

THE VERMILION



Vol. 48, No. 3 • The Quarterly Newsletter of the Vermilion Lake Association • Summer 2021



*To Protect
and Improve
Lake Vermilion*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Summer to Lake Neighbors, Friends, and Visitors,

What an incredible spring and early summer this has been. As an avid lake swimmer and as I write this message in late June (we go to press early July), I can't remember having had this abundance of warm water days so early.

With these delightful days, you've likely seen some of our numerous VLA volunteers out on the water or shorelines, doing phenomenal work to protect and enhance this Vermilion gem.

Our long-standing Shoreline Restoration Program, led by Wayne Suoja, has transitioned to a new state-wide Lake Steward Program. At this writing, we have 14 participants who have taken the Score Your Shore Quiz and are engaged with our volunteers to assure their shorelines protect water quality and enhance the natural habitat. We had two early recipients of the Lake Steward Award, Wayne on the east end in Daisy Bay and Ed Bonach on the west end, as you'll note in the accompanying article. We're confident many more of the participants will become Lake Stewards after their property visits this summer.

Our Fishery Conservation team that worked diligently this winter to develop an education card recommending voluntary conservation limits, has received very favorable response. The cards along with fishing towels are being widely distributed by our resort and marina partners, the guides, and AIS boat inspectors at launch sites. Reach out to any of these partners if you haven't received one. With continued fishing pressure on the lake this season, we're committed to these conservation recommendations and the work of our Fishery Team.

If you haven't yet visited one of our Shore Lunch Sites this season—now is a perfect time. Early this spring, one of our volunteers was alerted that a site dock seemed to be knocked off its base structure. Since the volunteer was away from the lake, he quickly reached out to volunteer colleagues. Within a couple days, Jeff Stebbins and John Zweig had the alignment issue corrected. This is another example of how our vol-

unteer teams work collaboratively to keep our many programs on track for our members and lake visitors. Click into our website to see all the Shore Lunch Site locations, pack up a picnic, and enjoy!



Pat Michaelson
VLA President

Another of our teams, led by Noel and Chris Sederstrom, worked diligently this spring and early summer to design and install a Loon NestCam. Those darn loons decided to nest on shore vs the platform they had occupied the last few years, so it made for some last-minute adjustments to the plan. Our camera distance and angles were off slightly from what we had hoped for, but for those of us who clicked in to our

live web cam, it was exciting to watch their diligence to the nesting site. Then, all of a sudden on June 23-24, the two chicks were hatched and swimming off the shoreline with mom or dad. We're motivated to enhance this program next season, and we express gratitude to our VLA members who shared their nesting site, keen observations, and time with us to bring this program to life.

Our Board is looking forward to seeing many of you at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 7 at Camp Vermilion from 3-7 pm. Since we were unable to accommodate an in-person meeting last year, we'll be hosting a variety of informational sessions and tables at this event where you can learn more about our many VLA programs. This is a family event; we'll have special activities for kids and teens including the opportunity to paddle in one of the camp's Voyageur canoes. We'll hold our required short business meeting where we'll be requesting some minor updates to our bylaws along with reappointment of 5 Board Directors: Sheri Sawatzky, Gary Haugen, Jill Korpela-Bontems, Pat Michaelson and Nancy Watkins. See additional information and be certain to RSVP.

It will be great to see many of you again on Saturday, August 7.

Be Safe,

Pat Michaelson, VLA Volunteer Program Leader and President



**We're looking forward to
having your family join us for the
Vermilion Lake Association Annual Meeting
Saturday, August 7, 2021
at Camp Vermilion, 2555 Vermilion Camp Road,
Cook, Minnesota, from 3-7 pm**

3-4:30 pm: Discussion Tables and Voyageur Canoeing (3:30 or 4:30, reservations required)

4:30-5:30 pm: Pulled Pork Sandwich Picnic Dinner (\$10 for adults, \$5 for kids under 12)

5:30-6 pm: Annual Business Meeting with bylaw revision presentation/vote
and re-appointment of Board Directors

6-7pm: Enjoy conversations with Lake Friends and Beverages on the deck (cash bar)

RSVP Required by Friday, July 23 to:

Terrie Heimann

jtheimann@live.com

218-666-6057

Pat Michaelson

plmichaelson@gmail.com

612-306-7702

The proposed bylaw changes are available at www.vermilionlakeassociation.org.

Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show

We are back and thrilled to announce the 30th Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show. It will be held on Sunday, September 5 at the Landing Restaurant, from noon to 4 pm.

We are delighted to have the Vermilion Lake Association as an honorary sponsor again this year. Their presence at the show allows the Association to display and educate the public on its achievements, goals and plans for the future, and maybe sell a hat or two. We are fortunate that Lake Vermilion has an organization that is so dedi-



**Bait Time owned by Jerry
Lepper, winner of the 2018
People's Choice Award**

cated to the welfare of the lake. Check out their booth at the show.

This event is open to the public and we encourage everyone to come see the beautiful boats and chat with the owners. Vote for your favorite boat. Then kick back and enjoy a Landing burger, a beverage, and stay for the awards presentation at 4 pm.

Anyone interested in displaying their antique or classic boat, whether it's wood, fiberglass or handmade, please contact us for more information.

Happy Boating and see you at the show!

Sandy Jackson, skayjack@aol.com, 612-790-7957

Mark Ludlow, mark@ludlowsresort.com, 612-817-4069

Cover photo by Chris Woody, VLA member

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



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

tax purposes. Please consult your tax professional.

To accommodate a wide range of donor interests, the Vermilion

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/>

*Your Supports Helps the Vermilion Lake Association
Make a Beautiful Lake Even Better!*

Board of Directors and Officers 2021

Cook

Sheri Sawatzky, Secretary/Membership, 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, 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, President, 2384 Deerwood Lane, Cook, MN 55723, 612-306-7702, plmichaelson@gmail.com

Tower

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

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

Nancy Watkins 5981 412th St, Rice, MN 56367, 320-291-2363, 2bitfarm@gmail.com

Volunteerism does not just happen; it's a work in progress

Volunteers are people like you and me who step up and say yes, I will help.

They are the core of what makes Lake Vermilion a great place to

live, work and play!



Penny Jackson
VLA Volunteer

Bob and Renee Pearson are two of those people. They both grew up in the area and never really left, Bob in Tower and Renee in Virgin-

ia. Bob's father worked on the lake and was Mail Boat driver in the 1930's and Bob shared in the same summer experience after high school and through college. Bob graduated from Tower-Soudan High in 1971. "Go Purple & Gold".

Bob is one of many board members who volunteers his time with the Vermilion Lake Association. He is currently helping with the Loon stewardship program and is working to advance that program potentially by funds paid to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and allocated to the state for damages caused to loons by the B-P oil spill. This money will help the Department of Natural Resources create loon-friendly lake programs and the MPCA to fund the program "Get the Lead Out". That program is designed to make fishermen aware of the problems created by lead sinkers and jigs for fishing and lead shot used in hunting. Lead has a huge impact on our loons and if we don't change our habits our loons will be gone! Never again will we hear their beautiful call across the waters of Lake Vermilion.

Renee has always been interested in science, water quality and animals. She continues to use her BS



degree in Natural Science to help the lake association identify Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). She, along with Bob, tests the water coming into the lake at the East Two River. She drags with a cone-shaped micro net for zebra mussel veligers (larvae). Her samples are then sent to a lab in Bemidji for testing. The results of these tests so far are that no veligers or adult zebra mussels have been found in Lake Vermilion. This testing is especially important for the life of the lake. Trying to stop it before it happens will really make a difference.

You too can make a difference by volunteering some of your time to the Vermilion Lake Association. The VLA would like to hear from you. Contact Volunteer Coordinator Pat Michaelson at plmichaelson@gmail.com or check our website at www.VermilionLakeAssociation.org.

AIS Public Access Sentry program update

Hi, I'm Jill Korpela-Bontems. I've been a Vermilion Lake Association board member going on three years. A recent role that I've taken on is becoming the Public Access AIS Sentry leader. The Public Access Sentries are responsible for inspecting each public landing three times during the summer months; once in each month of June, July, and August. From shore, a modified rake head is thrown out to gather samples of vegetation. Samples are looked over using the MN Aquatic Invasive Species Identification Guide book as a reference. If something suspicious is found it will be passed on to one of our AIS Detectors, who have had further training, to determine if it should be taken to the DNR for further testing. At that point a plan for further action could be made if necessary. Sentries perform vital early detection of invasive species, which almost always take root at our public or private accesses. Keeping aquatic invasive species out of our lakes requires vigilance. Keeping our beautiful Lake Vermilion as pristine as possible is the goal.



Jill Korpela-Bontems, VLA Board Member



I am following a family tradition of supporting Lake Vermilion. My father, Harold Korpela, was a board member of the VLA, which was then called "The Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion". He was very active in the organization doing various things from the late 1970s until they moved from the lake in 2008. I am honored to carry on his legacy. My parents instilled in me the importance of volunteering. My husband and I have lived on the same property on the east end of the lake for 13 years and I have spent my lifetime enjoying this beautiful lake.

How to Report Suspicious Vegetation at Vermilion

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

Because our highest priority threats are vegetation that tends to become first established where introduced, be especially vigilant at Vermilion's public and private accesses.

Please report any suspicious aquatic vegetation or



invertebrates which you do not recognize as native to Lake Vermilion to our AIS Detector team. Contact our AIS hotline by either email or phone at:

AIS@VermilionLakeAssociation.org or 218-288-1080.

A member of our AIS Detector team – listed below – will get back to you promptly.

Jim Graham jcgrahamsr@gmail.com

Bob McNamara bob@bobmcnamara.com

Wayne Suoja wsuoja@frontiernet.net

Adopt a Shoreline or Shore Lunch Site

Involving the Future Protectors of the Lake

Involving your children in protecting our lake is a good way to help ensure future generations can continue to enjoy and love Lake Vermilion. One option

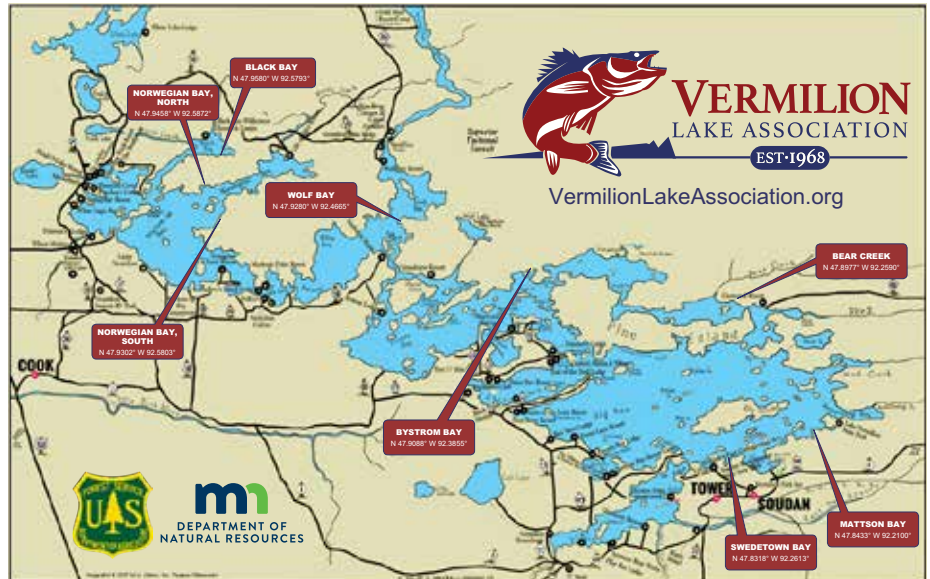
is for your family to monitor your own shore for aquatic invasive species (AIS), or consider monitoring one of the Shore Lunch sites for AIS. Jill Korpela-Bontems



is the AIS Sentry Leader and she can help with information on how to approach AIS identification. Information on how to report suspicious vegetation is also included in this newsletter (see article on facing page).

There are eight Shore Lunch Sites that are fun to visit and explore. As part of the outing, your family can do a check for invasive species. This activity can be

SHORE LUNCH SITES LAKE VERMILION



continued during each visit throughout the summer. Pick and adopt a site. The extra set of eyes on the watch for invasive species will support the volunteers who already monitor each of these sites.

Save the Date

What: Volunteer Recognition Party

Who: Member volunteers of the Vermilion Lake Association

When: Tuesday, August 31, Evening: specific time TBD

Look for more information forthcoming in your email, mail, and Facebook.



VLA Caps

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
www.VermilionLakeAssociation.org

For more info, contact Sheri Sawatzky

218-780-8178, sherisawatzky@gmail.com

Thanks for helping us protect and improve our great lake.

Why large, healthy breeding populations of Lake Trout are found in some northland lakes but not in Lake Vermilion

Lake trout are the largest fish in the char family, and are found in many freshwater lakes in northern North America. The largest specimen landed on a rod-and-reel was caught in Canada's Great Bear Lake in 1995 and weighed 72 pounds, but much larger specimens have been netted. Many lakes in the Arrowhead region like neighboring Trout Lake, Snowbank Lake and Burntside Lake have abundant populations of lake trout, as do massive Lake Superior and Lake-of-the-Woods, both a couple hours' drive away. The explanation as to why a viable, breeding population of lake trout is not found in Lake Vermilion is a fairly simple one: Lake Vermilion lacks the layer of deep, cold water they need in summer.

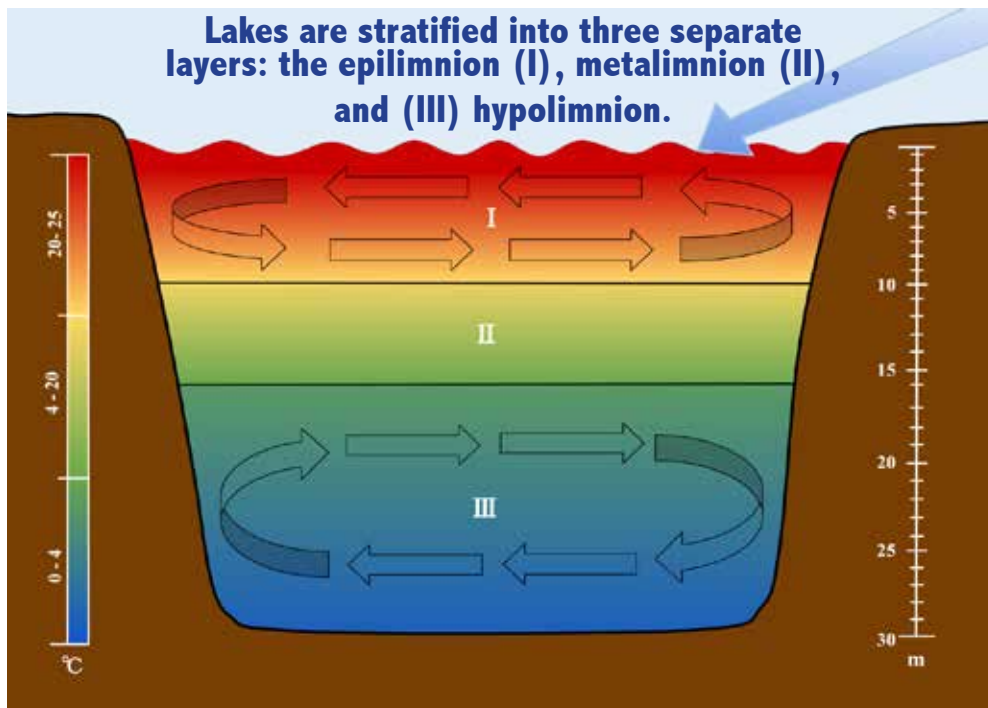


John Yocum
VLA Board Member

To understand why they are (almost) entirely absent from Lake Vermilion, one has to understand a little about their life cycle. Although they are found in

shallow areas during the fall, winter and spring, lake trout require a lake with deep, cold water in summer in order to thrive. During the summer in lakes where they are found, they inhabit a zone that is 20 to 50 meters (66 to 197 feet) deep. In deep northern lakes, water thermally stratifies or separates into 3 distinct layers. The warm surface layer, which is up to about 10 meters deep, is called the Epilimnion. The middle layer, which is about 10-20 meters deep, is called the Metalimnion or thermocline layer. The layer deeper than 20 meters is called the Hypolimnion, and generally stays about 4°C (39°F) all the time. Although Lake Vermilion is large at 40,557 acres, it is relatively shallow. The deepest part of Lake Vermilion is a small hole in Big Bay southwest of Spider Island that reaches a maximum depth of 76 feet. The only spot deeper than 20 meters (66 feet) in the entire lake is a couple acres that surround it. So, for all intents and purposes, Lake Vermilion lacks a Hypolimnion layer; certainly not one that is expansive enough and deep

Continued on next page



The scales are used to associate each section of the stratification to their corresponding depths and temperatures. The arrow is used to show the movement of wind over the surface of the water, which initiates the turnover in the epilimnion and hypolimnion.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermocline>

(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Correction to “Trapping Rusty Crayfish” article

In the Winter 2021 issue of The Vermilion, the modifications and design given for traps were not legal dimensions. The author mentioned modifying or building traps so the opening is 2-3 inches.

Edie Evarts, Area Fisheries Supervisor from the DNR, directed us to the legal construction for traps in the 2021 Minnesota Fishing regulations book on page 31:

Traps may not exceed a width and length of 30 inches, height may not exceed 15 inches, the diameter or width of the opening may not exceed 1-1/2 inches and mesh size may not exceed 1/2-bar measure. Traps must have a waterproof tag bearing the name and address of the owner.

She goes on to say, “I believe this is to prevent turtles from getting trapped and drowned (as they need

to periodically breathe). A few more other crayfish related regulations:

Can I take my own crayfish?

Yes, people with a fishing license and children younger than 16 can take and possess up to 25 pounds of live crayfish for personal use.

When can I take crayfish?

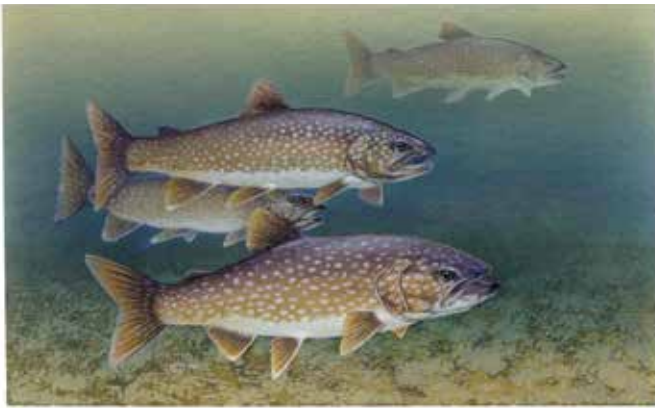
From April 1 to Nov. 30. Traps may be left overnight but may only be tended from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

Do I need a DNR permit to sell or move crayfish?

You need a DNR permit to transport them in water, sell them or import them.

We apologize for the error and appreciate the correct information.

Lake trout...from page 8



(Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

enough to support a lake trout population.

Trout Lake, by contrast, has a maximum depth of 98 feet; but it has vast areas out in the middle that are more than 90 feet deep, and even more surrounding those that are deeper than 80 feet. Burntside Lake is even deeper at 126 feet, and Snowbank Lake reaches 150 feet.

Now, that is not to say that a lake trout has never been caught in Lake Vermilion. Occasionally, one will read about someone catching a lake trout in

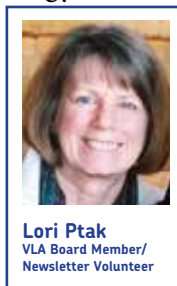
Lake Vermilion on a blog or hear about it in chatter around the lake. The DNR may have attempted to stock lake trout in Lake Vermilion many years ago because an old fishing map from 1994 lists them as one of the species stocked once during the prior ten-year period; if that actually happened, it never led to the establishment of a viable fishery. Probably the most likely way isolated specimens occasionally make their way into Lake Vermilion is from the stream connecting it to Trout Lake. That stream (officially known as Pine Creek) drains south out of Trout Lake into Lake Vermilion, and drops 25 vertical feet through steep rapids in only ¼ mile. (Trout Lake is at 1,394 feet above sea level and Lake Vermilion is at 1,369 feet above sea level.) So, it's not hard to imagine an occasional lake trout being cascaded down this stream into Lake Vermilion during periods of high water. Also, there have probably been instances where some well-meaning fisherman have dropped a few into Lake Vermilion on their way back from Trout Lake. But one can be certain that somebody catching a lake trout in Lake Vermilion is an exceedingly rare event, occurring no more than perhaps a handful of times per decade.

Cormorant Counts on Lake Vermilion Get New Angle



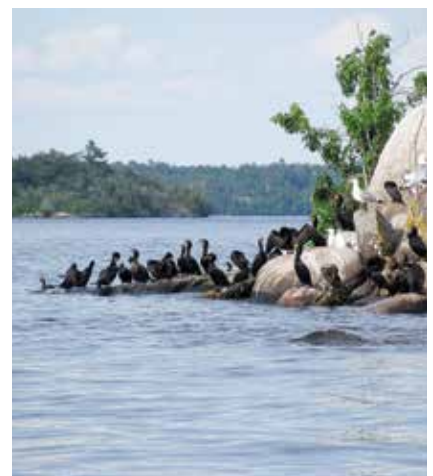
The Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) has broadened their observation of cormorant nesting by utilizing drone technology. A

VLA volunteer conducted drone observations of Potato Island in May and June of 2021 and plans to repeat flights during July, August, and September. The July flight will coincide with the Annual Loon and Cormorant Count conducted by VLA volunteers on the entire lake.



This information is shared with the Minnesota DNR, who are interested in the variation of numbers over time. Matt Hennen, DNR Large Lake Specialist, and Gaea Crozier, DNR Non-game Wildlife Specialist, conducted a physical count of 366 cormorant nests in May of 2021. They reported that an abnormally high number of those nests ($n=24$) had no eggs or chicks present compared to previous years. The 2021 count

was slightly higher than recent years and above the average nest count of 331 from 2013-2019. However, the number of nests observed is still significantly below the peak of 434 nests in 2012. No cormorant nesting activity was observed elsewhere on the lake.



Drone use is regulated, especially on public land and around wildlife. To learn more about these regulations, go to <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/issues/2021/may-jun/drones.html>.

Vermilion's First Lake Stewards

With Lake Vermilion's many unique shorelines, it's still easy to become a Lake Steward as shown by our first two award recipients.

Our first recipient, Wayne Suoja, has worked



Pat Michaelson
VLA President

over the years to create a shoreline buffer that is habitat friendly and protects runoff from their lawn into the lake. This buffer has an extensive growth of aquatic vegetation consisting of bulrush, reed, and cattail.

Wayne has long been a shoreline advocate, working as the Vermilion Lake Association's Shoreline Restoration leader for many years.

Our second recipient is Ed Bonach. His property, which his parents developed, has rugged, rocky shorelines. Ed shared that they are grateful his parents were nature enthusiasts, inspiring enjoyment of the natural state of their lake property.

After completing the quiz, the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR) program, working with the Vermilion Lake Association, brings a team to assess the property. They then work with owners for enhancements if desired.

In partnership with the North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), a pilot project will occur early this fall to assist landowners with planting a shoreline buffer. A Conservation Corps Crew will be working over a couple select days to restore or enhance a few landowner projects. If you are interested in taking part in the opportunity, start by taking the Lake Steward Quiz! (See "How to become a Lake Steward at right.") You can also contact Becca Reiss of SWCD at becca@nslswcd.org or 218-288-6143.



Above: Dwight Warkentin, Pat Michaelson and Mark Litherland present Ed Bonach with a Lake Steward award sign. Below: Look for these signs on recipients' docks



How to become a Lake Steward:

Take the quiz here: <http://mnlakesandrivers.org> and click on the blue/green box "Are you a Lake Steward?"

A VLA volunteer will visit your property and make recommendations if needed.

When qualified, you will receive a Lake Steward sign with the VLA logo.

For more information and if you want to participate, please contact Jeff Forester from MLR/VLA Volunteer at jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org.

Improve your shoreline this fall with help

Did you know that having a shoreline buffer can reduce erosion, protect the water quality of Lake Vermilion, and provide habitat to native wildlife? Over the course of a couple select days this fall, a Minnesota Conservation Corps Crew will be working on Lake Vermilion to restore or enhance a handful of landowner projects. This is part of a pilot project through the North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and Vermilion Lake Association to improve shoreline habitat along the lake.



Becca Reiss
VLA Member,
SWCD Community
Conservationist

This program may be perfect for you if you have been wanting to improve your shoreline but don't know where to start for planning. We can help you come up with a plan. It may also be for you if you have been wanting to improve your shoreline, but aren't physically able to do the work. We can provide the labor through the Conservation Corps Crew if you are able to purchase the plants.



Having a shoreline buffer will also give you points toward the Lake Steward Program launched this year through the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR), working with the Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) and North St. Louis SWCD. By using a 10-question quiz to "Score Your Shore", you can learn how you are doing with practices on your shoreline. Afterwards, a VLA volunteer will offer to visit your property and to follow up with the owner to learn their goals and hopes for the property. Owners who qualify and decide to become a Lake Steward are awarded a beautiful sign with the VLA logo.

For more information on planting native on your shoreline this fall, contact Becca with the North St. Louis SWCD at becca@nslswcd.org or 218-288-6143.

To take the Lake Steward quiz, visit: <http://mnlake-sandrivers.org/> and click on the blue/green box "Are You a Lake Steward".

Shoreland zones diagram courtesy of the Minnesota DNR

In Memory...

The Vermilion Lake Association regularly receives donations in memory of loved ones or friends. These gifts were received between Jan. 5 and June 16, 2021. We are grateful for these gifts and also wish to honor those who have passed away.

Gordon Bockus	Kim Wilson O'Brien
Arlene Branwall	Richard Okerstrom
Tim Flanagan	Betty Seashore
Ray Harris	Marilyn Skare
Bob Hart	Alpha Smaby
Mel Hintz	John & Ruth Stapleton
John M. Holmes	John E. Turk
Mary Juhl	Mary & William
Bill Ketola	Vollendorf
Jim Kvale	Ann Vollmar
Dale Lundblad	Friends of Dave
Danial J. Machacek	Ranoski, Ingeborg
Helen Hall Marturano	& Ann
Norman Miller	

In memoriam

Ann Vollmar, a longtime resident and lover of Lake Vermilion, died on March 8, 2021, from ALS. She died exactly as she always wanted, peacefully in her own home, with her family by her side.



She and her husband Warren were long-time members of the Vermilion Lake Association. Ann was active in the loon count and the cleanup of the Timbuktu Road. She was also the campground host for the Hinsdale Island Primitive Campsites. She loved meeting people and introducing them to beautiful Lake Vermilion. We will miss her lovely smile, and hearing her loon call announcing the start of happy hour on the deck. She has left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of her many friends. Wherever she went, no matter the weather, she always brought her own sunshine.

AIS Partnership with Your Boat Club Expands in 2021



Gary Haugen, VLA Board Member

Editor's Note: Protecting Lake Vermilion relies on our whole community working together. We will be highlighting local businesses that support the VLA goals of protecting the lake from invasive species over the next several newsletters. As a first in the series, we are highlighting Your Boat Club for their partnership with VLA.

From its quiet location on East Two River within the city limits of Tower, Your Boat Club (YBC) provides boats to its more than 2,000 members throughout Minnesota for a day to a week at a time. It's a win for all involved: The YBC member does not need to trailer a boat to Vermilion, the boat is ready to go when the member arrives, and Lake Vermilion sees one less boat ... from an unknown lake ... which might possibly be transporting an aquatic invasive species (AIS) to our lake.

Occasionally, a personal boat does launch at the YBC ramp. But not before it is thoroughly inspected. "Our trained staff will check every boat before launch," said Tod Van Norman, Lake Vermilion YBC general



Tod Van Norman, Lake Vermilion YBC general manager

manager. "We need to do that to protect our lake ... and we take that responsibility seriously."

East Two River, where YBC is located, is one of a small number of higher-risk AIS locations on Lake Vermilion. The river has occasional high calcium levels, which could make it vulnerable to a zebra mussel infestation. Your Boat Club is an ideal spot to deploy a centrally-located

zebra mussel settling plate in the spring. The settling plate ... along with two others on East Two River ... will be retrieved in October and examined to see if immature zebras are attached.

Continued on next page

Now there are four: We've been watching our loon family grow, on VLA's Live Loon Cam

By Noel and Chris Sederstrom,
VLA Volunteers

It has been great fun the past two months, acquiring equipment and then deploying it in a small bay on Lake Vermilion, so that anyone on the planet can watch two of our loons protect their nest and attempt to bring baby chicks into the world. There were challenges getting the camera set up and tightly focused, and a learning curve for our team. But then the drama began.



There were predators— a blue heron, a beaver— and it became apparent that threats could come from anywhere. We watched as the female and male loons took turns sitting on their nest keeping an eye out for trouble, constantly scanning the skies nearby for something to swoop in and attack.

Then, some time over Father's Day weekend, amid all of those storms we had, the two eggs hatched and we caught sight of two little chicks swimming along with Mom and Dad Loon. They have been teaching them how to find food. We've posted a few updates on the VLA's Facebook page along the way and that's where you'll find photos of the loon family. Check out our Loon Nest Cam webpage (<https://www.vermillionlakeassociation.org/live-loon-camera/>) to see video highlights from their last days in their home



Noel and Chris Sederstrom

waters—it's fun just to listen to the loons, the wind and the waves. Thanks to everyone who has helped us with this project this summer!

Your Boat Club...from page 13

"Tod's staff also inspects boats coming from another YBC location," said Gary Haugen, VLA Board Member, who has worked with YBC to develop the AIS prevention plan. Company-owned boats will sometimes move from one YBC location to another to balance demand. Some of the Your Boat Club locations are on lakes with known zebra mussel or Eurasian watermilfoil infestations. Those boats require extra attention and will perhaps be cleaned using the hot-water pressure washer recently purchased by the

Vermilion YBC. In more difficult situations, the boat will be sent to the Hoodoo Point decontamination unit prior to launch.

Haugen continued, "The YBC staff could not be more accommodating and professional. I expect our partnership will continue to get stronger over the years. Our thanks to the entire team."

North St. Louis SWCD Tree Sale Success!

By Lauren Soergel, NSLSWCD District Forester

Consider this article a broad thank you to all who participated in the 2021 North St. Louis SWCD's Annual Tree Sale. The proceeds of this event support the conservation efforts coming from our office in forestry management, aquatic invasive species control, community education/outreach, watershed protection, and many more projects (visit our website to see a few highlights, www.nsls-wcd.org). From January thru early May, annually, we sell native trees, shrubs, and plant kits to local landowners. These plants are sourced from greenhouses and nurseries including Schumacher's Nursery and Berry Farm, DNR Badoura Nursery, and Itasca Greenhouse.

This year was a record-setting year with over 13,000 individual trees and shrubs sold. Our top seller was, surprisingly, pollinator plant kits followed by white and red pines! New this year was a septic mound seed mix which was formulated specifically for planting on septic mounds with special consideration of plant root systems and well-drained soils.

Knowing thousands of trees were planted after this sale is exciting enough; even so, we wanted to know what the estimated carbon sequestration was as a

result. Using the steps provided by ecomatcher.com to calculate total carbon taken up by these trees over the next 10 years, the result is 755 tons of carbon!

Now you might be thinking, "Wow, that's great, but I have no idea what that means." Well, luckily the EPA website linked below puts that into a more digestible format so you may understand how planting trees contributes to taking carbon out of the atmosphere.

755 tons of carbon is equivalent to 164 vehicles, or 1,897,464 miles driven by vehicles; 834,489 lbs. of coal or 84,956 gallons of gas; 90.9 homes energy demand for one year; and/or 925 acres of forested land.

We are thankful for each of our customers, to the Eveleth DNR staff, and for trees that keep Minnesota beautiful for future generations! If you would like to order trees, shrubs, native plants or seed mixes from us next year, be sure to check out our website in January. We recommend you order promptly as we run out of inventory quickly each year.

<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator> <https://www.ecomatcher.com/how-to-calculate-co2-sequestration/>

Help protect Lake Vermilion by using Amazon Smile, Part V



I would like to thank all of those who used Amazon Smile during this past Holiday Season. I especially enjoyed reading your notes sent in with

Membership Renewals stating how you were using Amazon Smile as much as possible when shopping.

When you shop at Amazon, go to the Smile.Amazon.com website, designating The Vermilion Lake Association 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.

During the past year the purchases you made using Amazon Smile have contributed \$593.38 to the Vermilion Lake Association. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Topwater prospects

The topwater bite for Vermilion muskies produces some of the best fish of the season. These fish love TOPWATER!!! Our topwater bites start right at the season opener and go right into October!!! Here are a few good choices to start with from top to bottom:



Flap Tail- Most deadly bait out of the back of the boat...custom flap tails are the best ones to get, but are worth every penny... a custom Matt Wirth flap tail is my go-to!

Lake X Lures- Tail spin Lake X Lures are a must... there are 4 sizes: Dr. Evil, Fat Bastard, Cannon Ball Jr., and Cannon Ball...these baits catch fish all season!



Big Mama Lure- Tail spin with a curved tail especially in rough water throws a loud pop!

Hawg Wobbler- Another solid bait for the back of the boat in calm water...these are an oldie but goodie...weedbeds in July/August are a top producer for this lure!

Custom Globe Bait- Many great lure makers for this type of bait...these baits can be deadly as the water starts to cool in late summer/early fall

Creeper- B.S.Willy is my go to creeper! Another great bait for the back of the boat...great producing bait for mid-July to mid-September

A good thing to keep in mind for topwater baits and most baits in general....keep the faster moving baits in the front of the boat and the slower baits in the back for casting order!!

Steve Amundson

Spring Bay Resort & Guide Service

218-780-5941

VERMILION'S SUMMER

*(a poem best read when accompanied by
Percy Faith's "Theme From a Summer Place" from YouTube)*

Summer time, a time for looking out, not the dark inward questions that bug me at other times. Those questions?.... best left for cold dreary nights....It's time to read a book, disconnect, listen to some music, be it Johnny Cash, Chopin or Cool Jay. As Porgy sang, "Summer time and the livin' is easy, fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high".... Well we too cherish livin' easy here in Minnesota's "Arctic Circle".

Bird song fills our air, and the darting, diving aviation artistry on display amazes.....A mother mallard with her string of chicks brings a smile....though the head count is sure to dwindle by fall. And our loons, how can one leave them out of any summer reflection? Experience their haunting call.....you'll never forget it. Nor the sounds of a Vermilion thunderstorm; mighty collisions in the heavens, the crack of nearby lightning and then the pelting rain....with you forever.

Summer, ahh summer....a time to chase butterflies,

Ride a whimsical cloud from the comfort of your chaise lounge, or throw out a line and hope nothing hits it.

The best? Clear summer nights.....Stars.... high, deep and silent.

The mind can wander but no hand wringing allowed!!

Our north country days are far too few, too precious to squander on anything but the beautiful, the lovely, the joy-bringers.

Listen to Percy's strings gently carry you away on a cloud while you count your blessings.

Tom Aro

Summer 2021

"Savoring a Smart Bay Sunset,"
photo by Susan Mercer, VLA member

Catch and Release Trophy Panfish



Here are two 10-year old fish - which one is more likely to be eaten? Some years ago InFisherman magazine began emphasizing the common sense of selective harvest of mid-size panfish, and recognition of large panfish as respectable trophies worthy of release, and not just as food. “Keep enough for a meal,” they would say.



Rich DeAngelo
VLA Member

The name “panfish” I guess is unfortunate, because it kind of defines the predetermined destiny of this broad class of fish. They’re “eaters”! What fisherman didn’t grow up defining success as a bucket or basket

heavy with panfish headed for release into the grease? I am guilty as charged. Fifty years ago I would catch gills on Vermilion too large to get your hand around, like dessert plates, and over 30 years ago proudly caught stringers of 10” bluegills with my kids, but guess what? They’re almost gone. We ate them all.

A classic 1989 study by Olson and Cunningham graphically documented the historical decline of bluegills around Park Rapids, where records of local “trophy fish” from the Fuller’s Hardware Fishing Contest from 1930 to 1987 showed that until 1953 the average size of contest-entered bluegills was 1.3 lbs (and black crappies were over 1.75 lbs), but gradually declined until in 1987 the largest bluegill entries were only about 0.75 lbs, and crappies at 1.25 lbs.

Let’s look at what we do. We sit on a spawning bed and pick off the most aggressive (and vulnerable) large male bluegills - the genetic future of our lake. You recall that males have more vibrant colors, often a coppery orange breast, and females are more silver and green. Understand that there are two types of male bluegills - the big dominant ones that take 7-8 years to mature, that are most successful at defending nests and preventing depredation of their fry, and

then smaller “sneaker” or “cuckolder” males that mature in 4-5 years, never get big, and find ways to pass on their genes by being, well, sneaky. They will try to spawn alongside the dominant males, even assuming a female’s coloration to fool the larger males into allowing them into the nest to share in fertilizing eggs.

Crazy stuff, but then so is what WE do! We yank those big males off their nests, and release the sneakers to take their place and pass on their inferior genes. If we find a pocket of big ones, we’ll clean them out. Maybe time for a rethink?

A 2005 paper from the MN DNR showed improvement in bluegill size within 5 years after introducing a reduced bag limit on several lakes. And a 2015 paper presented by the WI DNR to The American Fisheries Society suggested reduced bag limits can be a useful tool in improving bluegill size.

What’s to be done? Well, let’s recognize that a bluegill over 8” is big for our lake, and a real 10-incher is a rarity, a surviving Methuselah that deserves respect and consideration for a reprieve. Keep those 7” males, and even bigger females, as there is evidence that releasing male bluegills over 8” is the right thing to do. The picture above is of the last honest 10” gill I caught here two years ago while flyfishing - I hope he’s still swimming.

My personal plan is to keep eating those tasty bluegills, and fillet up the smaller ones with my electric fillet knife, which makes short work of them. Maybe I’ll scale and panfry some of them whole and headless, the old-fashioned way, munching on those crunchy fins (try it!). I’ll eat more of the females - that surprisingly does not impact the population as much. But I will limit my overall kill and show the big boys over 8”-9” some respect, and let them go. There is sense to this approach for bluegills; not as many studies have focused on Minnesota perch and crappies, but it seems intuitively right to consider releasing unusually large perch (over 12”) and crappies over 13”.

Maybe if we all show our panfish a little respect, admire them and watch those chunkers swim away, we can bring back some of those good old days!

Tower's Ancient Cedars Trail is a new must-see

A community initiative to develop new hiking trails in Tower has opened up some spectacular opportunities for anyone looking to get a real feel for the northwoods.

The Ancient Cedars Trail, which opened last year, will quickly transport visitors from “downtown” Tower to a unique portion of untouched upland cedar forest that dates back 150 years. Back in the late 1870s, before the founding of Tower-Soudan, fire burned much of what is now the south side of Tower. A forest dominated by northern white cedar grew back in the wake of the fire and a portion of that forest has stood undisturbed ever since, making this area truly extraordinary as one of the only known examples of a primary forest site (never logged) found within the limits of a Minnesota city.

This site is not just extraordinary, it is a reminder of an ecological period that no longer exists in Minnesota. Had this site burned in recent years, the regeneration of white cedar would likely not have occurred due to the presence of whitetail deer, which browse heavily on white cedar. But when these trees grew up in the late 1880s, the forests of this area were populated by woodland caribou, which subsisted mostly on other foods of the forest. That makes this forest unique as a relic of a bygone era in Minnesota.

Yet the area is spectacular for more than just trees. The site also includes rugged rock outcrops, the remains of ancient mountains, that offer views of portions of the city and nearby Lake Vermilion. As you walk along the bases of these outcrops, under the deep shade of the old cedars, the rock faces are draped in mosses and ferns. It's a return to the forest primeval.

As you explore this trail, you will find the forest to be quite open under the thick canopy above, which can make it difficult to follow the trail unless you're paying attention. Watch for the painted blazes on trees along the way, which are designed to keep you on the right path. You'll also find maps at key intersections to help you navigate along the way. Blazes along alternate trails and spurs will be made with other colors.

Please keep in mind that this is a wilderness-type trail, which means you assume some risks inherent with wilderness travel. Watch for loose rocks, roots, and steep and slippery slopes that could pose hazards along the way. Sturdy



shoes or hiking boots are recommended and hiking sticks or poles may be of assistance as well.

To reach the trail, just follow the directional signs on the paved Mesabi Trail, which begins next to the Tower Train Depot Museum. In three-tenths of a mile, watch for a right turn down a grassy lane. From there, the trailhead is about 500 feet away, just over a wooden snowmobile bridge. Watch for the trailhead and an interpretive sign on your left.

The first 500 feet of the trail is on boardwalk, through a wetland area. The rest of the trail is upland, and parts of it are fairly rugged. The main trail is just under a mile in length, while a number of loops and alternative routes provide a total of two miles of hiking opportunity.

And don't limit your visits to the summer. These woods are even more spectacular when draped in winter white, so dust off your snowshoes and enjoy this area year-round!

The trail is a joint effort of the Tower Economic Development Authority, the Wagoner Trails Club, and Friends of Vermilion Country School. These volunteers are now working on developing additional hiking trails, on the hill-sides north of Tower, which include stunning ledge-outcrop overlooks of Lake Vermilion. These new trails will be completed this fall.

Story by Marshall Helmberger/Timberjay, VLA Member



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
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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.