This is done by allowing the tagged fish to

mix back in with all the other (uncaught and untagged) muskies in the lake. Then we go back and collect more fish by electrofishing or other methods. If we can collect a large enough sample, we can then estimate the total number of muskies in the lake. The estimate is based on the proportion of tagged versus untagged fish in the sample and the knowledge of the total number of tagged fish out in the lake. This population estimate is a big effort and we have planned for three crews of three people each. We expect that the tag and recapture effort will take at least three weeks with assistance from Fisheries staff from other areas.

Having tagged muskies in the lake will also allow us to see how they move about the lake. In the future, once there are a fair number of muskies tagged, we would also like to partner with local muskie guides so that they could use tag readers.



In Memoriam...

The Vermilion Lake Association regularly receives donations in memory of loved ones or friends. We are grateful for these gifts and also wish to honor those who have passed away:

William C. Allen M.D.

Lucille & Mike Begich

Dennis Fabozzi

Zach Gauthier

Darryl Johnson

Rod McPeak

Christopher Nicklow

Gerry Rosenberger

Paul Stimac

Ben Terrier

Donald Wildman

2018 VLA Business Meeting

A brief Annual Meeting will be held at Camp Vermilion at the dining hall on Saturday August 11, 2018, during the Family Picnic & Information Fair. All VLA members are welcome to participate.

A business meeting is required annually to elect Directors and to take up any other matters that require a vote by members. The short meeting will begin at 3:00 p.m. near the Camp Vermilion dining hall.

Four Generations of Helping Hands

If you live on or near any lake, you are there for one specific reason. It's because you love the lake and want to share that love with everyone around you.

Harold and Shirley Korpela knew the first time they laid eyes on Lake Vermilion that this place is so special they wanted to live there forever.



Penny Jackson
Author and
VLA Volunteer

The two of them built a family cabin and set off on an adventure to enjoy, respect and preserve the lake they loved.

In 1978, Harold contacted the lake association and decided to sign himself and Shirley up to volunteer. For many years he found himself heading up the spring sucker sale at the Pike River Hatchery and he even volunteered to be on the lake association's board of directors.

Shirley had a love for the many common loons that call Lake Vermilion their home and soon decided to take part in the annual loon count. She was assigned to a five-mile territory on the lake and, like all designated loon counters on the lake, she counted loons every year on the designated date and the same time of day. She did this for over 26 years with Harold steering the boat while Shirley counted.

As time breezed by like ripples on the water, Shirley decided she needed a little help counting the loons, so she asked her daughter Jill Korpela Bontems and Jill's husband Jerry Bontems to assist them. Jill was always more than willing to help her mom and dad. During the 2010 count, Jill brought along her son Ryan and his boys, Evan and Drake. A family tradition of volunteering had been passed down to the next generations.

Harold passed on about five years ago and Shirley now resides in senior housing in Virginia. The love they felt for Lake Vermilion lives on in the hearts



Four generations of the Korpela family, including (l-r), Harold, Shirley, their daughter Jill, grandson Ryan, and great-grandsons Drake and Evan, posed for a photo during the 2010 loon count on Lake Vermilion.

and hands of those who continue to volunteer on the lake.

Today, Jill and Jerry are still counting loons as her mother and father did for 30 years. Jerry spends most of his volunteer time helping the Vermilion Lake Association maintain the night navigation aid program.

This program is a series of flashing night navigation lights located along the major travel routes on the lake. Inconspicuous by day, the lights assist boaters and snowmobilers traveling the lake at night by helping them visually locate the main routes of travel. The solar powered lights are placed at shoreline spots and are not intended to indicate navigational hazards.

Anyone traveling Lake Vermilion at night should refer to a boater's map of the lake which will indicate exactly where the lights are located.

The Korpela-Bontems families along with many others "give back to the lake by giving of their time and ability, their hearts and their hands." Would you like to help? Many other opportunities are available to you. You can check them out at www.Vermilion-LakeAssociation.org or contact Pat Michaelson at plmichaelson@gmail.com.

AIS Threats in Our Own Backyard

Jeff Lovgren, VLA Board Member

To those fighting the aquatic invasive species (AIS) battle every day, being “connected” is not a good thing. It’s a measure of how many trailered boats come to Lake Vermilion from other lakes and rivers. Some of those water bodies harbor invasives which could find Vermilion’s habitat perfect.

Nearby lakes with AIS infestations which would be game changers at Lake Vermilion make us especially nervous. Lake Ore-Be-Gone ... also known as the Gilbert Pit ... has Eurasian watermilfoil adjacent to its public access, fishing pier and swimming beach. It’s a popular destination for locals, RV campers, and SCUBA divers. And it’s only a 45-minute drive away from Lake Vermilion.

Beginning in 2018, to better understand this threat and to protect Vermilion and other St. Louis County lakes, our AIS partnership has a watercraft inspector and decontamination unit at Lake Ore-Be-Gone from Friday through Sunday. Our AIS partnership – North St. Louis SWCD, Fayal Township, Vermilion Lake Association, and Burntside Lake Association –



also plans a vegetation inventory and water chemistry analysis later this summer.

Should the vegetation inventory find both native Northern watermilfoil and invasive Eurasian watermilfoil, Lake Ore-Be-Gone could be an incubator for many varieties of hybrid watermilfoil. Northern watermilfoil is native to Lake Vermilion. A hybrid with the habitat tolerance of the Northern parent and the aggressiveness of the Eurasian parent could be a game changer at Vermilion.

Who Would Have Guessed Counting Boats Would Be So Hard?

Jeff Lovgren, VLA Board Member

This spring, our aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention team began a two-year project to further improve the efficiency of boat inspection work at 17 Lake Vermilion and 5 Burntside Lake public accesses. Pretty straightforward ... right? All we needed to do was deploy our inspectors at the busiest public accesses at the busiest times of the day for the entire boating season.

It’s not hard to measure the traffic when a boat inspector is there doing inspections. But what’s happening at other times and at unstaffed accesses?

OK. This is easy. We purchased and deployed five recorders which would magnetically sense trailered boats and tow vehicles at our accesses. After much experimentation, we concluded one count for one boat was never going to happen. Who would have



predicted the number of times a trailer will back past the sensor as it tries to hit the ramp just right?

Who would have predicted a boat would park next to the sensor, registering many counts, as life jackets were retrieved and tie-down straps were removed before launch?

So, we decided to rely more on wildlife trail cameras. But that wasn’t foolproof either. A camera mysteriously disappeared at Frazer Bay public access during the first week. If one hides the camera in the woods a bit, moving branches log hundreds of pictures. Who would have guessed, even when the parking lot is not full, someone would park a truck along the road blocking the camera’s view? And sometimes it’s tricky figuring out from a single picture whether the boat is entering or exiting.

Are we discouraged? No way. The fun is just beginning. Stay tuned for the next update in this saga.

Removing Lake Plants Could Require a Permit

Lakeshore property owners are reminded that a permit may be required to remove aquatic plants, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

“We need plants to have healthy lakes and strong fish populations, it’s as simple as that,” said Jon Hansen, DNR aquatic plant management consultant. “So each year we remind folks to let them grow, but if they are set on removing plants, please check regulations to see if they need a permit.”

Aquatic plants provide food and shelter for fish, ducks and other wildlife. They stabilize the lake bottom, which helps maintain water clarity. These plants also protect shorelines from erosion by absorbing energy from waves and ice.



Additionally, the DNR is getting questions about devices that generate water current to blast muck and plants away.

“We refer to these devices as hydraulic jets and even though you can buy one, they cannot be used in any way that disturbs the bottom of the lake or uproots plants,” Hansen said.

Specific regulations govern what situations require permits for aquatic plant removal. Aquatic plant regulations and a guide to aquatic plants can be found at mndnr.gov/shorelandplants. To apply for a permit, visit the DNR’s permitting and reporting system at mndnr.gov/mpars.

Board of Directors and Officers 2017-2018

Cook

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651-343-3346, Adam.r.maki@ampf.com

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2018 Loon and Cormorant Count on Lake Vermilion

Terry Grosshauser, VLA President

It was a beautiful day to count birds this year. On July 9, from 9 - 10 a.m., over 70 volunteers spread out across Lake Vermilion to count both loons and cormorants in the 23 designated territories. This is the 37th year that volunteers have counted loons on Lake Vermilion so we have created a great history in surveying of the population of loons on the lake. The volunteers have their assigned territories and they have an enjoyable ride around the lake counting both loons and cormorants. Many gather at a picnic site to share numbers and baked goods. This is one of our most popular activities while serving to help better understand the population changes for these birds.

We have very good news in 2018 since the overall count of loons increased from 202 loons in 2017 to 235 loons in 2018. Chicks in 2017 were 29 compared to 38 in 2018. Last year presented some higher winds and some chicks did not hatch until after the count, but all in all a very good year for our state bird.

The cormorant nests on Potato Island were down from 332 nests to 324 nests (DNR data) in 2018. A DNR visit to the island in

mid-June showed there were 60 nests without any fledglings or eggs. The count of cormorants in 2018 was 332 versus 673 birds in 2017. The lower number of cormorants is noticeable when out on the lake this year. Although we do not know what exactly caused the reduction of cormorants this year, we do know the population of herring gulls on the island seems to be strong and they are very aggressive and could be eating eggs or very young fledglings.

The photograph below is of some of the loon counters in the central area of the lake celebrating the count, and the great weather we had. The lady sitting at the picnic table is my wife's 92-year-old mother, who is up from Arizona and enjoyed her eighth loon count. Needless to say, it was a fun event for all.



Vermilion Lake Association Caps Now Available



They're here! Wear your new caps proudly to show your support for your lake association. The price is right: \$15, plus \$3 shipping for any number of caps to one address. Free local pickup. Check out the three style choices at our website VermilionLakeAssociation.org/caps.

For more info, contact Sheri Sawatzky 218-666-5512, or email sherisawatzky@gmail.com.

Congress and Cormorant Environmental Assessment

Terry Grosshauser, VLA President

Fish and Wildlife Service has gained approval to restore some cormorant control measures through an environmental assessment that now allows for the control to be used in four instances. The new controls do NOT allow for control for protecting wild fish populations -i.e. a lake like Lake Vermilion.

The four areas where the ability to control cormorants has been restored include: for health and public safety; for threats to aquaculture operations; for cases of property damage; and for protecting threatened and endangered species.

Lakes were not included in the Environmental Assessment because it is more difficult to prove a direct impact in complex biological systems like a lake.

However, a bipartisan Congressional effort is considering restoring the tool legislatively. Two congressional representatives from Michigan and Arkansas have introduced bills to reinstate the depredation

orders and Collin Peterson, the 7th District U.S. Rep. from Minnesota, also issued a statement supporting reinstating the depredation efforts that were previously used to reduce the number of cormorants on Vermilion.

Further research by the Fish and Wildlife Service is expected over the next year to determine if information from the state and tribal studies will support these bills.

Although the outcome is certainly not clear at the time of this writing, there may be new requirements that each lake will have to meet before depredation is allowed again. The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe have been able to study the stomach contents of 700 cormorants in 2017 and another 1,000 cormorants in 2018 through research permits they have obtained. This project should help identify better what the cormorants are eating and how much.

We will continue to watch whether or not these bills to reinstate the depredation order will move forward.



Rainy Day Dreaming

Antique angler here again with a little dreaming of warmer days in August. Every August, there seem to be those rainy days where the wind is down and it rains off and on throughout the day. Many years ago when we use to stay at a resort, the vacation always seemed too short and if it rained a little we would still go fishing. The days are grey overcast with drizzle to light rain which just seems to roll in continuously, but we do avoid days with lightning and high winds.



Over the years, I still look for those days, as the fishing on Lake Vermilion can be unbelievable during those rainy days. I am not sure if you have ever tried to fish through some rain. Many times I have fished several areas during nice days and caught a few fish and then I go out in the rain and there are fish everywhere and hitting all kinds of different baits. I believe that the fish rise up in the water column and move closer to shore during these low light, rainy days. A buzz bait raced across a weed bed or near lily pads can generate some exciting strikes and it could be a bass, northern or even a muskie. My brother and nephews were out a couple of years ago and it was a steady drizzle and we only fished a few hundred yards of shoreline and we had strike after strike and we were all casting different baits.

While surface baits provide true excitement, do not avoid crank baits, plastics worms, and jigs. Senko style worms fished wacky style are also exciting, especially when you hook a 18 to 20-inch small-mouth bass. Oh, I forgot to mention that it is not only about a lot of fish hitting, it can be some of the largest fish in the area. Even if you are only a walleye fisherman, some of these strikes and the fight of a large bass or northern is worth trying out.

Even though I am fond of antique style lures, there is a relatively newer lure technique that really inter-

ests me this year. They call it a swim jig and the jig is dressed with a plastic trailer. The jig usually has a weed guard and can be cast like a spinnerbait, obviously without spinner blades. With the weed guard, these lures can be cast into lily pad areas and heavy weeds while letting the jig sink at times in weed pockets. The trailer in this case is usually plastic that looks like a crawfish. You know us old guys, we need new tricks to stay ahead of the young anglers out there.

So check out that rain suit for holes or buy a new one and give fishing in the rain a try. Make sure your bilge pump works and wear a pair of rubber boots; they keep your feet warm. Get ready for a picture-taking opportunity. It is best to fish in the rain when the temperature is at least 60 degrees, higher if you are older.

Please Share Your Lake Vermilion Stories

Are you willing to share some stories or photos about Lake Vermilion with other VLA members? It's simple to do. Just send them to us.

Our members enjoy reading newsletter stories about your fishing adventures, family fun at the lake, what brought you to Vermilion, shoreland restoration efforts, your family's history at this great lake, adventures with grandkids, introducing them to the outdoors, etc. Articles, poems, photos, maps ... you name it.

Please send your items to our acting newsletter coordinator Terry Grosshauser at terrygrosshauser@gmail.com.



Volunteers Make the Difference

The Vermilion Lake Association has been fortunate over the years to have a dedicated group of leaders and volunteers to staff our important activities. We are grateful for their help.

Please consider joining this team. We have needs for both workers and leaders, for those with only a few hours to spare, and for those who can make a larger time commitment.

If you think you may be interested, please contact Pat Michaelson, VLA Volunteer Program Leader, at 612-306-7702 (cell) or plmichaelson@gmail.com.

Vermilion Lake Association

Sheri Sawatzky, Member Records • P.O. Box 696 • Tower MN 55790
sherisawatzky@gmail.com • (218) 666-5512

Membership year runs from Jan 1st through Dec 31st

☐ 2018 New Member ☐ 2018 Renewal

Membership level

☐ \$15.00 Individual ☐ \$20.00 Couple
☐ \$25.00 Family ☐ \$50.00 Business or Organization

Member Name _____

Spouse Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (requested) _____

Phone (requested) _____

Please clip or copy this form and send to the address above.

Become a Member

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 VermilionLakeAssociation.org. We're pretty sure you'll like our vision for the future and the work we have underway now to make Lake Vermilion even better.

Please mail a check with the form on this page or join at our website using PayPal or a credit card.

The Vermilion Lake Association is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

Renew Membership for 2018

If you have not yet renewed your lake association membership, there's still time. You can renew at the VermilionLakeAssociation.org website or use the form on this page.