



The Buck Lake Association Inc.

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"To enhance people's enjoyment of Buck Lake now and for future generations"

Buck Lake News – 2015 July

Buck Lake Passing the Buck "Again"

Yes, again we passed the buck for Easter Seals Camp Merrywood. 49 boats, 6 kayaks and at least one personal watercraft joined in from various parts of the lake. The community spirit for the Boatilla is second to none. This year, 6 Easter Seals families joined us for the boat tour and \$26,835 was raised. This means 10 Easter Seals kids can enjoy Camp Merrywood and several who can only do day trips can also attend.



More pictures can be viewed here: [2015 Boatilla Pictures](#)

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Highlights from the 2015 Annual General Meeting (June 27, 2015)

Ron Vandewal, mayor of South Frontenac spoke briefly about some of the townships activities that may affect Buck Lake. Of most interest, were two items in the township's official plan related to setbacks and to private lanes. Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs is requiring that all development within 120 metres of all bodies of water be restricted. This is a huge shift from the 30 metre setback currently in the South Frontenac Official Plan. Council, along with other municipal governments in Eastern Ontario is opposing this.

The ministry is also insisting that no further development be allowed on private lanes unless under it is under a plan of subdivision or vacant land condominium. This is also being opposed by council and by other municipalities. Both these issues generated several questions and concerns from the audience. The township will be holding an Open House about the Official Plan on July 13th. Other members of council present at the meeting were: Ross Sutherland (Loughborough), Pat Barr (Bedford) and John McDougall (Portland). There was also discussion about creating Pickle Ball courts in the parking lot at Harris Park Hall in Perth Road Village. The council members present thought it was a good idea, and the board should work with the township recreation department and other users of the hall to do this.

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President Mark Nichol commended the current board members for the work they have accomplished over the past year. Peter Dawe, who is leaving the board this year, was recognized, for his 6 years of service.

The financial statements were presented and showed the current members equity to be approximately \$4,500. Other reports were presented by the Social and Outreach Committee, the Friends of the Lake Committee and the Boatilla Committee.

The board will be launching a survey in the near future to determine the priorities of Buck Lake residents and cottagers and to refocus their efforts. Surveys were available at the meeting and will be available on Survey Monkey shortly.

Current board members Terry Demers, Grayden McClurg, Jo Anne Hopkins and Mark Nichol were reelected each for another 2 year term, and 2 new board members Cherrie Summers and Vickie Gervais were elected.

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A Tale of Three Loon Platforms

Loon nesting platforms have been shown to increase the nesting success of loon pairs that have repeatedly lost nests because of changing water levels or human disturbance. They can also help loons on lakes that lack natural nesting sites. Natural nesting sites are marshy areas along the lakeshore or small islands with naturally vegetated, gently sloping shores.

The following are the tales of three nesting platforms that have been built on Buck Lake and the people who made them.

Note: If you are considering building a loon nesting platform, please review carefully whether this platform will improve the nesting success for the loon pair, i.e., have the pair's previous nesting attempts failed because of 1) lack of an appropriate site or 2) large water level fluctuations. If you are seeing loon chicks in your section of the lake, then a nesting platform is probably not needed.



Ralph and Kathy Wirsig

Kathy: We attended a couple of presentations on loons by Kathy Jones who heads up the Canadian Loon Survey and also one by a professor at Cornell who heads up the Ornithology Department and shared a keen interest about loons. It was from these lectures that Ralph built the platform, but it took 3 years before the loons started nesting there. We had successful hatches in 2013 and 2014 and presently there is a loon nesting on the platform so we should hear and see little loons hatch next week.

Ralph: When we put out the platform, the grand kids and I had furnished it with sticks and weeds. For the initial 2 years, muskrats tried to build a nest on it in the fall. They would pile mud and sticks on top and from the underside cut water entrance holes through the poly snow fencing covering. The floating platform would sink as they piled more mud on top – the more it sank and listed, the more mud they added and cut more holes, but they could never achieve a dry nest because of the sinking. I would periodically push the mud mound over and some of it off the platform to discourage them. Eventually they did quit and the good thing was the mud left which I shaped into a nest that the loons then used.

While 2 chicks hatched in 2013, one disappeared in the first week. Last year, only one egg hatched.

Spring 2015: This year one of the holes the muskrats had cut lead to a hole forming in the bottom of the nest, just as the loon was protecting the nest for the start of laying. I left, but was able to patch the nest later when the loon was away feeding. Soon after, 2 eggs appeared and most of the time a loon has been sitting on them.

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Two eggs on the nest



Loon on the eggs

June 14th: A repeat of last year as only one egg hatched. It hatched yesterday, June 13th – got some photos (not great quality due to distance) of the loon with the (unusual) head up on the nest and the chick sometimes peeking out from under and the mate alongside the raft seemingly discussing the situation. A few hours later, the loon now again with head down continues to try to hatch the second egg with the chick probably under her too – the mate is away. Same scene early the next morning, June 14th, but about 10:30am there is a call for the mate. I go over to find her in the water with the chick on her back about 10 ft. from the nest with the visible unhatched egg. She continues to wait and make periodic calls for the mate. Shirley and Don Young join to watch the drama unfold. After at least 20 minutes from her first call, the mate arrives – seemingly some more discussion about the situation. The little one jumps in the water and scoots about behind the mother as they move to and fro away from the nest and then back towards it again while at least one of them wails this quiet and sorrowful cry while looking back at the nest. Slowly all 3 move further and further from the nest toward the open lake while the mother (I believe) repeatedly looks back and wails quietly. About 500 ft. down the lake there is this first bit of jubilation calling out, but nothing like the jubilant display two years ago when both chicks hatched.

Later in the day, a loon was back on the nest to hatch the second egg. We could hear the mate down the lake, I assume with the chick. So far it appears to be a repeat of last year which ended with disappearance of the second egg the next day, and abandonment of the nest.

June 15th: The nest is empty with no sign of the unhatched egg. Nearby is, what appears at some distance, to be a family of 3 spending a quiet day in the nesting bay with one loon peering under the water surface and diving for food while the other is minding the chick. However, some days later to my pleasant surprise when viewing the photos and videos on a big screen there are clearly two chicks – not one as previously thought and a happy ending to my story.

A real estate advertisement banner for Tammy & Heath Gurr. The banner features the Royal LePage logo in the top left corner, with the text "ROYAL LePAGE" and "Hedonism Realty Brokerage". Below the logo, the names "Tammy & Heath Gurr" are written in a large, elegant font, followed by the tagline "Your Total Real Estate Package!". Two circular portraits of Tammy and Heath are shown in the center. In the bottom left, contact information is provided for both: Heath at (613)985-2414 and hgurr@rideau.net, and Tammy at (613)583-0616 and tammygurr@rideau.net. The bottom right corner features the text "Buck Lake Residents" and "We specialize in waterfront properties!". The website "www.gurreathomes.com" is listed in the top right corner. The background of the banner shows a house with a large window and a porch.

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Kim Turner

Spring 2014: I was on my way home from work, feeling excited that the lake had opened the day before and my mind immediately drifted to thinking about the loons that have nested in our bay forever. I've been a cottager / resident of south Buck Lake for 41 years and they've always nested on what we call 'Loon Island' (of course!) just off Burnt Point out from Christmas Bay. What used to be a healthy size island is now a mere clump of stones, a 2 foot dead tree stump and some weed growth. Excitement turned to sadness as I thought about the loons and how impossible it would be for them to nest there this year. The spring before I watched (as all of us surrogate loon parents do) as she sat on those eggs through waves spraying up on her and even hail with no protection. It was truly admirable. So I told myself there must be some way to help her and I thought hey, perhaps a floating island anchored over 'Loon Island' would do the trick. I was so excited I couldn't wait to get home to research it on the internet and was ever more-so when I actually found many such nests have been built (and used!!) with great success! My husband, George, knew he might as well join me in this project because I wasn't going to let it go (and he has as great affection for 'our' loons as I do). We discussed a few designs that I found on the Internet and after deciding on what we thought was best, we went to visit our neighbour Ralph Boston to get his respected opinion. We all agreed on the 8' x 8' cedar structure, raised on 3 sides to give some protection and cedar 1" x 12" boards for the platform supported by snow fencing was what we needed, as well as straw, swamp mud and some local foliage. It quickly became a neighbourhood project with Ralph donating the cedar posts and straw, Reece and Deb Torrey providing the snow fence that they just happen to have. It was perfect! We couldn't decide on what to use for a ramp so we put 2 on it, one made of a fire hose and the other of wood. Once George built the nest and it was sitting in our driveway, Reece got their boat ready while George and I donned the rubber boots and collected several buckets of swamp mud and foliage (that was fun!). We carried the nest to the lake, tied it up to the boat and piled in with buckets, shovels, chains and a concrete anchor, everything we could think of that we might need to position it. We were a comical sight! The loons watched us with exceptional interest as we positioned and anchored the floating nest over their usual nesting spot on 'Loon Island'. I placed the straw and mud on the platform and planted the foliage around the 3 raised sides hoping it would take root and provide some wind protection for her. Ralph rowed out the next day to do a much appreciated inspection and lowered it a few inches. Then we waited and watched for days and weeks. Sadly they did not nest that spring. It was then we found out there are other loon nests on Buck Lake that others have made and their loons did not take to them right away either.

Spring 2015: This spring we again watched every day, hopeful that they would accept the platform this time – unfortunately no such luck. We still see them around our bay and are honoured to hear their calls, but to our knowledge they did not nest anywhere. Will they next year? We will be watching.

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Loon platform on Loon Island in Christmas Bay (Spring 2015)

Duncan Sinclair

I built the platform last summer with cedar logs donated by Mike Judge, a block of dense styrofoam from Mike Flannigan, and the remaining boards, wire, etc., from stuff in my messy "things that might be useful someday" pile. It is about 5 feet square and constructed so one end floats higher than the other so the loons can just slide on it from the water. My son Gordon and I towed it to its current location in mid-April, anticipating a couple of barren years as the loons discovered and got used to its being there. Walter and Donna Johnson were the first to observe the adoption of the platform by the nesting pair and all of us in the bay are now anxiously awaiting their success.

June 12th: The loon continues to sit stoically on the loon platform in the depths of Richardson Bay. We estimate that the chick(s) will arrive in 7-10 days now.

June 21st: This morning sometime between 10 am and 11:30 our loons hatched their egg and have now both drifted slowly about half-way out of the bay with their single chick vigorously swimming between them, obviously enjoying his/her freedom from the confinement in that egg. Walter and Donna were the first to see the adult pair off the platform in the depths of the bay when they came back from kayaking. We are all rejoicing and anxiously holding our breath during the chick's early days when s/he is particularly vulnerable to hungry snapping turtles and who knows what other predators. Everybody keep your fingers crossed!



Loon on platform in Richardson Bay, North Branch

If you are interested in building loon nest platforms, here is a link to the PVC design Ralph used www.rideau-info.com/canal/ecology/loon-nest.html. It also has a cedar log design.

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In conclusion, a reminder to boaters, the first few weeks of life are critical for survival of all loon chicks on Buck Lake. Remember to be alert for little ones as they are not very visible. Please try to give all loons wide berth.

Coming Events:

July 18th: Pie Sale at Perth Road Sunday School Hall 9:00AM until all “home made” pies are sold.

July 23rd: The Friends of the Lake present:

"Paradise Lost? - Invasive Species and A Changing World"

Presented by: Dr. Stephen Loughheed - Director QUBS

7:00PM at Perth Road Sunday School Hall

All Buck Lakers are welcome; bring your family and visitors.

August 8th: The annual Buck Lake BBQ will be held at the Harris Park from 4:00PM to 7:00PM in Perth Road Village. All Buck Lakers are welcome; bring your family and visitors. Food will be served at 5:00PM

In order to promote the spirit of Buck Lake People, we invite your comments and suggestions for newsletter articles or announcements. Mail to: info@bucklake.ca

Lake Plan link: [Lake Plan Web Version](#)

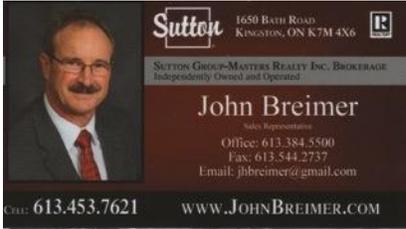
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