



Let's meet at **LakeMANSFIELD**

The newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA)

Spring 2011

Do you believe in the power of Lake Energy?

Christine Ward



This year was a glorious year at Lake Mansfield: a beautiful spring for fishing, a sun-drenched summer for swimming and picnicking, a spectacular autumn for boating and a stellar winter for ice-skating, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. A new kiosk was installed at the boat launch. Amazing trail progress was made in the forest. Plantings of blueberry and elderberry strengthened the beach wetland buffer area. Great news came in on grant applications. The lake was the place for serious fun and joyful work. The beauty of the natural world feeds the soul and inspires healthy connections. LMA supports a thriving lake community. **Join us - together we can harness lake energy and work to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield.**

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2011 Lake Mansfield Events

Thursday April 14th, 10AM-1PM

Trail Work Day

Join Student Volunteers from Berkshire School for a Spring Clean-up in the Conservation Forest

Saturday April 30th, 10:30 – 3:00

Lake Mansfield Celebration and Clean Up Day

Lake & forest clean up, potluck lunch, community meeting, afternoon boating and trail walk
A great day of hard work and joyfulness!

Annual Fishing Derby on June 5th

Hosted by Berkshire South Regional Community Center
For more information call: 528-2810

Summer Life Guard 11:30AM-5:30PM

Beginning on Memorial Day Weekend
Provided every day during school vacation

Children's Swim Lessons

Session 1: July 5-21 & Session 2: August 2-18
(Tuesday & Thursday)

Provided through funding from the GB Parks and Recreation Commission
To register call: Berkshire South 528-2810

Saturday, September 10th, 10:00 -12:30

The 2nd GB Walk About!

Begin at Lake Mansfield Beach Area,
come celebrate the Forest Trail system
For more information go to www.gbtrails.org

Monday, September 12th, 2011

The Elderberry Bash!

Picnic at the Beach & celebrate our community seniors
Hosted by Great Barrington Garden Club, Lake Mansfield Alliance and the Claire Teague Senior Center

Winter on the Lake

Dale Abrams

Winter in New England requires different strategies for dealing with shorter days and long, cold nights. Some folks hunker down with a good book by a warm fire. Others go outside to face winter head on. They enjoy outdoor activities that are only possible where snow and ice are found. As many of you know, I'm an ice skating junkie, always looking for a patch of pristine ice on area lakes and ponds. Perhaps you know some of these other folks who love Lake Mansfield in the winter.

You may know Dara H., a school teacher by day, who treks the lake on snowshoes just before dusk. Catching the last few rays of low angle sunlight is worth the effort and the benefits are clear when you see her big smile coming across the lake.

2 Or maybe you know David V., a local furniture maker. Dave's a man whose mission is to make clear ice for

young hockey players (like Levi, Oliver, Natalie, and many more) to enjoy. After most storms Dave tunes up his favorite shovel and heads out to push back the drifts, creating the proverbial "field of dreams" for the skaters who will surely come.

Surely you know the Kotleskis, a familiar clan around town. They choose just the right day to stake out the perfect spot. With a pack basket full of tip-ups and an ice fishing drill, they make a day of it – fishing and picnicking with family and friends – what more could you ask for?

There are countless others who enjoy the lake in winter. I am inspired by folks out walking, skating, fishing, snowshoeing, strolling, snow-sculpting, and skiing on the lake. They remind me that we're part of long line of people who enjoy a good New England winter. Happy spring!



Lake Day is Almost Here

Dale Abrams



There are only a couple events that I write on the calendar months in advance, blocking out the whole day, so nothing else can interfere. At the top of my list is the Lake Mansfield Clean-up and Celebration. Besides seeing so many folks whose company I enjoy and eating great food at the potluck, something less tangible makes the day unique, something to do with getting lost in the act of caring for a community space.

For weeks in advance my kids and I love scouting the lake on clear, still days to search for sunken “treasure” – the remnants of lake activities from days gone by. We look especially hard for relics from Lake Mansfield’s historic past, such as ice tongs and other implements from the ice making industry that once lined the lake’s south shore. Some treasure is less nostalgic, like shopping carts, car tires, or bath tubs shoved out on the ice and left to sink in the spring. It doesn’t matter whether the booty is new or old, the thrill is the same. By the end of the day we usually have a large pile of treasure, and the smell of mud on our hands attests to our efforts. Our sense of accomplishment is priceless.

Everyone who comes to Lake Day has a different way of contributing. As years have passed, we’ve had to look farther for litter and diversify our caretaking tasks. Some folks cut bittersweet vines or pull garlic mustard while others comb the shore for bottles thrown “away.” Some folks bake bread or cookies while others prune the fruit trees. No matter what part you play, small or

**Save the Date: Saturday April 30th (Rain date: May 7th)
Lake Mansfield Clean-up & Celebration**



large, splashing wet or on dry land, getting together with neighbors to celebrate the lake makes it worth marking your calendar early and planning nothing else for Lake Day. Hope to see you there.

Cleaner Waters for Lake Mansfield

Chris Rembold, *Great Barrington Town Planner*

You have probably seen plumes of sediment-filled water rushing into the lake at various places after a heavy rain. The two most apparent of these sources are at the southern end of the lake (at the boat launch), and at the beach parking lot, where heavy rains carve channels across the gravel before dumping into the lake. Past studies have shown that this runoff is filled with nutrients that feed invasive weeds, such as Eurasian Milfoil, contributing to their growth and spread. In addition, the sediment slowly fills the shallower areas near the shorelines. Shallow water warms in the summer and becomes a perfect nursery for invasive weeds. Fixing these runoff problems will help increase overall water quality in our lake.

4 Another key source of stormwater to the lake is the Castle Hill Avenue storm drain system. It delivers runoff via a catch basin - pipe system underground (roughly where Prospect Street and Castle Hill Avenue intersect) before emptying into the southwest corner of the lake. Though difficult to see, it is the key culprit in the lake watershed and has been singled out in past studies as the major contributor of nutrients, including phosphorus, and sediment to the lake.

Thanks to the efforts of LMA and the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF), the Town of Great Barrington recently received two significant grants to address stormwater runoff. These grants will fund efforts to control and filter stormwater runoff before it can enter the lake.

The Castle Hill Avenue system will be addressed by the first grant, a \$266,500 award from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and authorized by section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act. This award will be used to reconstruct the catch basins and storm drains on Castle Hill Avenue. The new catch basins will be deeper, so that sediment is held in the basin instead of being washed down the pipe and into the lake. Also, at the last catch basin, a new cyclonic filter system will be installed in the basin so that oil and chemicals are filtered out, as well as sediment and particulates. The runoff will still enter the lake via pipe, but it should be much cleaner. Work will begin in the spring or summer of 2012.

DEP also awarded the Town a second, smaller grant. These funds, authorized by section 604(b) of the Clean Water Act, will be targeted to control runoff pollution that enters the lake from the boat launch and Knob Hill. The award of \$10,500 will pay an engineer to develop conceptual plans for catch basins, drainage swales, and other solutions to catch and filter the runoff. This project will coordinate with the Massachusetts Office of Fishing and Boating Access, which has expressed interest in helping to decrease runoff at the boat launch. Once the plans are developed, we will be able to seek 319 funds to implement them.

More information is available on the Town's website www.townofgb.org



Our Lake Our Responsibility

Ron Dlugosz



New sign kiosk built and installed by LMA members this year at the boat launch

Lake Mansfield now belongs to all the residents of Great Barrington. In May 2007, voters at Town Meeting voted to accept Lake Mansfield from the Prudential Committee of the Great Barrington Fire District. This past year the lake was surveyed and the lake was officially transferred to the Town of Great Barrington with the filing of a deed. Now that we (all the town's people) own the lake, it is our responsibility to care for and protect it.

The Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force recommended that the Conservation Commission be the regulating body for the Town. The Conservation Commission would oversee the entire Lake Mansfield Recreation Area; consisting of Lake Mansfield; the Beach and Picnic area; and the Conservation Forest to the east of the parking lot. The Task Force drafted a set of regulations covering these three areas for the Conservation Commission's consideration since the protection for the lake, which was provided by the Fire District, was no longer in place. On January 26, 2011, a public hearing was held and the Conservation Commission unanimously voted to adopt the Regulations. These Regulations will be inserted as Article V of Chapter 217 of the Great Barrington Town Code and entitled "Use of Lake Mansfield Recreation Area." (www.townofgb.org/Pages/GBarringtonMA_Conservation)

You might ask "Why do we need regulations telling us what we can and can't do?" For the vast majority of those using the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area, the regulations are just common sense. Just like most of us stop for a red light because it makes sense, there are a small number of people who run red lights. Sometimes, this can lead to disastrous results. Likewise, sometimes people do things like dump their aquariums in Lake Mansfield. This can also lead to disastrous results by infecting native fish or releasing invasive water plants into the lake. Another area of great concern is the siphoning off of lake water into tankers for commercial applications such as filling swimming pools and mixing chemicals for lawn applications. This can cause severe problems through cross-contamination. If you see this being done, please contact the Great Barrington Police Department immediately. The regulations are meant to prevent or limit behaviors that infringe on other's enjoyment of the lake area or can have an adverse impact on the ecosystem of the lake and surrounding lands.

During the coming months, Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA) will develop signage for the various areas concerning the regulations that apply to those areas. They will be posted on the kiosks located at the beach, the boat ramp, and the conservation forest. Lake Mansfield is ours to enjoy and we all have a responsibility for protecting this Berkshire treasure.



1. Jensen Trail Contractors provide world-class trail construction 2. Elementary students from the Mountain Road School have adopted our LM trails 3. An amazing snapping turtle shell discovered at Lake Day 4. Lake Day volunteers attack invasive bittersweet 5. Trail Volunteers work to complete the Bridge & Boardwalk 6. Lake Day Canoes & Kayaks are donated by PJ Hunt & Berkshire South 7. Youngsters learn about protecting the watershed at an educational program funded by LMA, the GB Cultural Council and GB Garden Club 8. LMA helps host the Elderberry Bash 9. Cross Lake Swimmers have a great time & support LMA 10. Berkshire School Students work on LM Trails 11. Valiant trail builders battle a stubborn stump 12. People Power! LMA volunteer takes initiative in cleaning graffiti from whale rock

A trail is an Invitation to Enter

Christine Ward

What is a forest? To the eyes it is a changing tapestry of color and light—now green and bright, now misty and grey, now copper, brushed with gold, amazing to behold. To the ears it is a twitter, a flutter and a screech, a scurry, a call - with silence tucked in among it all. And to the nose! Spicy and light, or musty and bold—scents that stir and waft on the breeze beneath tall trees. The forest is alive, ever-changing, a home to the plants and creatures that thrive there. And a trail is an invitation to enter.



LMA has provided for the trail project planning and coordination within the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest where two newly groomed sections of trail pass gently within the woodland and provide access to all. The forest is owned by the town of Great Barrington and overseen by the Great Barrington Conservation Commission.

The trail system invites all to enter and explore this rich woodland. You can take the direct route from Christian Hill to the lake. Or perhaps you want to wander, to see the brook flowing beneath the locust bridge or to meander round fern beds and past the great boulder. We urge everyone to visit.

Left: Plants and duff were gently moved and geo-fabric was positioned and covered with a base of crushed stone to ensure a stable trail bed.

Right: The top layer of crushed stone was installed and compacted upon the prepared base layer. Trail edges were groomed with top soil and replanted with the preserved ferns and duff.

Funding for this project comes from:

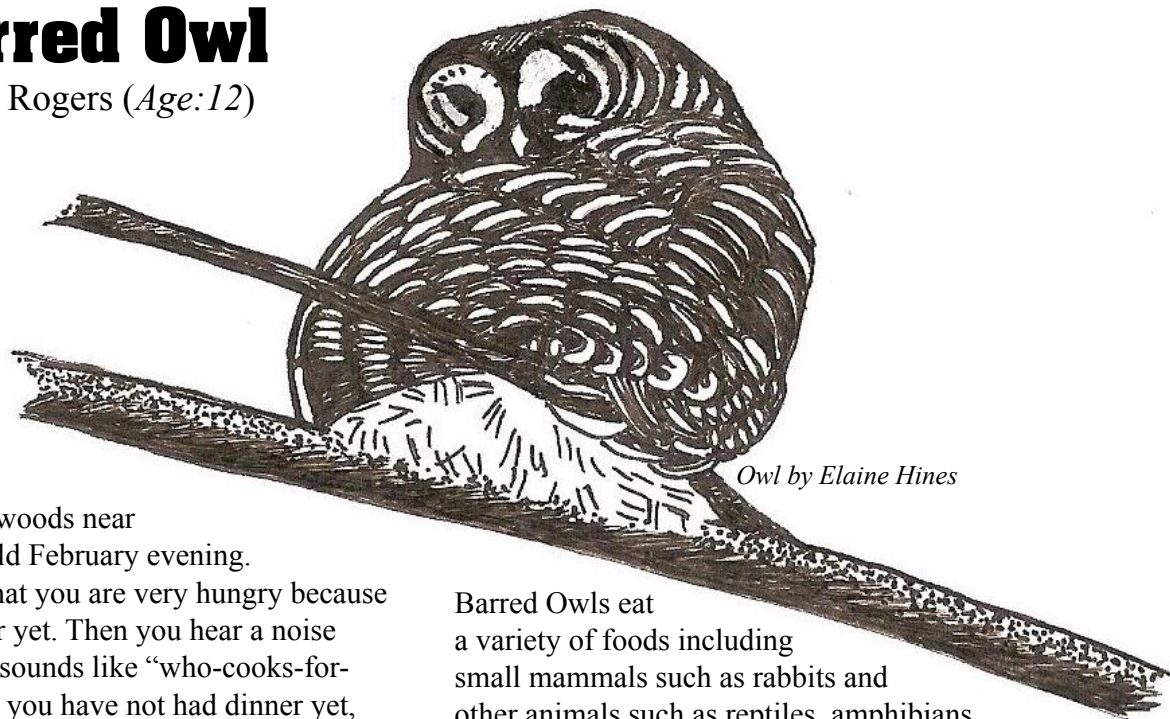
- MA DCR, Recreational Trails Program
- The Berkshire Environmental Endowment Fund
- The Fields Pond Association
- Town of Great Barrington
- Lake Mansfield Alliance

Over 700 volunteer hours have powered this project to date. Thanks this year to:

- Lake Mansfield Alliance
- Greenagers
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Berkshire School Students
- Elementary Students of the Mountain Road School

Barred Owl

Jesse Rogers (*Age: 12*)



Owl by Elaine Hines

You are walking in the woods near Lake Mansfield on a cold February evening. Suddenly, you realize that you are very hungry because you have not had dinner yet. Then you hear a noise coming from nearby. It sounds like “who-cooks-for-you?” Nobody, because you have not had dinner yet, you think. Then you realize that the hooting sound is not another person yelling about being lost in the woods or being hungry. In fact, it sounded like an owl. Now why would an owl ask that question? You go home after your walk and look in your book about birds to see what kind of owl makes a “who-cooks-for-you?” sound. You learn that you have heard a Barred Owl.

Barred Owls are a large owl with a round head and no ear tufts, unlike the Great Horned Owl, which has large ear tufts. Barred owls get their name from their whitish underbelly with dark streaks. Their length is approximately 16-25 inches and their wingspan is 38-50 inches, more than the length of their body. Barred Owls weigh around 1-2 pounds. They are easily distinguishable by their loud and noisy hooting. They are very vocal owls with their most well-known call being “who-cooks-for-you?” along with other variations of the same call. Other sounds include chirping and loud screeching.

Barred Owls live in a variety of habitats, including forests, swamps, riverbanks, and uplands, generally preferring large areas of forest. The range of Barred Owls spreads throughout the eastern United States including Florida, Texas, and Michigan, along with eastern and central Canada, and eastern Mexico. They nest in holes made by the weather or by other animals, which they find in the sides of deciduous trees.

They may steal holes from hawks or crows. Sometimes they will use nest boxes made by people. Barred owls nest between February and May. Females lay from 1 to 5 white eggs, which hatch after about 28 days. The fledgling owl can fly within 45 days of being born.

Barred Owls eat a variety of foods including small mammals such as rabbits and other animals such as reptiles, amphibians, birds, and invertebrates. They hunt at dusk or at night by sitting high up in a tree and looking and listening for food to swoop down upon. I have volunteered at an animal sanctuary where I helped to feed birds including falcons, eagles, hawks, and owls that were injured, including Barred Owls. I would sometimes watch as they swooped down to get their very appetizing frozen mouse. If Barred Owls eat a lot of crayfish their belly feathers are sometimes pink. Barred Owls have brown eyes unlike most owls, which have yellow eyes. Please do not tell any Barred Owls that you mistook them for a person who is lost in the woods yelling for food. That is my article on Barred Owls, our loud and noisy Lake Mansfield neighbors.

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LMA Birdhouse Fundraiser

Support our
native birds
and LMA too!
Place an order
for a handmade
birdhouse built by
LMA volunteers.
\$30.00 each
see order info
on membership
form (p.11)



Open Water Swimming

Bill Meier



10

It's snowing – again. Yet all I can think about is a day in the middle of last September. A front was moving through with torrential rain and the threat of thunder storms. I had been swimming outside almost every day in area lakes, mostly in Lake Mansfield. With the end of the season looming, I kept checking the online satellite pictures. I finally saw a break that might last long enough for a quick swim. With the warm rain slowing to a drizzle, I sped to the beach and was in the water in minutes. An ominous, dark ceiling hung overhead. On the other side of the lake, I stopped to turn around and, at that moment, a gap broke in the cloud cover. A column of sun cut through the mist, bathing the Simon's Rock hill in gold. As the early autumn colors caught the light, the slope appeared to glow from within. Transfixed, I treaded water. But in seconds, the clouds swallowed the beam. Swimming back to the beach, I found myself thinking, like so many times before, that I'd been given a great gift.

Each summer, it's such gifts that draw more people outside the ropes—to the area unprotected by lifeguards. If you are planning an open water swim, it's very important to consider some basic safety tips.

Are you a competent swimmer? - Here's a measure to gauge your ability – You should be able to swim 300 yards of freestyle (crawl stroke for twelve lengths in a 25 yard pool) with good rhythmic breathing. If this is

difficult, keep practicing AND stay close to the protected area.

Go with a boat - encourage a friend to paddle next to you. This way, help is only a paddle-length away.

The Buddy System – Swim with a friend. It's fun, and you can watch out for each other.

Be flashy - Wear the gaudiest bathing cap you can find – the more fluorescent, the better. A loud cap makes you visible against the dark colors of the lake.

Drag your own floatation – Choose a device that you can bring with you as you swim.

If your swimming ability puts you in the competitive realm, then LMA is working on options for you. Last summer, the YMCA Snappers Swim Team hosted a youth open water swim competition. Over 50 swimmers, ages 6 through 16, participated. This year, we will try to build on that success with races for all ages.

With the approach of the 2011 swim season, we encourage you to hop in, have fun and be realistic about your swimming ability!

Wednesday July 6th 5:30-7:30 PM
Lake Mansfield Open Water Swim
for Youth and Adult Swimmers
Affiliated with YMCA and US Masters
For more information contact:
Bill at meierbill@yahoo.com



Thank you to all who contribute to our Lake Mansfield Cabin Fever Fundraising Event



Your Support is Needed!

2010 LMA Budget Summary

We keep a tight LMA Budget. The costs of all projects are greatly offset by many volunteer work hours. Donations fuel this efficient working model.

INCOME

Carry forward.....	907.14
Donations/Membership.....	1,695.00
Project Grants (programs).....	450.00
Cabin Fever fundraiser.....	2,011.60
Income Total	\$ 5,063.74

EXPENSES

Accounting & Insurance.....	600.00
Dues (Lakes & Ponds Association).....	100.00
Postage & PO Box.....	203.42
Printing.....	627.75
Supplies.....	181.16

PROJECT COSTS

*Trail work.....	2,000.00
Programs (\$450 reimbursed through grants).....	760.00
Plantings (matched by GB Garden Club).....	110.45
Beach Area Kiosk.....	232.42
Graffiti removal/Whale Rock.....	46.50
Expense total	\$ 4,862.02

*LMA coordinates the trail project in the Conservation Forest. The LMA funding is only a small portion of the total project (see p.6). In 2010, over 250 volunteer work hours provided by LMA volunteers provided a match value of over \$4,000.00.

LMA is a project of Great Barrington Land Conservancy, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible. GBLC is a vehicle for preserving and enhancing our community's natural resources and distinctive character.

Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2011

Name _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Suggested annual dues I wish to remain an anonymous donor.

\$20 Individual \$35 Family \$50 Supporter \$100 Conservationist

\$250 Guardian \$500 Steward \$____ Trail Project Dedicated Donation \$____ other

Make tax deductible donations to: GBLC Lake Mansfield Fund, LMA, PO Box 944, Great Barrington, MA 01230



LMA Birdhouse Fundraiser

I want to support our native birds and LMA with my purchase of _____ birdhouses @ \$30.00 each. They make great gifts.



Lake Mansfield Alliance
PO Box 944
Great Barrington, MA 01230

A project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

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MA 01230

“Working to preserve, protect and enhance Lake Mansfield as a vital natural habitat and community resource.”
See page 1 for 2010 Lake Mansfield events & LMA Newsletter. ENJOY, and PASS IT ALONG . .

Lake Mansfield Spring Celebration & Clean-up Day Saturday April 30, 2011 10:30-3:00

Rain date: Saturday May 7

10:30-12:30 Lake & Forest Clean-up:

Meet at the beach, gloves recommended.
Bring tools: rakes, wheelbarrows, wagons . . .
and enthusiasm!

12:30 – 3:00 Potluck Lunch

Community Meeting, learn “New Games” for friends and family
Guided Trail Walk: Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails



Thank You Berkshire South Regional Community Center for supporting
Lake Mansfield Spring Celebration & Clean-Up Day

Join your friends and neighbors for a fun day of community action!