

THE VERMILION



Vol. 47, No. 4 • The Quarterly Newsletter of the Vermilion Lake Association • Fall 2020



To Protect and Improve Lake Vermilion

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greeting friends and neighbors, it is late September and we have experienced an autumn to remember with trees ablaze in color. After what many assumed would be a very lean year for activity on the lake in April and May, it turned into what I would consider a record use of Lake Vermilion throughout the summer and into the fall. It is that time of year to reflect on our accomplishments as an organization this past year and look at what concerns we have for next year, along with beginning to look at our direction to address these concerns.



Terry Grosshauser
VLA President

As everyone is aware, we had to adjust all activities in consideration of COVID-19. The unfortunate result was that we felt it was best to cancel both the annual meeting and the volunteer recognition party. We really miss seeing the members and volunteers in person and having the ability to discuss the projects and the lake in general.

Even with the virus, we were able to coordinate most of our activities including loon and cormorant counts, navigation lights, maintenance of picnic sites, loon nests, water quality analysis, website updates, newsletter, AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) sentries, AIS resort coordination, AIS checking at fishing tournaments, and traffic analysis for managing boat checking. North St. Louis County Soil and Water was able to staff the boat checking at our launch sites this summer and will most likely check a record

Cover: Fall perfection: Pat Condon, a VLA member and cabin owner, along with his Golden Retriever Lucy, enjoys a beautiful fall day and perfect fall walleye. Terry Grosshauser photo

number of boats this year. We have developed a list of potential future capital projects and have made key contacts in the DNR regarding the British Petroleum fund supporting the MN loon population.

Please check out our large list of volunteers in this newsletter; we are thankful for all they do to protect and improve Lake Vermilion. Also I would like to thank the board of directors that continued to meet using Zoom throughout the spring and summer. Through the efforts of Soil and Water and our volunteers, NO new AIS was found in the lake again this year. The coordination and team work was exceptional.

It is important to understand our concerns going into next year at this point. The cormorant count was up again this year and we will need to refine our ability to count them on Potato Island using a drone. The Federal Government was evaluating turning over the ability to control cormorants to the states and we need to understand if that will actually happen. Our loon counts have been below the long-term average now for a couple of years and we need to work on protecting them with loon nests and other approaches to increase the count. On the AIS front, we know that approximately 20-percent of the boats arriving at resorts come from infected lakes and there is a need to check 100-percent of these boats.

With regards to the fishery, Lake Vermilion in 2019 was the second most pressured lake in Minnesota for fishing. With no sports, the Canadian border closed, and an increase in interest towards fishing, the fishing pressure on the lake this year was very, very high. We need to work with the DNR as the walleye population was barely meeting the management plan levels the last two years. Also, the lake experienced a die off of largemouth bass in the spring of 2018 and the levels are significantly down compared to what they were. A change in regulations may need to be considered. Overall, I have received comments on the bass population, indicating that it is not anywhere near what it was only two years ago, from dedicated bass fishermen.

Continued on next page

Board Members' Terms Renewed by First-Ever Remote Annual Meeting

In lieu of an in-person annual meeting, the Vermilion Lake Association held their election of board members via paper ballot. Members received ballots enclosed within the summer newsletter and returned them by mail. A total of 105 votes were cast to approve current board members Terry Grosshauser, Eric Hanson, Jerry Lepper, and John Yocum for three-year terms.

In place of a speaker and business meeting, a video of the president's message was posted on the website for members to view. The year-end treasurer's report was also available to view on the website as well as in the newsletter. A photo contest was held for members to enter, view online, and vote at the same time. Members Bob McNamara, Jamie Kitzmann, and Terry Jones were voted in the top three places respectively. See articles for each within this newsletter. To see all entrants, go to our website at www.vermilionlakeassociation.org.

Thank you to all the members who participated in the election and photo contest.



Terry Grosshauser



Jerry Lepper



John Yocum



Eric Hanson

President's Message....from page 2

Fishing tournaments were mostly canceled this year, however there were several in August that were mostly bass tournaments. While we have done very well in making sure these boats are checked for AIS, the tournament format of showing your catch on the tournament stage, requires carrying the fish most of the day in a live well and then putting them in a bag/tank and finally returning them to the lake with little distribution of the fish. We need to continue to work with tournament directors to move to catch, record, and immediate release to protect the fishery. There is no law to support this approach so we have to work with the directors.

Lastly, we are considering adding a new picnic site on the lake. While we are looking at a couple of sites, a site on Knott's Island in Wolf Bay is being considered. There are hiking paths on this island which would add another activity after a picnic. We have experienced very high use of the picnic sites and their popularity continues to grow.

Speaking for the board, we are looking forward to holding the annual meeting and the volunteer recognition party in 2021. We hope to see you there.

Reasons to Volunteer

- 
- Do your part
 - Meet new People
 - Raise Awareness
 - Be a positive influence
 - Join the Excitement
 - Develop new Talents
 - Grow from the Experience
 - Learn and Serve
 - Pass along wisdom
 - Work for a Cause
 - Be part of a Team
 - Face new Challenges
 - Preserve our Lake Vermilion Environment

VLA 2019 & 2020 Volunteers

Aquatic Invasive Species

Howard Ankrum
 Craig & Carol Beveroth
 Susan Bies
 Barry Botruff
 Rob Bryers
 Larry Clines
 Kim Goodwin & Rita O'Reilly
 Jim & Donna Graham
 Gary Haugen
 Dan & Corrine Hill
 Byron & Penny Jackson
 Marilyn Johnson
 Tom Knox
 Jill Korpela-Bontems
 Julie Laurinaitis

Steve Lindberg
 Jeff Lovgren-Leader
 Bob McNamara-Leader
 Mary McNellis-Leader
 Jim Mueller
 Bob & Renee Pearson
 Dale Robertson
 Mark Schmidt
 Frank Siskar
 Wayne Suoja
 Bob Ulseth
 Terry Vagle
 Dick Vohs
 Gary Whitenack
 Bob Wilson

Communication

Steve Amundson
 Tom Aro
 JoAnne Bergman
 Terry Grosshauser
 Penny Jackson
 Erin Kennedy
 Kim Kladivo
 Steve Lenertz
 Jeff Lovgren
 Pat Michaelson
 Lori Ptak-Leader
 Sheri Sawatzky
 Dwight Warkentin

Volunteer Coordination

Terry Grosshauser
 Jeff Lovgren
 Pat Michaelson-Leader
 Dwight Warkentin

Vegetation Management

Howard Ankrum
 Wayne Suoja

Shore Lunch Sites

Mel & Corliss Bremer
 Rob Bryers
 Jim & Cathy Carlson
 Wade Coplin
 Ted & Caren Fossum
 Jim & Ann Gribble

Tom & Sue Hartley
Richard Johnson
Ron Kmett
Karen & Eric Olson
Mike & Lori Ptak-East Leader
Jeff & Nancy Stebbins
Scott & Terry Vagle
Al & Mary Williams
Bob & Judy Ulseth
John & Claire Zwieg-
West Leader

Water Quality

Peter Anderson
Craig & Carol Beveroth
Robert & Liz Dahl
Joe Dennie
Tami Forsline
Peggy & Robert Fry
Ron Kmett
Jim Lakmann
Steven Lotz
Karin & George Marjanen
Bob McNamara
Laurie & Don Potter
Dale Robertson
Jeff Stebbins
Wayne Suoja-Leader
Doug Wallace &
Peggy Hunter
Karl Wied

Fisheries

Terry Grosshauser-Leader
Dick Vohs
John Yocum

Shoreland Restoration

Emily Anderson
Wayne Suoja-Leader

Sucker Sales

Jerry Bontems

Rob Bryers
Tom Forconi-Leader
Dick Johnson
Don Johnson
Oz Leciejewski
Jeff & Kathy Lovgren
Roy Peterson
Wayne Suoja

Annual Meeting 2019

Jerry Bontems
Liz & Rob Dahl
Jim & Donna Graham
Terry & Bonnie Grosshauser
Terrie & Jeff Heimann
Penny & Byron Jackson
Don & Jane Johnson
Jill Korpela-Bontems
Jeff & Kathy Lovgren
Jerry & Colleen Lepper
Pat Michaelson-Leader
Bob & Renee Pearson
Lori & Mike Ptak
Sheri Sawatzky
Dwight Warkentin &
Rachel Rushing
Georgia Suoja
Al Williams

Board of Directors 2020

Jim Graham
Terry Grosshauser
Eric Hanson
Gary Haugen
Jill Korpela-Bontems
Jerry Lepper
Jeff Lovgren
Pat Michaelson
Mary McNellis
Bob Pearson
Lori Ptak
Sheri Sawatzky

Wayne Suoja
Dwight Warkentin
John Yocum

Navigation Lights

Jerry Bontems-East
John Zwieg-West

Donor Volunteers

Jim & Patty Cownie
Denise & Mark Muhich
Lee & Anne Niepagen
Karen & Eric Olson

Records Archivist

Renee Aro

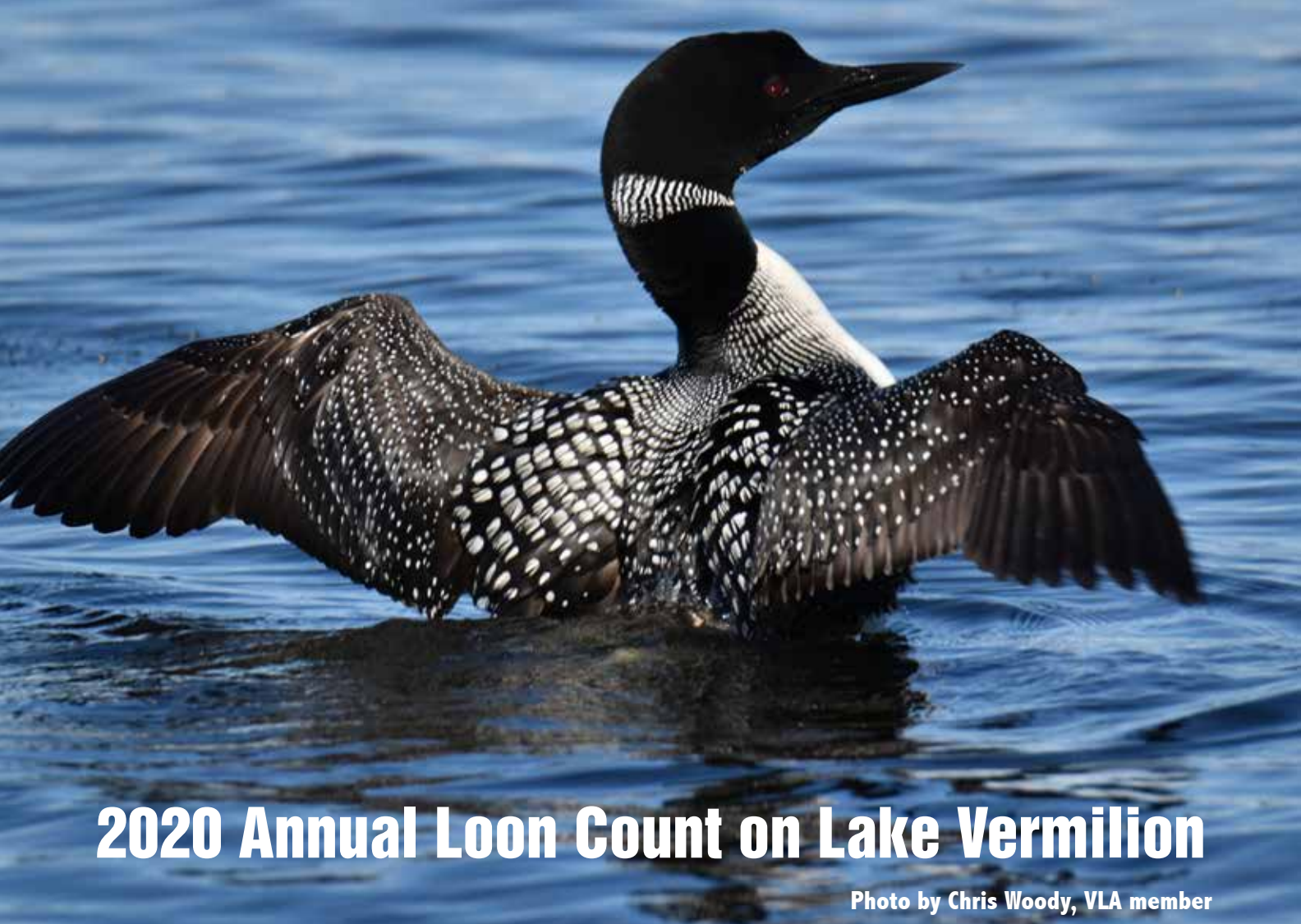
Loon & Cormorant Count Territory Coordinators* & Platform Teams

Warren & JoAnn Anderson
Val Annen
Renee & Tom Aro
John Aro
JoAnne Bergman
Chuck & Susan Bies
Barb & Gary Boutto
Mel & Corliss Bremer
Cathy & Jim Carlson
Larry Clines
Rob & Liz Dahl
Carol Ferguson
Tom Forconi
Bonnie & Terry Grosshauser
Mark & Cheryl Harelstad
Julie Hippe
Florette & Al Hujanen
Mardy Jackson
Greta Jeske
Dan & Jane Johns
Don & Jane Johnson
Marilyn & Tim Johnson
Rhonda & Rob Joki
Betty & Dick Kerber

Jill Korpela-Bontems-
East Leader & Jerry Bontems
Jim & Rita Lakmann
Jerry & Colleen Lepper
Mary Levy
Reany & Steve Lindberg
Kathy & Jeff Lovgren
Dorthy & Bill Marbaker
Peter & Elaine McGillivray
Ryan & Amy Monacelli
Norm & Heidi Nelson
Bob & Renee Pearson
Lori & Mike Ptak
Lauren & Sherri Sawatzky
Sharon Smith
Wayne Suoja
Jim Taitt
Bruce Tode
Judy & Bob Ulseth
Dan & Liz Villnow
Ann & Warren Vollmar
Kern & Mary Walker
Dwight Warkentin
Mary & Al Williams
Christine Woody
Jaynee & John Yocum
John & Claire Zwieg-
West Leader
*There are over 120 actual
loon count volunteers

CPA Volunteer Needed

Are you a CPA who could share approximately 10 hours a year with the VLA? Our Treasurer appreciates the expertise of a CPA during our annual audit process and when other occasional questions arise. If you are interested in joining one of our Volunteer Teams..... contact Pat Michaelson at plmichaelson@gmail.com



2020 Annual Loon Count on Lake Vermilion

Photo by Chris Woody, VLA member

In between recent storms, the annual loon count on Lake Vermilion was conducted on Monday, July 13 on a perfect summer day. Seventy-nine volunteers covered 22 territories on the lake and spotted 201 loons. The west (Cook) end saw 81 loons

which included 15 chicks, while the east (Tower) end sighted 120 loons which included 13 chicks. This total number of loons was 6 more than the 2019 count of 195, although the chicks numbered 8 less than last year. Several volunteers reported seeing adult loons

still sitting on nests.

This year's count is comparable to those of 2011 and 2017. Just like our weather, nature has its ups and downs.

Thank you to all the volunteers!

VLA Caps make a great present!



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 at 218-780-8178 or email sherisawatzky@gmail.com.

Special Opportunity for Donors

Members and friends of Vermilion Lake Association should note a unique opportunity to leverage donations made to Vermilion Lake Association this year. As part of the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act Congress has changed the rules for the deductibility of charitable contributions. Previously, in order to deduct a gift to charity a taxpayer needed to itemize deductions. Under this new provision, there is a universal “above the line” deduction of up to \$300 per taxpayer (\$600 per couple if filing jointly). This deduction is available even if you use the “standard deduction” and is in addition to it.

Also, taxpayers who itemize their deductions were previously subject to a limit of 60-percent of their

annual adjusted gross income, but now under the CARES may deduct charitable gifts of up to 100-percent of their adjusted gross income for gifts made in 2020.

Members or friends planning to make charitable gifts to Vermilion Lake Association should also consider the availability of matching funds. Many corporations will match employee and retiree gifts to 501c3 charitable organizations. Some also allow and match monthly donations. Check with your employer or previous employer for details.

Please consider making a gift to Vermilion Lake Association this year to take advantage of these opportunities. For questions contact Jerry Lepper, Treasurer, at jnclep4@frontiernet.net.

Call for Member Input



We are always interested in what our members think about issues regarding protecting and improving Lake Vermilion. If you have questions, comments, or even ideas for future newsletters, please email either Lori Ptak at lori@ptak.org or Terry Grosshauser at terry-grosshauser@gmail.com.

Board of Directors and Officers 2020

Cook

Sheri Sawatzky, Secretary/Member Records, 2750 Wakemup Village Rd. W, Cook, MN 55723, 218-780-8178, sherisawatzky@gmail.com

Eric Hanson, 2746 Vermilion Dr., Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5478, eric@pehrsonlodge.com

Dwight Warkentin, Vice-President, PO Box 97, Cook, MN 55723, 651-269-0674, dhwarkentin@hotmail.com

Terry Grosshauser, President, 7307 Oak Narrows Rd., Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-0580, terrygrosshauser@gmail.com

Jim Graham, 8978 E Wakemup Village Rd., Cook, MN 55823, 218-780-5525, jcgrahamsr@gmail.com

Pat Michaelson, Volunteer Coordinator, 2384 Deerwood Lane, Cook, MN 55723, 612-306-7702, plmichaelson@gmail.com

Mary McNellis, St. Croix Real Estate Inc., 101 Main St. NE, Suite 2, Minneapolis, MN 55413, 612-804-8604, mmcnellis@stcroixre.com

Tower

Gary Haugen, 1903 Westhaven Dr., Tower, MN 55790, 612-720-2853, ghmedrep@gmail.com

Wayne Suoja, 1029 Eales Rd., Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-2162, wsuoja@frontiernet.net

Jerry Lepper, Treasurer, 3087 Old Hwy. 77, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-2629, jnclep4@frontiernet.net

Lori Ptak, 3505 Downers Dr., St. Anthony, MN 55418, 612-247-3751, lori@ptak.org

Jill Korpela-Bontems, 4437 Big Rock Rd., Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-6324, jandjatbigrock@frontiernet.net

Jeff Lovgren, 2113 Birch Point Rd., Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-2413, lovgren.jeff@gmail.com

John Yocum, 4102 Hoel Rd., Tower, MN 55790, 407-873-3883, snootman@aol.com

Bob Pearson, 5773 Puncher Point Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-4212, rpearson@duluthlaw.com

AIS Early Detection Program Completes Third Season



Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are non-native plants, fish and invertebrates which have the potential to ruin boating, recreational activities, and fishing on our beautiful Lake Vermilion.

How can we stop AIS? Our first step is boater education, boat cleaning, and boat inspections to prevent most AIS introductions. Our equally important second step is early detection after introduction when more options for management and perhaps eradication are still possible.

The VLA attacks the early-detection challenge through several means. In each case, a score of hardworking volunteers labors behind the scenes inspecting the riskiest areas of the lake for AIS invasions.

In 2018, a loosely assembled group of volunteers established themselves as Sentries to inspect Vermilion's 17 public boat landings three times a season. Since then, led by Mary McNellis, the Sentries have become a highly organized team, supported by four certified AIS Detectors – Jim Graham, Mary McNellis, Wayne Suoja and Bob McNamara – trained to identify AIS by the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive



Bob McNamara
VLA AIS Volunteer



Mary McNellis
VLA Board Member

“No invasive vegetation was found at any access in 2020. Thanks to our AIS Detectors, our resort partners, and our Sentry volunteers for helping with this key element of our AIS program at Lake Vermilion.

Species Research Center (MAISRC) at the University of Minnesota.

Our 14 Sentries and their 4 AIS Detector partners have just successfully completed their third year by policing all 17 public accesses, the Fortune Bay marina, and Your Boat Club. These boat launches were inspected three times this summer in June, July, and August. The August inspections placed special emphasis on starry stonewort, which is most identifiable at that time of year.

In 2020, the VLA expanded its successful public access program to include many private ramps at resorts and marinas. This early detection effort was organized by Bob McNamara. Four resorts chose to do the job themselves, checking their waterfront 3-6 times during the season. An additional 14 resorts and marinas accepted assistance from our AIS

Continued on next page

Zebra Mussel Early Detection on East Two River Ends Well

When engaged in AIS early-detection work, finding nothing is the best result. And that's exactly what the team found on East Two River so far in 2020.

The DNR's 2019 discovery of zebra mussel veligers (larvae) at Lake of the Woods has important implications for Lake Vermilion. Both lakes have generally low calcium levels, well below the levels thought suitable for zebra mussel reproduction.



Bob & Renee Pearson
VLA Volunteers

No veligers or adult zebra mussels have ever been found at Lake Vermilion. However, the Lake of the Woods discovery re-opens the question on whether zebras might conceivably get a foot-

hold along East Two River before it enters Pike Bay. East Two River has relatively high calcium levels at certain times of the year when rainfall is low. As a precaution, volunteers resumed a comprehensive adult and veliger early detection plan on East Two River during 2020.

Here's what they found:

VLA volunteers Renee and Bob Pearson conducted two plankton net tows during July near the mouth of East Two River. The water samples were tested by RMB Environmental Labs, which reported no evidence of veligers in the samples taken. This is good news for Lake Vermilion.

VLA volunteer sentries Jill Korpela-Bontems and Terry Vagle watched for adult or juvenile zebras on vegetation they collected on their rakes during vegetation sentry work along East Two River. None were found.

AIS Early Detection....from page 8

Detectors, who performed checks in June, July, and August.

No invasive vegetation was found at any access in 2020. Thanks to our AIS Detectors, our resort partners, and our Sentry volunteers for helping with this



Adult Zebra mussels are the size of pistachio nuts. Photo courtesy of MAISRC

VLA volunteers Wayne Suoja and Maria & Dale Robertson deployed a zebra sampling plate near the mouth of East Two River at the Robertson dock. The sampling plate, when checked this fall, had come apart, but no zebra mussels were found on the components.

VLA volunteers Gary Haugen and Jeff Lovgren will check the hulls of pontoon boats at Your Boat Club on East Two River when the boats are removed in mid-October. We're hopeful that will also be a "zero," making the final score 4 to 0 in favor of Lake Vermilion.

Our Vermilion AIS team will watch closely as DNR scientists study the Lake of the Woods discovery. Until more is known, as a precaution, VLA volunteers will continue to check for zebras at Vermilion's East Two River for a few more years.

key element of our AIS program at Lake Vermilion.

Additional Sentry volunteers are needed. If you'd like to pitch in, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Michaelson at 612-306-7702 or plmichaelson@gmail.com.

VLA Volunteers to Support eDNA Research at Lake Vermilion

Lake association volunteers will assist researchers from the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) with 2021 field work at Vermilion. The project to optimize eDNA monitoring, one of eight new projects supported by the Minnesota AIS Research Center, is being led by Josh Dumke and Dr. Gretchen Hansen.



VLA volunteers will help technicians collect water samples in multiple locations around Vermilion during 2021. The researchers plan 6-8 visits to Vermilion as they seek to understand the best seasonal timing and the best methods for sample collection and processing.

The early work at Vermilion will focus on zebra mussels, spiny waterfleas, and rusty crawfish.

Environmental DNA (eDNA) is a tool being developed to detect the presence of the DNA from a specific invasive species in a water body while the abundance of that targeted species is still very low. Many more options for management and perhaps eradication come into play in the earliest stages of infestation.



While the science supporting eDNA tools is still developing, these tools appear ideally suited for Lake Vermilion. Early detection is a challenge for a lake with 341 miles of convoluted shoreline forming many bays, points, and unique habitats. Our volunteer corps – no matter how dedicated and well trained – cannot cover our 15,000 littoral acres by inspecting our shoreline with current technology.

For additional information about MAISRC's eDNA and other research, visit the MAISRC website at <https://www.maisrc.umn.edu/research/detection>.

MAISRC Highlights AIS Research During Virtual Showcase

Jeff Lovgren, AIS Program Coordinator

The 7th annual MAISRC Research and Management Showcase was held online in 2020. Presentations, poster sessions, lunches with researchers, and wrap-up “happy hours” were held on three consecutive afternoons, September 22-24. Over 300 participants registered to attend.

The annual showcase is a simple, compact way for Lake Vermilion AIS leaders, volunteers and interested VLA members to stay in touch with what's happening at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) at the U of M. We recommend attendance every few years, whether held in-person or online in the future.

This year 19 presentations and posters shared the results of recent research projects. In addition, eight



new two-year projects were introduced by the principal investigator. Three of those new projects will directly benefit Lake Vermilion:

- A project to develop a framework for integrating professional and citizen-science data to improve AIS surveillance throughout the state.
- A project to improve the efficiency of boat inspections through lake-to-lake traffic analysis.

Continued on next page

Featuring Lake Vermilion's "Most Unwanted" Species...the second in a series.

Curly-Leaf Pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*)

What is it?

Curly-leaf pondweed generally grows in water depths from shore to 15 feet. It can grow to the surface and have an impact on recreational boating and on fisheries in some lakes. It's an early season plant, growing under the ice and then dying back in late June.

Is curly-leaf common in Minnesota?

Curly-leaf pondweed was first discovered in Minnesota over 100 years ago. It has a wide habitat tolerance and is now found in 70 of Minnesota's 87 counties.

Do we have curly-leaf at Vermilion?

Yes ... but only in a few places. We have a 2-acre infestation in Everett Bay. We also have had a small infestation in Stuntz Bay, but it has been difficult to locate in recent years.

Is curly-leaf pondweed spreading at Vermilion?

No, not in the normal sense. We don't know when curly-leaf first arrived in Vermilion. A good guess might be 50 years ago. After five decades, it is likely to be in equilibrium with our native vegetation. Occasionally, our early inspection team will find a few plants in a new location -- perhaps transported there wrapped around a propeller. When we re-check that location a year later, the curly-leaf may have disappeared, losing the battle for light and space to native vegetation.



Curly-Leaf Pondweed. Photo credit: MAISRC

What are we doing to protect Vermilion?

Our public and private access sentries watch for small "pioneer" infestations of curly-leaf. We will monitor those locations to be sure it is not expanding or posing a risk of becoming a major infestation.

What can property owners and visitors do?

If you see a suspicious infestation of any vegetation that you don't recall seeing at that location before, call the VLA AIS Hotline 218-288-1080. An AIS Detector will respond to help make an identification.

Is there a good reference book to help identify invasive species at Lake Vermilion?

Indeed, there is! We recommend ***AIS Identification Guide: A Minnesota Handbook*** published by the Minnesota AIS Research Center. This reference is available at U of M Bookstores for about \$40.

Link: <https://bookstores.umn.edu/product/book/ais-identification-guide-minnesota-handbook>

AIS Research....from page 10

➤ A project to optimize eDNA monitoring for more efficient detection of new invasives. (See nearby article on how Vermilion volunteers will assist in 2021.)

The Vermilion Lake Association strongly supports the AIS research at MAISRC. We rely on them to

provide science-based knowledge to inform policy makers at the state and local levels and to provide tools to make our prevention and early detection work at Lake Vermilion faster, more thorough, and less expensive.

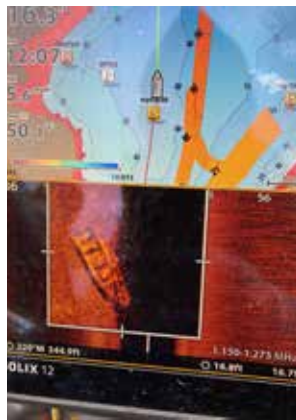
Targeting Individual Fish: How to Utilize your Humminbird/Minnkota

Lake Vermilion gives you many opportunities when it comes to catching big fish/trophy fish. Sometimes we stumble upon them when fishing in general, or when fishing one of our favorite spots, but searching for “THEEE FISH” can be very fun. One of my favorite ways to fish big fish is to “Fish the Fish...Not the spot”. Utilizing the current technology when it comes to fishing is very important. The newer units teach us a lot of different things about the lake and can tell us a story on what the lake is going through on a day-to-day basis.

The Setup:

**Minnkota trolling motor w/ 2D or down scan-
Humminbird w/down scan and side imaging
Both networked together**

As I look for big fish to start the targeting process, I target special spots with deep water nearby. These spots are typically around edges of reefs, have sand/gravel fingers or spines coming off of them and usually have a few boulders mixed in. These spots hold fish basically all season. The sand portions are easiest to fish as the fish stick out like a sore thumb on side imaging and/or down scan. As I approach the piece of structure I have my trolling motor already in the water, I-pilot remote in hand, and rods ready with multiple styles of bait or live bait. The whole time I’m idling, I’m looking at the side imaging and down scan. Once I see a good size mark on down scan/side imaging, I drop a new waypoint right on the individual fish. Please note that you need to put the cursor right on



the fish as you go past it. You now look at your I-pilot remote and use the “go to waypoint feature.” Once you hit the button, the depth finder tells your trolling motor precisely where to go. It even tells

you how many feet left to go until you reach the fish you’re targeting. Once you reach the fish, hit the anchor button/spot lock button. Drop your line down and work your fish! This technique works on a daily basis and can bring in the nicest fish of the day on a regular basis!

**Steve Amundson, Spring Bay Resort & Guide Service,
218-780-5941**

Protect Loons: Get the Lead Out

Who hasn't been awed by the eerie call of a loon wafting over the waters of our lake? Many VLA members and friends enjoy our seasonal loon residents, and our association has been conducting annual loon counts since 1983 – the longest running single lake count of common loons in the United States. We want to be good stewards to our loons and need to understand some simple things that will go a long way to sustaining a healthy loon population.

Loons routinely swallow small pebbles on the bottom of lakes to aid in digestion. They have an organ in their digestive system called a gizzard where pebbles aid in grinding their food, similar to how a pharmacist might use a mortar-and-pestle. Lead sinkers on the bottom of lakes are indistinguishable from pebbles to the bird. Lead is toxic to animals; death in birds can occur when blood levels reach 0.2 ppm or greater. The Journal of Wildlife Management in a study found that lead fishing tackle was the leading cause of death for loons in New Hampshire – nearly 49% of the loons found dead had died of lead poisoning.

Non-toxic sinkers and jig-heads are now commercially available. They are made from copper, bismuth, tin, stainless steel, tungsten, ceramic, recycled glass and natural granite. All the aforementioned materials are non-toxic to loons.

Several Northeastern states including New Hampshire,

Non-lead weights and jigs Lead-free options are now available for nearly all types of tackle.



More resources > www.pca.state.mn.us/sinkers

* Made in Minnesota



John Yocum
VLA Board Member



Bob Pearson
VLA Volunteer

Vermont, Massachusetts, New York and Maine have recently enacted laws that limit or ban lead in fishing gear. Minnesota and other mid-western states have been less aggressive in enacting laws banning lead in fishing gear. Minnesota's approach has been to create proactive educational and assistance programs. A state agency, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), has launched a new program focused on encouraging anglers to switch to lead-free fishing tackle called Get the Lead Out!. The MPCA estimates that lead poisoning is responsible for about 14-percent of Minnesota's loon deaths. The MPCA has developed a website that lists where to buy lead free tackle:

pca.state.mn.us/living-green/nontoxic-tackle-lets-get-lead-out

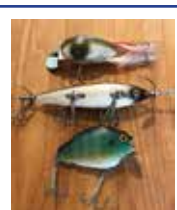
Here's what we can all do to help save loons:

- Purge your tackle box of lead-based tackle such as sinkers and jig-heads. Remember to dispose of these items at hazardous waste sites not regular garbage.
- Talk to local tackle shop managers about stocking alternatives to lead-based tackle; or alternatively, order lead-free tackle online when not available locally.
- When traveling on the lake, look around for loons and steer well clear of them. A boat traveling at high speed can quickly overwhelm a bird before they are able to dive out of the way.
- Give nesting loons a wide berth. If you see a loon in one of our nesting platforms or on a natural nest, power down your motor to minimize the wake your boat creates as it passes by. Maintain an appropriate distance to avoid disturbing the nest.

If we all do our part, we can help maintain a healthy population of this magnificent species.

Fishing Solunar Tables: Fact or Fiction?

Antique Angler here to talk about solunar tables and whether or not they are effective. Solunar tables for fishing or hunting provide a listing of which days are the best for fish activity and the peak solunary time to fish - a major and minor time when the fish are most active (bite the best). I have some examples of how effective these tables can be.



The Antique Angler

On a nice day in the summer I was fishing a point that opened up into a small bay and there was another boat casting muskies along a weed line in the bay which is a popular location for muskie fishing and several boats almost every day cast the weedline for muskies. As I was casting I heard the guys in the boat yelling fish on, get the net. I looked over and I saw a muskie jump a couple of times before they netted the fish. High fives and congratulations were yelled out and then I saw them release the muskie. On my way out of the bay, I stopped to talk to them and they were still excited about their catch, but the first thing they said was that the fish was caught at the beginning of the major solunar period and they were sold on using the solunar tables. It was a nice heavy 43-inch muskie.

This encounter certainly impressed me and previously I had randomly referred to the tables to make sure I was on the water at some of the times. That year I had an area where I was catching walleyes casting usually after the sun set on some nights. One day it was in the 70's, sunny and about 1PM, but it was the day of the dark of the moon and 1PM was the beginning of the major fishing times, so you had one of the best days of the month and at a peak time. So I stopped at my walleye spot that I usually fish in the evening and started casting. After catching a couple of keeper walleyes, I noticed some weird activity, larger walleyes were following the x rap rapala to the boat and turning away. I could see the telltale white tip on the walleyes tale as it turned away. Then after more casting I caught two in the slot (+20 inches) and another keeper before the major period ended. I had never seen walleyes in 11 feet of water follow lures to the boat. Now I could see some people think that was one of those exceptional occasions that

happens only once in a lifetime. I continued to catch walleye in that area at major solunar times the rest of the season.

Then there was the day that my friend and his granddaughter came up to do some bass fishing in late August. The first day happened to be cloudy, the day of the full moon, and there was an eclipse of the sun. Talk about moon activity all in one day. Every spot we stopped we caught bass and most were 15 inches to 19 inches. Then grandpa catches a beautiful 20-inch largemouth bass and within five minutes after that bass was released, the granddaughter catches a 21-inch largemouth bass. It also happened during the eclipse of the sun as it became much darker. The day continued with the three of us catching and releasing over 60 bass that day. It was unbelievable day, possibly the best fishing I have ever had. There was no doubt in my mind that all of the moon activity influenced the fish activity. I consider a 20-inch bass on Vermilion to be a trophy and a rare catch.

These are only examples of some of days that I have had using solunar tables. To access solunar tables go to www.solunarforecast.com/solunarcalendar.aspx to get the solunar information and remember to put in your zip code so you get the correct times. It will give major and minor times and the best days to fish. Even if it is not the best day, still try the major and minor times because you will do better at those times. The times that can be exceptional are a late evening major time period on a full moon or dark of the moon with constant weather or a storm approaching. The weather can play a trump card over solunar times, especially on cold fronts with high skies. The Antique Angler needs all of the tricks to keep up with younger family members and knowing these times makes me look like a good guide.

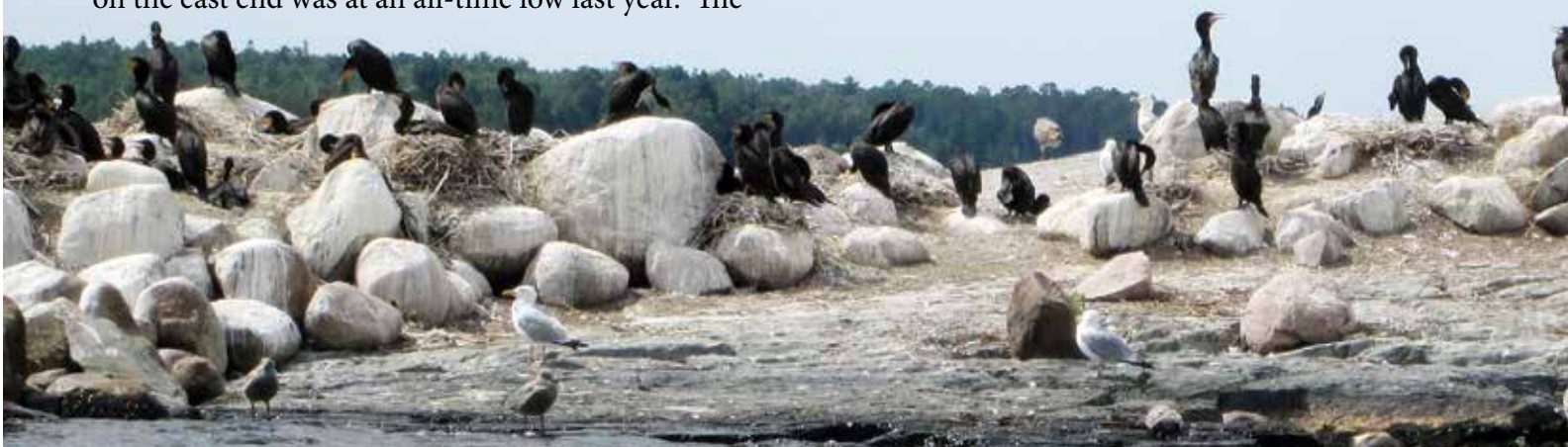


Cormorant Count Shows Increases

The Cormorant Count this year indicates a strong increase in the numbers of cormorants. In 2019 we counted 353 and in 2020 the count was 617. We continue to have difficulty counting the cormorants on Potato Island (see below) where most of the cormorants reside even during the time we count them. We currently take pictures of the island and then try to count them and this has its limitations. Future plans will be to use a drone to take pictures and count the number of birds. There was an increase in cormorants on west Vermilion too as increased numbers were seen in the water and resting on small islands. With the perch population at high levels on the west end, they are obviously drawing more birds to this area. The perch population on the east end was at an all-time low last year. The

DNR was not able to count the nests on Potato island this year, but with the increased numbers, one could assume there has been little change with approximately 300 nests.

The Federal Fish and Wildlife Service recently asked for comments on their proposal to start allowing country wide control of cormorants again, but they would turn over the responsibility to determine where to control the cormorants to the state DNR's. Several members of the board have responded in favor of control of the cormorants. Control will be limited to lakes where damage is occurring to the fishery, other bird populations, or destruction of vegetation where they nest or rest.



Help protect Lake Vermilion by using Amazon Smile, Part III



During the past year Amazon Smile participation has almost doubled to 56 members. Total donations from Amazon based on your qualifying purchases were \$214.50. When you shop at the Amazon Smile website and designate the Vermilion Lake

Association as your selected charity, Amazon will make a donation to the association based on the value of your purchases. There are still 1,244 of our members who could participate.

When you shop at Amazon, go to the [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) website, designating The Vermilion Lake Asso-



ciation as your charity.

If you have started to shop at Amazon.com and then remember you want to use Smile, leave everything in your shopping cart, log off Amazon and then log back

in using Smile.Amazon.com. Your purchases will still be in your shopping cart and Vermilion Lake Association will receive the Amazon half-percent donation on qualifying purchases.

Thank you for helping the Vermilion Lake Association protect and improve Lake Vermilion.

Autumn 2020...Looking Back

The last of our beautiful red Maple leaves, hanging-on, urging us to look back, look back

before winter with its dark cold days, captures the landscape and dims the eyes.

Look back at this crapola year!

Taking that look back a small poem by Kobayashi-Issa a Japanese Haiku poet from the 1700's comes to mind.

Kobayashi wrote; "In this world....We walk on the roof of hell....Gazing at flowers."

For me the year of 2020 has been such a walk. My flowers? Daisy Bay - Lake Vermilion with her natural wonders and my beautiful rose....and yes, gratefully, I gazed upon them both....often.

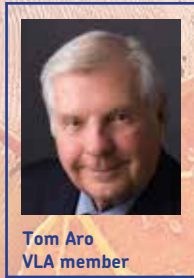
The troubles bridged during our walk across this imaginary roof came in many forms:

The depth of the loss of wonderful, wonderful friends,

A very unexpected heart attack,

The need to replace some body parts... gettin' old, wearin'-out and the gloomy and ominous message that comes with it.

The cruelest? Loss of memory....petals falling from my beautiful rose.



A further look back down the 2020 road, the picture darkens.

The pandemic!.....COVID 19 bringing devastation to multitudes....across the world!

Death and illness to countless innocent souls.

Hundreds of thousands left unable to feed their families.

Kids, struggle to continue their learning.

NFL, NHL, MLB no fans not the same!!..... What the h*ll?

Seniors imprisoned, huddled together, often no human touch, afraid of what lurks.

Our streets on fire.

November 3rd's election, be there.....it will greatly effect us all.

Phew, what to make of this?....This perilous stroll?

I continue to default back to my two rocks; Daisy Bay-Lake Vermilion and my rose.

Like some magic elixirs they respond; balms to soften the edges, tonics to rest the soul.

At peace, I simply gaze upon her face or the lake's waters,

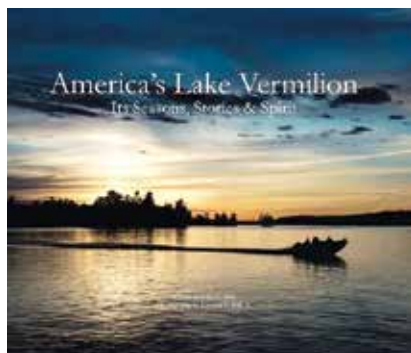
And once again, silently and gratefully shout out, "How great Thou art."

Put Lake Vermilion in your Christmas Stocking!

Minnesota author John Abel's new book, "America's Lake Vermilion... Its Seasons, Stories & Spirit" will drop from its regular price of \$39.99 to \$34.99 just in time for the holiday season. For each book sold to Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) members, \$7 will be donated to VLA to support the fight against Aquatic Invasive Species. Hurry though; the price will go back up to \$39.99 on January 1, 2021.

The book includes stories from a cross section of people on the lake, including many VLA board members. Over 200 pictures by Tom Hill, photographer, show the beauty of our lake over four seasons. For the full article on this book, go to our Summer 2020 newsletter at www.vermilionlakeassociation.org.

To order, go to www.americaslakevermilion.com. Please use the promotion code VLA on the order form.



Below: Lake Vermilion area writer John Abel's book is now on sale for holiday giving.



Donations

The Vermilion Lake Association has qualified as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). Your charitable gifts and membership dues are generally tax deductible for federal income

tax purposes. Please consult your tax professional.



To accommodate a wide range of donor interests, the Vermilion

Lake Association has three funds to which gifts may be directed. Any size gift is appreciated and acknowledged.

General Fund: Gifts to this fund are used for a broad range of lake association activities.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Fund: Gifts to this fund are used to prevent new AIS infestations and to manage infestations already present.

Shore Lunch Site Improvement Fund: Gifts to this fund are used to improve and maintain Lake Vermilion's eight shore lunch sites.

How to Make a Donation
If you'd like to send a check, please make it payable to "Vermilion Lake Association, Inc." and mail to the

address below. If you wish, you may direct your donation to a specific fund.

All gifts are appreciated and acknowledged. Please include your name, email, and mailing address.

If this is a memorial gift, please let us know who the gift is in memory/in honor of.

Vermilion Lake Association, Jerry Lepper, Treasurer, P.O. Box 696, Tower, MN 55790

Donate online at <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/get-involved/donate/>

Whitefish Netting

The Antique Angler here again with a story about whitefish netting in the late fall. This sport is not for someone who cannot take the cold because the netting season is usually in late October and into early November. It usually takes a two-man team, one to run the motor and keep it out of the rocks and net, and one to pull up the net and take the fish out of it. The season is controlled by the DNR, and the start is dependent upon the water temperatures in the lake, which indicate when the whitefish will spawn. The spawning is usually in shallow areas with small rocks on the bottom, and the 100-foot nets must be placed in less than six feet of water. Each person can have one 100-foot net under their license, and the net needs to have a pole at one end with buoys at each end with one having your name on it.



The Antique Angler

What is important is to scout out potential areas to put your net and always be concerned about how windy the spot will be so you can get at the net every day. It is best to check your net early every day so the fish are still in good shape. You do not want to attract predators like otters that will eat most of the fish and leave the head. You will need a large bucket in your boat for the fish, and a long pole will help hold a boat in one place while removing the fish. This is a messy process; the whitefish is oily and makes a mess of scales and blood when you remove them from the net, and the nets accumulate smelly algae. Your clothes will smell like fish and algae and will need a good cleaning at the end of the season.

The other problem you may incur will be the release of game fish like northern pike and maybe a muskie, which follow the whitefish looking for a meal. Northern pike sometimes get into the nets and can be difficult to remove since they roll in the net. Per

the regulations, they have to be released whether dead or alive. This can be the worst part of this process, since the fish and the water are very cold and you have to take off your gloves to get the fish out of the net. Needless to say, a good day is when no northerns

are in the net, but catching game fish generally is not a common occurrence.

What my friend and I have learned is that there is one factor that is really important to your success. It is having your net in place on the day of the full moon or dark of the moon. Whitefish spawning activity seems to be at its peak during these times, and you can fill your freezer on these days or the day before or after these days. Last year we had only one net out on the day of the full moon and we caught enough fish to fill our needs. Two years ago we only had one net and had it out for two days around the full moon and caught about 14 very nice size whitefish and no northerns. It was a short but great season. We have had fish up to 26 inches long and very heavy. It can be exciting to see what is in your net each day.

The license costs \$10 and there is no limit on the whitefish or tullibees (cisco) that you can keep. You do not want to clean the fish inside your house, so outside or in a warm garage is best. It is a smelly process, and your wife will not be happy with you if you clean them in the house. So why go through all of this effort? The fish are excellent eating. They are a white flaky fish that can be fried, steamed, boiled, baked or smoked. Smoking whitefish is very popular among people who live around Lake Vermilion, and each has their own approach. Smoked whitefish for a snack or meal is outstanding and is something special to look forward to during the holidays. Our favorite is the fish boil, made famous in Door County, WI. See the November newsletter in 2018 (www.vermilionlakeassociation.org) for the recipe on how to do a fish boil, and remember to use real butter on the fish and potatoes.

2020 Photo Contest Winners

Left: I've always enjoyed photographing the night sky in northern Minnesota and Death Valley, CA (where I work for the national park during the winter). The Milky Way is my favorite subject during summer months!

Bob McNamara, first-place winner.



Right: Our family cabin on Lake Vermilion is our favorite place to spend our summers! Owen, my 3-year old, strives to be exactly like daddy! They share a passion for fishing like I have never seen before. Any chance he can get, Owen begs daddy to go fishing! This 3-year old can already cast his own pole and has more patience for fishing than most adults! On this particular beautiful Lake Vermilion evening, his dedication, patience and passion for fishing paid off with a giant Lake Vermilion Walleye! Overwhelmed with excitement to see his bobber go down, we watched him fight and struggle to reel in this giant fish! He never gave up with the help of daddy along the way! This night was so special and something we will never forget! His smile says it all in the picture! We couldn't be prouder of him and his young love for fishing inspired by daddy!

Jamie Kitzmann, second-place winner.



Left: The "Through the Trees Moon Rise" photo was taken from our vacation home on Little Sweden Road. The picture is overlooking Blueberry Island in Head-of-Lakes Bay. If you look closely, you will see the large eagle's nest in the tree. My wife Cindy and I are both retired, spending the summers on Lake Vermilion. Our "home" is in Metamora, IL (near Peoria) where we raised our three boys. We have been visiting the lake since 1984 and decided to purchase a place in 2006. Our lake house is located on Jacobson's Point (west end) where we enjoy fishing and other boating activities. Besides the lake, we enjoy traveling, photography, gardening, and UTV rides.

Terry Jones, third-place winner.





Vermilion Lake Association

PO Box 696

Tower MN 55790

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 • 218-780-8178

Membership year runs from Jan 1 through Dec 31

☐ 2021 New Member ☐ 2021 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.

Do You Qualify?

Trick question. Anyone can join the lake association whose mission it is to protect and improve Lake Vermilion. No need to be a property owner. No need to be a fisherman or a kayaker. Just someone who cares about our great lake and wants to protect her for the next generation.