

THE VERMILION



Vol. 50, No. 3 • The Quarterly Newsletter of the Vermilion Lake Association • Summer 2023



*To Protect
and Improve
Lake Vermilion*

IN THIS ISSUE

Annual meeting set for July 29...page 3
Stop the spread: Spiny Water Fleas...page 5
Boat decontamination station how-to's...page 7
A loon story...page 8

Recognizing our volunteers....page 9
Antique boat show...page 11
Shore lunch sites...page 14-15
Updating bass regulations...page 18

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Lake Neighbors and Friends,

As I am writing this during the first week in June, I am reminded at how fast the seasons change. We went from a late ice out, just in time for fishing opener, but with great weather, then to a near record heat wave where I have had to run the AC in my lake home. But that is part of why we enjoy this lake. In this climate, if you look for it, you will see many phenology changes, even week to week. We enjoyed the Northern lights earlier.

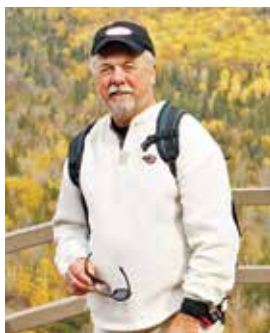


Dwight Warkentin
VLA President

These past 4 nights, I observed an amazing display of bright white fireflies. The loons are back, the ducks are nesting, the fish are jumping around my dock and the boat rides are special. It is a great time to be living on Minnesota's crown jewel lake!

Under the leadership of board members Gary Haugen and Nancy Watkins, we are expanding our AIS prevention program to include boat cleaning stations, bait disposal bins and signage at selected boat launches. We all need to be vigilant to prevent AIS from entering our lake. Remember: Clean your boat and trailer before you enter, be sure your drain plugs are pulled and fully drained, and dispose of any unused bait in the trash, not in the lake.

Craig Beveroth, board member and water quality leader will be expanding his program to include more measurements of lake water quality to help ensure our lake maintains the great water we all enjoy. More details should be available later this summer.



Cover photo courtesy of Kit Carson. Kit is a Minnesota nature photographer who mainly takes photos in the Northeastern part of Minnesota.

To see more of his work, go to
<https://www.smokeyphoto.com/>

You will notice an increase in fishing tournaments this summer. While these are permitted by the DNR, Terry Grosshauser, board member and fisheries leader, is working hard behind the scenes to ensure all laws are followed. In addition, he has been working to help address some of the fishing regulations and other issues to help protect our great fishery.

A special thanks to Jerry Lepper, who has served tirelessly in the important role as treasurer for nearly 8 years. He has provided the financial documentation necessary for us to successfully obtain our grants. He will be retiring this summer and will be handing the role as treasurer to new board member Mark Schmidt. Great job Jerry and thanks again!

Remember to attend our annual meeting this year if you can. We have a great speaker, good food, and it will be a fun time again at Camp Vermilion. We will not be sending out post cards this year, so look for the notice in this newsletter on how to RSVP.

I hope you are enjoying our loon cam again this year. Some great videos of the interactions between the loons, an eagle, and a beaver.

When you visit the shore lunch spots, you will likely notice some improvements to some of the docks. You will find them more suitable for multiple boats for your friends to join. We still plan to add one more shore lunch site soon.

Please join me in giving a special thanks to our board members and our over 200 volunteers. Without them, we would not be able to fulfill our mission to protect and improve Lake Vermilion. If you can, get involved by contacting board member Pat Michaelson. We appreciate your membership. Remember, we rely on our modest membership dues, donations from members, and an AIS grant from the county. There are considerable expenses in our many programs. Please consider an additional contribution to help support our mission.

Stay safe, enjoy your summer on this special lake.

Join your lake neighbors and friends at the

Vermilion Lake Association's Annual Meeting

Saturday, July 29th, 2023

At Camp Vermilion, 2555 Vermilion Camp Road, Cook

From 4-7 pm

4-5 pm: Gather and Explore our Program Information Tables

5-6 pm: Beef Brisket Sandwich Dinner (\$15 for adults, \$7.50 for kids under 12)

6 pm: Annual Business Meeting, bylaw revisions* and director re-appointments

6:20 pm: Key Note Speaker

"Lake Vermilion and the AIS Dirty Dozen"

Guest Speaker: Doug Jensen

AIS Prevention Planner for the MN DNR

Postcard Invitations will not be mailed this year!

RSVP Required by Wednesday, July 19 to:

Terrie Heimann	jtheimann@live.com	218-666-6057
Pat Michaelson	plmichaelson@gmail.com	612-306-7702

Or watch for an email invitation with a link to our website to RSVP.

*Proposed bylaw changes are available at www.vermilionlakeassociation.org

Lake Vermilion AIS Early Detection Efforts

The case report from Lake Washburn is a positive testimony of how volunteers through a lake association can be proactive to identify AIS threats, develop screening strategies and formulate an action plan to protect their lake's health. Lake Washburn covers 1,590 acres. Lake Vermilion presents a much larger challenge. With a surface area of 40,557 acres and 300 miles of shoreline, it is the 5th largest lake within Minnesota.



The Vermilion Lake Association's strategy to monitor for AIS combines ongoing professional services as well as utilizing its many volunteer lake sentries. RMB Environmental Labs, Inc. of Detroit Lakes has been contracted annually to screen the lake. The surveyors visit both Vermilion and Burntside Lake at the end of July into the

first week of August. The survey provides vegetation data, plant taxa, frequency of all plants, abundance of specific species and distribution. About 15,000 acres or 38% of Vermilion has littoral areas. This is where there is enough light for plant growth, usually in less than 15 feet of water. Last year RMB Labs used a meander technique through Wolf, Stuntz, Everett, Pike Bay and Wakemup Narrows. There were 754

sample sites with a maximum depth of 14 feet. 513 sites had no vegetation. The good news: No new invasive vegetation was identified.

Ongoing monitoring for early detection of an AIS is critical and would not be possible without the countless volunteer hours of the VLA's 16 lake sentries. There are currently 24 sites, a combination of public access points, lake facilities and resorts which are screened by the sentries, rakes in hand. The goal is for each site to be visited three times over the summer from June thru August. Suspicious vegetation is reported to the DNR for further investigation.

This year the VLA's AIS initiative is to further enhance screen coverage through a collaboration with RMB Labs and interns working with Jon Utecht from St. Louis County's Soil & Water Conservation District, (SWCD). A situation AIS map of Vermilion is currently in development to indicate type of lake bottom, water chemistry, and weed reports. This will help focus our efforts on higher risk areas, as well as monitoring where and when screens have been conducted. Vermilion is a huge lake presenting huge challenges to identify a new AIS. Hopefully through this collaborative effort and with all "rakes" on board we are positioned to meet the test.

Early Detection of Aquatic Invasive Species - Opportunity for profound results and good return on investment

Jeff Forester, Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates recently reported a case study regarding the eradication of Eurasian Watermilfoil (mostly) in Lake Washburn in Cass County. In 2007, he received a call from Ted Johnson, the President of the Lake Washburn Association (LWA) about Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Ted was concerned that the lake might be susceptible to AIS following the construction of a MN DNR water access site. At that time Jeff could offer little comfort. There were no state funds earmarked for county AIS programs. There were almost no watercraft inspec-

tion programs from the MN DNR, no decontamination services for the public. It was before MLR had successfully lobbied the legislature to create the \$10 million in county AIS Prevention Aid. It predated MLR successfully lobbying the Minnesota legislature in 2012 to establish and fund the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) through the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

Ted and the Lake Washburn Association were on

Continued on page 6

Spiny Water Fleas

Spiny water fleas are a predatory zooplankton that eats other zooplankton including Daphnia, an important food source for native fishes. In some lakes, spiny water fleas can contribute to the decline or elimination of native zooplankton. As they are difficult to eat due to their long tail and spines, this can have a negative impact on a lake's fishery.

Appearance:

- Range in length from ¼ to ⅝ of an inch
- Have long, spiny tails with 1- 4 barbs
- Have distinctive black eye spots
- Females may have a bulbous brood chamber on their back

Origin and Spread:

Spiny water fleas are native to Europe and Asia and were unintentionally introduced into the Great Lakes through discharge of contaminated ballast water. They were discovered in Lake Superior in 1987 and have continued their spread along the northern border lakes and first identified in Lake Vermilion in 2015.

Spinys spread mainly through the movement of water-related equipment. The species collect as gelatinous blobs on fishing lines, downrigger cables and anchor ropes. They can survive in water contained in bait buckets, live wells, bilge areas, ballast tanks and other water containing devices. Adults and eggs may also be hidden in mud and debris and stick to scuba gear.

What Should I Do?

- The simplest answer: Avoid transferring wet stuff and water from one water body to another via your watercraft and gear
- Clean your watercraft of all aquatic plants, mud and debris
- Drain all water by removing drain plugs for the boat, live wells and empty bilge and ballast tanks
- Clean fishing lines, anchor ropes and other equipment such as fishing nets
- Air dry for more than six hours to kill any spiny water flea eggs
- Dispose of bait water on the ground before entering another water body.

Article by Nancy Watkins, AIS Co-Leader



Striving for Paperless!

Are you getting email notifications of our newsletter postings, as well as breaking news regarding our loon cam and other exciting projects? If not, please subscribe via our website, under "News", then "eVermilion" <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/latest-news/>

We at the Vermilion Lake Association are trying to reduce paper usage, as you can see by our decision to not send out postcard invitations for the Annual Meeting. So having your email address is important! Your inbox will not be inundated with emails from us. While some months have more notifications than others, they average about 1-2 a month or less. And don't worry, we will never sell your email address.

Keep Vermilion's Water Quality High

PFAS sampling completed, results expected soon

With summer water activities in full swing, we're back to a more vigorous water quality watch. As a follow up to the last writing about PFAS in Lake Vermilion, samples have been taken at most of the feeder sources for Vermilion's water. We hope to have lab results toward the end of June. These results will be available on the VLA website, vermilion-lakeassociation.org, under "Other Programs/Water Quality Protection/Water Quality Monitoring".



of perch and sunfish). Keep in mind that this is a state-wide recommendation for all Minnesota lakes. Individual lake recommendations are probably a long way off due to the immensity of sampling over 12,000 lakes, and drinking water is the number one PFAS concern.

According to sources from the MN Dept. of Health, there may be a shot at water sampling sooner than later depending upon how much funding they received from the recent spending bill passed at the state Capitol.

Vermilion's water is good. Let's all do our best to keep it that way.

<https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/>

The MN Dept. of Health's recommendation for Vermilion fish consumption hasn't changed from the last issue of the Newsletter (one serving per week of walleye and northern, and four servings per week

Early Detection...from page 4

their own. The LWA identified the most likely AIS they could encounter. They reached out to the private sector to get a quote on treatment costs and asked members to contribute to an AIS fund so they could move quickly if an AIS was discovered. An expert from the DNR came to teach members of the association how to identify Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM), curly leaf pondweed and other AIS.

In 2009, one of the members found a fragment which looked suspicious as EWM on the shore and was confirmed by the DNR. The association was prepared to eradicate this invasive species but was cautioned by the DNR the best hope was for "control."

Within days Ted had contacted a private scientific lake survey company to determine the exact location and size of EWM infestations. Another company was hired to chemically treat the area. Ted, who had become SCUBA certified, hand pulled the milfoil that had survived the treatment. In subsequent years the association continued to survey the lake and

through a combination of hand pulling and chemical treatment the infestation declined. Last year, after an exhaustive survey of Lake Washburn, only one EWM plant was discovered.

Additional lake case reports from Weaver, Crooked, Ruth and Lake Sylvia were provided demonstrating that early identification efforts and initiation of a response plan can save thousands of dollars and countless hours of volunteer time to preserve our lakes.

MAISRC launched the AIS Detectors program where volunteers receive training in identifying AIS. Six years ago they launched the Starry Trek program to search high risk lakes for starry stonewort. The results have been impressive. Last year 233 volunteers searched 289 water access sites on 248 water bodies for starry and other AIS. No new starry infestations were found but volunteers found 13 other undiscovered AIS.

Decontamination: Clean, Drain, Dry

by Jon Utecht, AIS Program Coordinator, North St. Louis County SWCD

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) have been known to travel long distances over land on watercraft and water related equipment. This is why it is important to Clean, Drain, and Dry all watercraft and water equipment after leaving a waterbody and before entering a new one. A thorough inspection of these items is the easiest and best way to prevent the spread of AIS.

In addition to a visual inspection, decontaminating boats and watercraft equipment is the best way to ensure invasives are held at bay. Soaking boats, motors, and equipment with HOT water can kill AIS, especially in hard to see areas. With water temperatures between 120°-140°F it only takes a few minutes to flush susceptible areas of the boat and equipment to prevent the spread of AIS.

During a 2019 survey (n=1,612), the MNDNR found that 94% of those surveyed “believe preventing the spread of AIS is the right thing to do.” They also indicated that they would be willing to spend 30 minutes or less decontaminating their boat if a free unit was offered (77%). Minnesota’s willingness to take action to prevent the spread of AIS is encouraging. This is why the North St. Louis SWCD in collaboration with the Koochiching SWCD and Voyageurs National Park, operate eight decontamination units around Northern St. Louis County. The units are strategically placed around the region to optimize usage throughout the open water season. Decontamination services are FREE to the public!

For more information on the MNDNR courtesy decontamination program and to view decontamination site availabilities around the state feel free to visit the following website.

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/watercraft_inspect/courtesydecon.html



VLA AIS co-leader Nancy Watkins gets a training on Decontamination Unit operations from the MNDNR



You can contact Jon Utecht at jon@nslswcd.org, 218-288-6142

Find this newsletter, along with previous issues at

<https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/latest-news/>

Bald eagle and beaver try to intimidate loons in nesting area

by Noel and Chris Sederstrom, VLA Volunteers

A bald eagle swooped in and invaded “our” loon pair’s home on a small peninsula of Lake Vermilion on Memorial Day. It was one frightening evening for the loons as they attempted to establish a nesting site for the summer.

Only a few days earlier we used our Live Loon-Cam to monitor their activities, mystified at their indecision over where to camp out. For a few days they seemed to be inclined to use a floating platform anchored nearby. But they are creatures of habit, and later went back to the same area where they’ve nested the past two summers. But they kept circling the area, staring into the bushes.



Thanks to the recording capability of our Axis camera system, we were able to go back and find out what was happening—a beaver had been tormenting the loons just as they were trying to

settle in. Of course, the beaver had been there first. The loons had only migrated back to Lake Vermilion from their winter homes when the ice went out in early May.

The life of a loon is fraught with danger from all sides. Perhaps that’s why they cry out so mournfully, wailing at any little thing, or even giving each other a hoot of joy on a peaceful evening.

The sounds of Lake Vermilion and our loons are a big part of our Live LoonCam project. A new custom-made parabolic dish is helping us capture great audio where it’s pointed. There’s a downside though,



when the wind blows into the dish that shelters our all-weather mic. But it helps us listen in to the loons’ most intimate “conversations” when they coo and whistle to each other in their loon language.

We’d like to give a special thanks to Bill Michaelson for leading our marine team who established our camera post near the loons’ nesting area. We’re grateful to the VLA Board for its continuing financial support. And to Access Broadband of Virginia, which again gives us internet upload power to get the camera signal out to our website and YouTube Channel.

We’ll be watching all summer to see if our loon pair is able to bring new chicks into the Lake Vermilion eco-system. View the live feed on our website www.vermilionlakeassociation.org. Go to the bottom of the home page, click on “Live Loon Cam”.



New Lake Steward Coordinator

The Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) is excited to introduce its new Lake Steward Program coordinator, Sara Bright. Sara and her husband, David, are originally from Michigan but raised their family in the Twin Cities area. She is newly retired from 3M and now spends summers at their cabin in Smarts Bay. Sara and David have been members of the VLA since 2018 when they built their cabin. Although fairly recent property owners, they've been visiting friends on the lake for over 20 years and knew this was the place to spend their summers (and even some time during the winter!).



Sara Bright

Sara's interest in nature was fostered by her parents, who took her camping as a child. She believes that spending time in the great outdoors is important for everyone's health. Sara continues to build her knowledge of the flora and fauna of our lake and hopes to use that knowledge to preserve native plants and improve water quality.

Sara is looking forward to working with the Lake Steward volunteer team and Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR), and is already busy with new Lake Steward applications. If you are interested in learning more about the program, you may send an email to VLALakeSteward@gmail.com. If you are interested in learning if your property qualifies for the Lake Steward award, go to Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (link below) and take the quiz. You will be contacted by a Lake Steward program volunteer to arrange a property visit.

<https://mnlakesandrivers.org/lake-associations/lake-association-programs/lake-steward/>

Volunteer Spotlight: Bob McNamara

By Nancy Watkins, VLA Board Member and AIS Co-Leader

The Vermilion Lake Association would not be the robust organization it is without the time and talents provided by its many volunteers. One such volunteer featured in this edition is Bob McNamara, one of our AIS lake sentries who is also an AIS Detector through the University of Minnesota's Extension Program.

Bob's background is not in science. Originally from Como Park in the Twin Cities, he left Minnesota to attend



college at Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara. Commercial photography was his interest and life at the beach was not bad. Living the dream, he photographed games for the LA Kings and Lakers. Unfortunately, at that time air pollution in LA was legendary. Bob returned to Minnesota

and ran his own successful advertising photography company. Target was one of his clients. In 2016 he closed up shop and sold the business to pursue other passions. He reported a long interest and commitment as a citizen scientist. He was in one of MAISRC's earliest classes to be a detector and has been a VLA lake sentry for about 7 years. He also volunteers as needed assisting the MPCA collecting water samples. Bob has been coming to Vermilion for 21 years. But unlike many other Minnesota "snowbirds" who migrate to Arizona,

Texas or Florida during the depths of winter, he prefers to spend his winters living in a tent in Death Valley working for the National Park Service. The scenery is spectacular and the only invasives of concern are burros and palm trees.

Bob appreciates the care and commitment the people who live on Vermilion have towards preserving the lake. Thank you Bob for your assistance in helping the VLA to achieve its mission of protecting and improving our lake.

Minnesota-The State of Fishing

MN-FISH is a sportfishing foundation founded and directed by experienced anglers and fishing industry stakeholders. For a long time, the voice of the average fisherperson has had no influence on state government support of Minnesota fisheries.

MN-FISH is led by TV personalities and people involved in the fishing industry. The mission of



Terry Grosshauser
VLA Board Member

this organization is to restore, protect and enhance Minnesota sportfishing for present and future generations of anglers to enjoy. I joined this organization

two years ago to make sure that I understood what they were about. In the past, there has never been a strong voice working with state government to promote the needs of the state's dedicated fisherpersons.

The organization goals are:

1. To provide a strong voice for Minnesota anglers and fishing related industries before the state legislature and DNR regarding all things fishing.
2. Seek greater state investment back into sport fishing utilizing some \$271M in taxes from the \$4.4B fishing and marine industry.
3. Support scientific and common-sense fish management for all gamefish species and review DNR stocking policies and proce-

dures to maximize angler success.

4. Advocate and promote youth fishing – recruitment and fishing programs in school curricula.

I was honored to be invited to their annual meeting held in early May in Rogers, Minn. I was probably the only one from a lake association in attendance and this is important because it recognizes the Vermilion Lake Association's very good reputation around the state for an organization that works with many areas to protect and improve the lake.

I did not know what to expect, but I was interested in evaluating their approach to improving fishing in the state. I was thoroughly impressed. Attendance included all high level DNR fishery managers, DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen, and Governor Tim Walz. The governor and DNR commissioner were excited that the funding would be approved to fix most of our fish hatcheries (some that go back to the 1800s with little or no improvements). Discussion included some funds to fix our public landings which are in very poor condition. In addition, MN-FISH was coordinating an effort with bait dealers and the DNR to fix the shortage of bait around the state. They are also working on education for the Barotrauma issue (see article on page 17 of this issue), improving shore and public pier fishing opportunities, and providing fishing equipment to underprivileged youth.

They do a very good job of lis-



tening to the concerns of the everyday fishing community, and they have a lobbyist in place to promote their efforts in the legislature. Their emphasis is to work together to make improvements and to let the legislators know what is important to the fishing community.

The executive director is Mark Holsten, who has a cabin on Frazer Bay and was the previous DNR commissioner from 2007-2011. If you are interested in learning more, please go to MN-FISH.com. Remember your voice will be heard by this organization and they have the means to make improvements.

Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show

The 31st Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show will be held on Sunday, September 3 at the Landing Restaurant, from noon to 4 pm.

We are always delighted to have the Vermilion Lake Association as an honorary sponsor.

Their presence at the show allows the Association to display and educate the public of its achievements, goals and plans for the future. We are fortunate that Lake Vermilion has an organization that is so dedicated to the welfare of the lake.

Visit with them at their booth and learn how to get the lead out.

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's burger, a beverage and stay for the awards presentation at 4 p.m.



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

Happy Boating and see you at the show!

For more information, contact lakevermilionboatshow@aol.com
Sandy Jackson, 612-790-7957



Remembering Tom and Renee Aro

The Vermilion Lake Association would like to express our appreciation for the service of two longtime Lake Vermilion residents. Tom (August 1942-2022) and Renee Aro (July 1942-January 2023) were both dedicated VLA members and volunteers.

Renee served on the VLA board for several terms and helped archive our newsletters. Tom contributed his poems to the newsletter for over a decade. His poetry spoke to his love of the lake and was very heartfelt, graceful and lyrical. They will be missed! A Celebration of Life is being held on Saturday, July 8, 2023 from 1:00 pm –4:00 pm at the Lakeside Tent at Fortune Bay. Kindly RSVP (call, text or email) to Kathy at 763-229-5974 or arok@comcast.net or Lori 435-315-5191 or larrow23@gmail.com.

The Story of the Soudan Underground Mine is also a Story about Immigrants

Surface tours this summer focus on the history of the mine

by Reed Peterson, Mine Interpreter

There were workers coming from multiple countries, all coming for the hard, strenuous work that the regular Americans didn't want to do. These were people whose mastery of English varied from somewhat to non-existent. Many of these immigrants arrived because their lives were

for the workers. In the beginning decades, this meant a six-day work week, sometimes going for twelve hours a day. Miners worked in dark underground drifts, operating massive equipment that moved around massive amounts of ore, all the while straining to make more under a contract mining system that paid by the tonnage.



in flux, either from warfare, or ethnic oppression, or economic depression. Their goal was to come to America and do the hard work, so that maybe the next generation could take advantage of the United States.

If you think this story is from today's headlines, you'd be wrong. This is the story of the people coming to settle the Iron Range in northeastern Minnesota.

Iron ore was found in large quantities north of Duluth, on the Vermilion Range during the 1860s. The settlements and mines came with the railroad in the early 1880s. By 1882, miners were working at the Minnesota Mine in what is now known as Soudan. Within two years, the railroad arrived from Lake Superior and by the end of the decade, Soudan was producing over 500,000 tons a year alone. Other mines soon sprang up in nearby Ely, and by 1893, production started on the vast Mesabi Range. 1893 was the first of 130 consecutive years that Minnesota was the largest iron ore producing state in the nation.

And with the opening of the mines came the demand

These were jobs for newly-arrived immigrants, the ones who would work longer hours for less pay. And within a few years, tens of thousands came from Europe. These were people from farther east and south than the stereotypical Minnesota immigrants. Instead of the Norwegians and Germans, the newer arrivals were Finns, Italians, and the motley collection of the future Yugoslavia- the Slovenians, Croats, and Serbians, among others. These were people coming to the American frontier, not the Wild West, but the Wild North. And what they found was as hardscrabble and backbreaking as any place in America.

In 1907, the Oliver Mining Company, the iron ore branch of United States Steel, took a survey among its workers in northern Minnesota, the Vermilion and Mesabi Ranges. They wanted to know what kind of workers they had, where they were from, and how well they worked. Their results were fascinating. In 1907, of the over 12,000 employees, 84% of them were born in another country. Over half of them had lived in the United States less than two years. They came from over twenty different nations in Europe, with the Finns having the highest percentage (about 20%), but some unique outliers scattered in as well, including Arabian, Korean, and Syrian.

All these different groups arrived in America and began the process of creating a life here. The communities they made began as strictly delineated neighborhoods, where each ethnicity dominated, but

Continued on next page

as the years went on and younger generations were born, the people mixed more and more. The communities on the Range still maintained their distinct culture, but they were hyphenated with -American. The children that were raised now only knew they were Americans, and with that, all the privileges and rights guaranteed in the Constitution. The communities of the Range had gone from a frontier hodgepodge of immigrants to traditional American communities, proud of their past but always looking forward to the future.

And so maybe a better way to talk about the story of immigrants in America is that the example of the Iron Range is still going on today. There are still jobs that use people willing to work harder and cheaper, which draws in those looking to get away from the problems



of their home country, finding a better place for their future generations. It's happened before, and it will happen again in America- it's who we are and what we do.

I'm proud to be able to tell the story of northern Minnesota, and if you'd like to hear more, we'd love to have you out at the Soudan Underground Mine State Park. The mineshaft is under renovation again this summer, so unfortunately we aren't going

underground, but we are offering surface tours this summer, where you can learn about the history of the mine, the workers, and the place itself. We're open seven days a week, and tours are available on the hour from 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Call 218-300-7000 to reserve, or else just drop by and see when the next tour is available. It's five bucks per person and the tours usually last around an hour.

We'd love to see you.

Board of Directors and Officers 2023

Cook

Sheri Sawatzky, Secretary/Membership, 2750 Wakemup Village Rd W, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5512, 218-780-8178, sherisawatzky@gmail.com

Eric Hanson, 2746 Vermilion Dr, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5478, 218-780-1563, eric@pehrsonlodge.com

Dwight Warkentin, 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, 608-207-1509, terrygrosshauser@gmail.com

Mark Schmidt, 8780 Raps Rd, Cook, MN 55723, 612-810-44570, bigwalleye55@gmail.com

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

Tower

Bob Pearson, 5773 Puncher Point Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-4212, 218-348-1938, rpearson@duluthlaw.com

Gary Haugen, 1903 Westhaven Dr, Tower, MN 55790, 612-720-2853, 218-753-3021, ghmedrep@gmail.com

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

Jerry Lepper, Treasurer, 3087 Old Hwy 77, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-2629, 218-404-2320, jnclep4@frontiernet.net

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

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

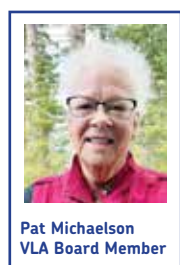
John Yocum, 4102 Hoel Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 407-873-3883, snootman@aol.com

Craig Beveroth, 9416 Hearthside Dr, Tower, MN 55790, 952-428-9155, cbeveroth@comcast.net

Shore Lunch ACCESSIBLE Site Capital Project Planning in Progress

Memorial weekend yielded perfect weather (except for those pesky mosquitoes) for our Shore Lunch Site Leaders-- John Zwieg and Mike Ptak to get on to the proposed new Accessible site. We traversed the shoreline laying out a plan for where a 42-foot dock could be installed to accommodate a wheelchair-bound visitor or one using a walker hankering for a roasted hotdog with their family.

This beautiful DNR-partnered site near Hinsdale Island in Smart Bay is tucked into a quiet cove. It provides opportunity for navigation from both east and west-end users who have need for a more user-friendly accessible day use site.



Pat Michaelson
VLA Board Member

In addition to recommending a plan for the dock installation, they envision an expanded fire-ring area including an elevated or pedestal camp stove. Another area enjoyed by our typical users is the picnic area...think grilled hotdogs and brats followed by s'mores! This site will require some minimal clearing of tree limbs, then construction of a flat, level surface to allow for easy ambulation with an assistive device or the wheels of a scooter or wheelchair.

We're actively engaged with the Lake Vermilion Soudan Underground Mine State Park office, where Jim DeVries is eagerly spear-heading the needed approval process. As we plan for the recommended changes, enhancements and ultimate construction, hopefully later this summer...we'll post updates on our VLA website.



YOU CAN HELP in TWO Ways.....

The cost of this and other Shore Lunch Site upgrades this year will cost approximately \$80K. While we have some funds dedicated to the project, donations will gladly be accepted; mailed to our Treasurer Mark Schmidt at PO Box 696, Tower, MN 55790 or via our website.

We'll need a volunteer corps when the construction process begins. Contact me if you'd like to be a part of the construction or work team at plmichaelson@gmail.com or mobile: 612-306-7702.

In Memory...

The Vermilion Lake Association regularly receives donations in memory of loved ones or friends. These gifts were received between Dec. 31, 2022 through June 1, 2023. We are grateful for these gifts and also wish to honor those who have passed away.

Tom & Renee Aro

Fred Brooks

Bud Carter

John & Ellen Dennis

Leo DuCharme

Willard & Elsie Esala

Tim Flanagan

Gary Gately

Michael Huseby

Thor Levinson

Anges & Herman

Mesojedec

Norman Miller

Richard Okerstrom

Don Price

Trevor Reichel

Alpha Smaby

John & Ruth Stapleton

Luella "Lu" Stone

Roger Weaver

Shore Lunch Sites Get Some TLC

The shore lunch sites are in very good shape for your enjoyment this season thanks to the cooperative effort of Vermilion Lake Association volunteers, the State Forest Service, and Eagle Docks. Shore lunch site leaders John Zweig and Mike Ptak

spent two half days installing “Leave No Trace” signs on picnic tables, as well as doing routine maintenance (such as securing latrine lids) and clean up.



Lori Ptak
VLA Board Member/
Newsletter Volunteer

A dock extension was installed on the Bystrom Bay site to allow more boats to dock at one time. There are other dock extensions to be installed in the future. Also in the plans are a few new stand-up fire grates installed by the Forest Service, such as the new one pictured at Bystrom Bay.

We rely on our many volunteers who maintain these sites, as well as the many lake users who follow the “Leave No Trace” guidelines to keep these areas in their natural pristine condition for all of our enjoyment. If you experience any issues at any of our locations, report them to John Zweig 218-666-5009 (West End) or Mike Ptak 612-986-7984 (East End).



LEAVE NO TRACE

GUIDELINES FOR SHORE LUNCH SITE USE

- NO TOILET PAPER OR FOOD IN THE WOODS
- COMPLETELY EXTINGUISH FIRES
- CONSIDER SHARING THE SITE AND/OR LIMIT YOUR TIME OF USE
- NO GARBAGE IN LATRINE
- CONTACT VERMILION LAKE ASSOCIATION WITH ANY CONCERNS (WWW.VERMILIONLAKEASSOCIATION.ORG)



A map of the lake containing locations and GPS coordinates is located on our website under “Other Programs” – Shore Lunch Sites, or click here <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/>

Annual Loon Count

Don't be alarmed if you see a boat or two "patrolling" the lake with multiple people holding binoculars or scopes! Those boats contain "loon counters," VLA volunteers! Every year, over a hundred volunteers traverse the lake, which is divided into 23 territories, counting loons and cormorants.

This year, the count will take place on July 10 (July 12 in case of inclement weather.) Results will be posted on our website and published in our Fall 2023 newsletter.



Register Today for Take a Kid Fishing Day

The Lake Vermilion Guides League is again sponsoring two events this summer: Take a Kid Fishing and Take a Vet Fishing. Both are out of Fortune Bay Marina.

The Take a Kid Fishing event is scheduled for July 19, 2023, and is for kids aged 10-15. Times are as follows: Boat Operator Breakfast 7:30 a.m.; Registration: 8:00 a.m.; Estimated start time: 9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. with lunch after.

To register, go to
<https://lakevermilionguidesleague.com/>

The Take a Vet Fishing event is on August 24, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Registration for this is closed because the maximum number of Veterans has been reached.

These events not only provide wonderful experiences for our youth and veterans but also showcases the beauty of Lake Vermilion. The LVGL decided that



they could provide an opportunity to expose youth to the outdoor activity of angling as well somehow show our Veterans a new venue of appreciation. The Take a Kid Fishing days summer event has entertained and educated over 1,000 youth in its first ten years. At the same time over 600 Veterans have enjoyed a day on the water catching a few fish and sharing stories with comrades

How to safely release fish: preventing barotrauma

By Terry Grosshauser and John Yocum, VLA Board Members, adapted from an article by Scott Gangl

Barotrauma refers to injuries sustained by fish (and divers) caused by rapid changes in barometric/water pressure while passing to the surface. Fish caught in deep water environments will experience traumatic and sometimes deadly injuries when they are brought to the surface. Signs and symptoms include bulging eyes, bleeding gills, gas bubbles under the skin, and an expanded swim bladder that pushes the stomach out of the fish's mouth. Other internal injuries like a bleeding liver may also be present, but not easily visible. Some species are more susceptible than others; in Lake Vermilion these highly susceptible species include walleye, perch, smallmouth and crappies. Some species, like catfish and pike, have a pneumatic duct that allows them to release or "burp" gases from their swim bladder, so barotrauma is less of an issue for them.

The key depth to remember for barotrauma being a potential problem is 28 feet. Fortunately, Lake Vermilion is relatively shallow for such a large lake. The greatest depth is 76 feet, and that is found in a deep hole southwest of Spider Island in Big Bay. The mean depth of the lake is 19.1 feet. Among the lake's largest bays, Wakemup has the deepest mean depth of 23 feet. Big Bay, the lake's largest bay, has a mean depth of 19 feet. More than 85% of the lake is less than 28 feet deep, so barotrauma is potentially less of a problem

on Lake Vermilion than other large lakes in Minnesota.

A recent study initiated by the Minnesota DNR and MN-FISH used a long hoop net from the surface to the bottom of the lake to evaluate the survival of crappie in depths greater than 28 feet. This along with using forward electronics, it was easy to determine how fish react coming from the deep water when released. For crappies, it found that between 30 to 60 % of the crappies caught from greater than 28 feet of water did not survive. The forward-facing electronics clearly showed that the crappies released swam down to 12 feet of water and then had difficulty staying upright. The impact on walleyes is thought to be the same. The study is not complete yet, but these initial findings were presented at the annual meeting for MN-FISH and to the state walleye workgroup.

The ethical thing to do if you choose to fish in water deeper than 28 feet is to keep the fish you catch as part of the daily limit and to not do catch and release. Lake Vermilion has a slot for some species including walleye. Walleyes between 20 and 26 inches must be released. This creates an ethical dilemma for anglers who catch walleyes in the 20 to 26-inch slot from 30 feet or deeper, because the law states that they must be released immediately. It is common to hear in the fall that fishermen find 10 inch walleyes in water deeper than 28 feet on Vermilion and then continue to catch and release a large number (30, 40 , 50 walleyes) before culling out a limit



Anglers presume the fish they release survive. Bleeding, internal or external, is an obvious sign that, if released, chances of survival aren't good.



of fish large enough to keep. We could be negatively impacting the population by doing this.

There are techniques for dealing with barotrauma which include inserting a needle into a fish's air bladder to relieve pressure known as fizzing; however, it is not legal to do this in Minnesota. This is only recommended for use by professionals who know exactly what they are doing. Amateur fishermen who employ this technique can often do more harm than good. Even reeling in fish slower does not prevent barotrauma, it would take over an hour to slowly

Continued on next page

Are you a Bass Fisherman?

The DNR technical committee is currently taking comments on a change to bass fishing regulations. The proposed bass season would simply replace the closed bass with catch and release bass angling and would be in effect for the first two weeks of the general fishing season. However in the Northeast zone (east of HWY 53), the season starts at the beginning of the general fishing season.

Initial comments received by the DNR are overwhelmingly in favor of the change. As a bass fisherman, I do not have problem with the catch and



Terry Grosshauser
VLA Board Member

release section. However, Lake Vermilion is in the northeast zone and there would be no catch and release in the first two weeks after the opener whereas the rest of the state would be catch and release to protect bass spawning. There is no reason in my mind that Lake Vermilion is not catch and release for the first two

weeks of the fishing season as is the rest of the state. The current regulation allows for a show and tell fishing tournament every year during the second weekend of the season on Vermilion and some years the bass are on their beds spawning. This means that the tournament brings all of the fish to a central location and they are released in that area. Studies indicate that these fish will most likely not spawn that year. There is no reason for a different regulation in the Northeast (Vermilion). Bass fishing



is becoming more important every year on Lake Vermilion and we need to protect our very good fishery.

If you agree with the concern about the northeast, please comment on that in the survey. The more people who respond with concern about the northeast, the better chance we have for the DNR to change that to catch and release the same as the rest of the state. The survey will only be available through the middle of August. Thanks and have a great year fishing on beautiful Lake Vermilion.

If you are an avid bass fisherperson on Lake Vermilion please fill out the survey (it is at the bottom of the webpage): <https://engage.dnr.state.mn.us/fisheries-public-input-wildlife-public-input>.

Barotrauma...from page 17

bring up a fish from over 28 feet of water to prevent barotrauma.

There is no immediate and certain fix to deal with fish that are released after being caught in deep water. To recap, anglers should consider keeping everything that is caught in waters deeper than 28 feet (except where prohibited by law), or fish exclusively in depths shallower than 28 feet where barotrauma

is not an issue. It is more common on Lake Vermilion to find the larger walleyes in the fall in shallower waters and avoid the deep-water areas. If you are fishing for crappies or walleyes from deep-water areas in the winter, keep everything (except slot fish) you catch up to your limit and stop fishing or move to shallower water. It is up to you as an angler to protect the Vermilion fishery so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of great fishing.

Be prepared, carry a spare

It was one of those dark summer days when the sky opened up early and unleashed a torrent of rain that pelted the water into a shimmering dance. The strong winds were blowing the grey, low hanging clouds at a good pace and white caps were everywhere. After the storm passed, the sun began to peek through the clouds and while the wind died down a bit, it was still kicking up the water into a froth. I decided to go out and explore the area just north of Bystrom Bay. Bystrom is not too far away from the Niles Bay area, but far enough for a good boat ride after being cooped up for a good part of the day. The family climbed into the boat and off we went. The lake was empty. It seemed like we were the only boat on the lake.



Everything was going along just fine. At least it was until we passed by St. Mary's Island and I heard a large thump. The big 250 hp Yamaha began to tremble. I shut her down and lifting the prop out of the water, I found the prop bent up pretty badly. Great, what did I hit? I fired up the engine again and slowly turned the boat around, the outboard shuddering like it wanted to pull the screws out of the transom. We soon found a log, floating, almost invisible, in the rough water. The log was cut like a piece of unsplit firewood about 10" in diameter and maybe 24" long. We fished it out of the lake and brought it aboard. There was no sense in leaving a hazard like that floating to possibly harm another person's motor.

Like I said before, we weren't that far away from our dock, but far enough. The outboard was struggling terribly so I turned it off, and lifted it out of the water. I then lowered my 8 hp auxiliary outboard and started it up to make the trip home. The 21 ft Lund slogged through the white caps at a brisk 5.2 mph. At that break-neck speed, it would take a long time to get home. Luckily, I had the spare outboard, which most smaller craft would not have, but having fished big waters like Lake Michigan and Lake of the Woods, I know the hazards of being without propulsion on big water. At least we could make head way and had steerage.

But, I was further prepared. I always carry a spare

prop or two. I headed towards a sandy area on Gold Island and planned to fix the problem by swapping out props. I prefer a sandy spot in case I drop a cotter pin, washer, or nut; it would be easier to find on the sand. Now, if I wasn't able to find a sandy area, I would've needed to find a shallow rocky shoreline or one of those long, sloping, smooth base rocks to pull up on. I have no love of standing in muck, so rock would always be my second choice. When I get out of the boat and in the water, I prefer to have shoes on, so, being prepared, I had a pair of water shoes in the boat. Not only are water shoes great for standing on slippery rocks, but they also keep the Rusty Crayfish off your feet. The Rusties will still climb up your legs and pull the hair out, but at least you're not stepping on them with your bare feet. They are aggressive little buggers, and it can get a bit messy too. Soon, the prop was changed and we were flying along the wave tops once again.

A suggestion that you may consider if you feel that you are all thumbs or have a case of the dropsies: tie one end of a piece of fishing line to the cotter pin, or any other small part that you are afraid to drop and either tie the other end around your finger or to a bobber so it can be easily retrieved if dropped. If your prop change is not in calm water, it may also be difficult to handle the parts. Of course, trim the line off after the repair.

Other things to carry on the boat besides a spare prop, and water shoes are several spare cotter pins, prop washers and nuts (these are found on larger outboards), a tool kit, fuses, tow ropes, flare gun, air horn, updated first aid kit, a good map, and a fire extinguisher. Some of these are required by law, others are just good to have. It is also good to have an additional throwable life cushion or two, just in case. And, a spare plug. There's nothing like launching your boat and remembering you left the plug on your work bench as the bilge pump tries its best to keep you afloat. You'll save a lot of time if you have a spare plug on hand.

A number of things can go wrong when you are out on the water. It is always best to plan the best that you can for any of the more common mishaps that can occur. Having the above items on hand can be a big help. When you are out in the boat, be safe and be prepared.



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

☐ 2023 New Member ☐ 2023 Renewal

Membership level

☐ \$20.00 Household membership
☐ \$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) nonprofit 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.