



Let's meet at **LakeMANSFIELD**

The newsletter of Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA)

Spring 2012

How do you connect with Lake Mansfield?

Christine Ward



Trail Volunteers Team up!

Is it through the sound of chortling geese or the music of spring birdsong? The feel of smooth ice, rough bark or silky water? Is it through a riot of fall color or a soft violet sunset, or a deep leafy green? Is it through play or work? Exercise or meditation? Our Lake Mansfield and Conservation Forest allows for so many to experience so much. These healthy habitats enrich our lives on a daily basis.

LMA provides for a thriving lake community. The beauty of the natural world feeds the soul and inspires healthy connections. **Join us – connect with friends and work to preserve, protect and enhance our wonderful Lake Mansfield.**

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2012 Lake Mansfield Events

Sunday April 29th, 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!

Saturday June 3

Annual Fishing Derby

Hosted by Berkshire South Regional Community Center

For more information call: 528-2810

Summer Lifeguards 11:30AM-5:30PM

Beginning on Memorial Day Weekend

Provided every day during school vacation

Children's Swim Lessons

Session 1: July 10-26 & Session 2: July 31-August 16

(Tuesday & Thursday)

Free to Great Barrington residents

Funded by GB Parks and Recreation Commission

To register call: Berkshire South 528-2810.

GBLC Firefly Fete (Annual Potluck)

Friday, August 3rd, 6-8:30 pm

Everyone welcome; more info at:

www.greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org

Saturday, September 22nd, 10:00 -12:30

The 2nd Annual GB Walk About!

Begin at the Riverwalk Rain Garden. Proceed along the river and through to a quiet neighborhood area and into the shady woodland of the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest. Stop by at the Farmers Market. (3.5 mile loop)

For more information go to www.gbtrails.org

What Happened to the Ice this Year?

Dale Abrams

As a lake skating enthusiast, I've been watching Lake Mansfield's ice carefully for about a decade now and learning everything I can from other ice "junkies." I've noticed that ice formation and retention depend on the balance of several factors. Two primary factors are the temperature of the water (which stays above freezing all winter) and the temperature of the air. Another important agent is wind, which causes water movement and can prevent ice formation or lead to ice erosion, but we'll come back to that. Once ice begins to form, there is a continual balancing act between the competing forces of relatively warm water below the ice and the (potentially) cold air above the ice.

When the ice initially formed this year, we had a stretch of 0-10 degree, windless nights with daytime temperatures around 15-20 degrees. Under these conditions, ice grows quickly, as cold air chills the ice and leads to new ice forming on the bottom of the ice layer. With extremely cold conditions, ice can increase by as much as 3/4 of an inch in a single night! This year the ice reached a maximum thickness of 6-7 inches in mid-January. In years past, with sustained cold and snow accumulation, we've measured as much as 24 inches of ice by March! This February, we had several weeks with temperatures in the 20s at night and 40-50s by day. With this warming, the balance gradually tipped in favor of ice melting, since the air temperature wasn't cold enough to out-compete the warmth of the water below. The ice thickness steadily decreased from 6 inches, to 5 inches, to 4 inches, to 3 inches, and eventually to open water toward the north end of the lake. Without sustained cold, we saw the lake completely free of ice by February 23, much earlier than past years.

Several other factors led to a rapid loss of ice this year. Once there was a little open water, several windy days/nights quickly eroded the thinning ice layer from north to south. The ice often thins first around the edges and the north part of the lake where the water is shallower, and in the broad middle section of the lake where the



Skaters find ice time.

ice receives the most hours of sunlight each day. When the surface is snow-free, sun penetrates through the ice and warms the water below (like a greenhouse). Some of the light strikes the dark, shallow bottom and warms the water further, sending warm currents toward the surface. All of these factors contributed to thin ice, a short skating and ice fishing season, and an early reopening of the lake this year. One factor I didn't even mention is winter rainfall, which happened several times this year. Rain can be a natural Zamboni or lead to unsafe conditions, but we'll save that for another time. There is so much to observe and learn about this complex and fascinating system.

Remember, always measure the thickness and condition of the ice before going out. The consensus among ice experts is that 4 inches of consistent, clear ice is the minimum for safe foot travel. Be safe and enjoy! To learn more about lake ice and ice safety try these websites: www.lakeice.squarespace.com and www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw.

Cleaner Waters for Lake Mansfield

Chris Rembold, Great Barrington Town Planner

For decades, nutrient-loaded stormwater entering Lake Mansfield has fed the growth and spread of invasive weeds. Storms pour sediment into the lake, slowly filling shallow areas near the shorelines, and creating pockets of warm water that are perfect nurseries for the weeds. Left unchecked, the weed growth and sedimentation would dramatically change the chemistry and health of the Lake. Fortunately, a partnership of LMA, the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF), the Town Department of Public Works, and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has been steadily working to fix these stormwater runoff problems.

On Knob Hill Road, we are implementing a \$10,500 section 604(b) Clean Water Act grant to develop conceptual

oped a design for this area, but the goal is to address runoff problems, and provide an additional parking spot or two, while retaining the existing informal, natural, “carry-in-only” characteristics of the launch.

The most important work, however, will be focused on Castle Hill Avenue, between Fern Hill and Prospect Street. This work is funded in part by a \$266,500 section 319 Clean Water Act grant. Our engineers, Tighe & Bond, from Westfield, will be on Castle Hill Avenue this spring to survey and design a new storm drain and catch basin system in this area. The current system is the major contributor of nutrients and sediment to the lake. It is undersized and poorly designed for the volume that actually occurs. A new system will keep sediment and



2012 Members of Lake Mansfield Task Force:

Suzie Fowle (Planning Board), Ron Dlugosz (Citizen at Large), Christine Ward (Chairperson), Deb Phillips (Select Board), Dale Abrams (LMA), Amanda Sewall (Conservation Commission Agent, ex-officio) Joseph Sokul (Superintendent of Public Works), Nina Evans (LMA alternate), Chris Rembold (Town Planner, ex-officio). Missing from the photo is Jessica Dezeick (Conservation Commission)

plans for a drainage system to catch and filter Knob Hill runoff. The town’s engineer, Foresight Land Services of Pittsfield, has completed a concept plan for up to six oversized catch basins and drainage piping to collect and filter the water before it can enter the lake. We are hopeful that we can win grant funds to build the system at a future date.

We have been coordinating this design with the Massachusetts Office of Fishing and Boating Access, who will help improve the boat launch. OFBA has not yet devel-

nutrients out of the lake. This portion of Castle Hill Avenue will be impacted in the spring or summer of 2013 when the system is installed. The Town will keep you informed about the anticipated schedule.

Each year we make more progress correcting long-standing problems, and we get closer to our goal of ensuring Lake Mansfield remains a healthy ecosystem and resource for all of us for decades to come. Keep up the good work, and happy boating, fishing, and swimming!

Birding Lake Mansfield

Darra Wheeler Happ

One day last summer, I decided it was time to learn the names of the birds we hear early each morning during the spring and summer from our bedroom window in our home near Lake Mansfield. I can identify several birds by sight, but only one or two by their songs; I had no idea which bird was out there singing to me at 5 o'clock in the morning. This situation had gone on long enough. It was time to learn the names of the birds by their calls.

So, to deal with the situation, I did what anyone else might do: I put an ad in the Shopper's Guide. The ad read "WANTED: Bird expert willing to meet

4 me by Lake Mansfield to teach me the names of the birds by their calls. Will pay for your time." A few days later, a message was left on our answering machine by Kai Reed, and later that week he showed up at dusk for our first meeting. We walked to the edge of Lake Mansfield, sat down on our rickety wooden bench, and spent a quiet hour listening to the birds. Kai whispered the names of the birds as he heard them, and I took notes on a yellow legal pad. Within five minutes, Kai named fifteen

birds. I was amazed. He could have easily continued naming birds because we heard many, many more, but Kai politely suggested that learning the names of 15 birds was a good number to master before moving on. Kai spent the rest of the hour answering my birding questions and sharing interesting facts about each of the 15 birds on my list. He also told me a few details about his world-wide adventures as an award-winning birder.

The final step in my learning process is to use my favorite bird book, The Backyard Birdsong Guide: A Guide to Listening, by Donald Kroodsma. I have been using the "Push and Listen" feature so I can hear the call and see a picture of the bird. Eventually, I hope to be able to name all the birds I hear by the sound of their songs, so I hope Kai was serious when he said



Red wing blackbird by Ladage Photography.

he'd come back to name the next fifteen we hear.

The first fifteen birds: Catbird, Grackle, Song Sparrow, Eastern Kingbird, Redwing Blackbird, Baltimore Oriole, Goldfinch, Cedar Waxwing, Flicker, American Redstart, Chimney Swift, Least Flycatcher, House Finch, Downy Woodpecker, Ovenbird, Veery, White-breasted Nuthatch and the Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Other Resources:

The Cornell lab of Ornithology: For a great on-line bird guide that features bird songs along with excellent information in an easy to use format go to:

www.allaboutbirds.org.

The Music of Nature: For amazing sound collections To practice your skills at identifying calls and develop your ear go to: www.musicofnature.org

Naturalist Notes: Wild Turkeys

Jesse Rogers, age 13



Wild turkey by Ladage Photography.

You are done with your day at work or school and are driving to your house. It will soon be Thanksgiving, and you are thinking about what you will eat on that day. You have not been thinking for a minute before the thoughts of eating turkey come into your head. Your thoughts stop when you hear a very irksome sound coming from the side of the road. You look over to that area and see a flock of wild turkeys. Even though it is not a great idea to look out the window while you are driving, you have still made an important find. You now know that turkeys are found in other places besides your dinner plate.

Wild Turkeys are called *Meleagris gallopavo* and can live for 3 to 4 years. They are found in many parts of the United States. They are mostly seen in forests, swamps, and grasslands. They can be 3.6 to 3.8 feet in height and can weigh 5.5 to 18.8 lbs. Their wingspan is 4.1 to 4.8 feet. They will eat seeds, nuts, small fruits, and small animals, and will be eaten by foxes, coyotes, bobcats, and other large birds.

Wild Turkeys make nests on the ground and will have between 4 to 17 eggs, but will sleep in trees. They can run at a good speed, but are not known for flying. Even

though many people will eat domesticated turkeys for Thanksgiving, there are some people who will shoot and eat wild turkeys.

Still, most people do know that turkeys are found in other areas besides their plate, in fact wild turkeys are very interesting. The wild turkey and the Muscovy duck were the only two birds that were domesticated in the Americas. Benjamin Franklin believed that the wild turkey should have been the bird that represented The United States because it was, "a much more respectable bird," than the bald eagle. In the United States, turkeys were over-hunted in the 1900's, but now they live in many parts of this country, in New Zealand and some areas of Europe.

Here in Great Barrington, people have seen turkeys for many years. Flocks of a dozen or more are often seen sneaking their way through the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest. Several of their predators have been sighted as well. Hopefully these birds will still be seen and people will know that they are interesting, along with knowing that they taste very good.



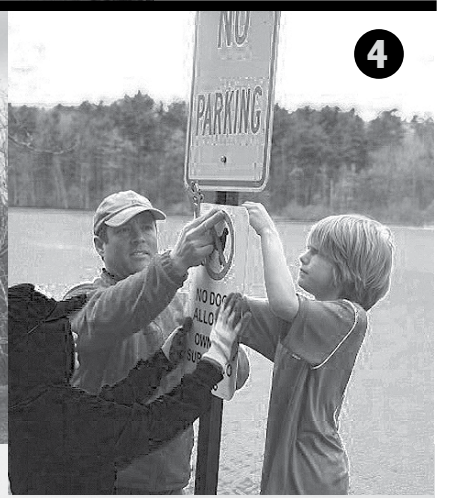
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Connecting with our Lake & Forest

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1. 2011 Elderberry Bash picnic 2. 2011 GB Walk About folks 3. Berkshire School volunteers for Gracious Living Day 2011 4. Lake Day volunteers repair signage 5. Greenagers trims the Christian Hill trail entrance 6. Swimmers prepare for a Lake Mansfield Mini Triathlon 7. Canoers provide safety watch as Lake Mansfield Mini swimmers cross the lake 8. Volunteers work to mill harvested locust 9. Greenagers construct and install trail kiosks 10. Student Trail Stewards for the Mountain Road School in New Lebanon, NY 11. Moving Locust timbers.

Lake Mansfield Swim Lessons

Laura Martin

Berkshire South Regional Community Center has provided water safety instructors to offer free swim lessons to Great Barrington residents at Lake Mansfield Beach through funding from the Great Barrington Parks and Recreation Commission for the last three summers.

Each summer the swim lessons have been popular. In 2011, a total of 51 slots were used by 33 children ages six through ten for the free lessons. Eighteen of the children enrolled in both of the three-week sessions. Some of the children would arrive for the lesson and then stay to enjoy the beach afterward. One parent, on a survey at the end of the summer wrote, "My daughters had a lot of fun while learning how to swim, and staying to play at the beach all day."

The focus of the lessons is on basic skills such as water familiarization, safety, floating and learning basic swimming strokes. In addition to the focus on water safety, games and fun activities are part of the lessons. Participating in formal swim lessons has been linked to a lower risk of drowning (the second leading cause of death in children ages 1 to 19).

But the children aren't thinking about that; they want to have fun in the sun! The lessons are designed to focus on

water safety skills while maximizing the fun factor and using the fantastic beach and swimming area. The children are proud to show and use what they have learned in the lessons. Some of the families would not be able to afford the cost of traditional swim lessons and have expressed how grateful they are for this program.

We anticipate offering three different levels of the American Red Cross Learn to Swim Program Tuesday and Thursday mornings this summer in two three-week sessions.

Level 1: Introduction to Water Skills is 10:30 to 11 a.m.

Level 2: Fundamental Aquatic Skills is 10 to 10:30 a.m.

Level 3: Stroke Development is 9:30 to 10 a.m.

Space will be limited, and advance registration is required. Families can register in person at Berkshire South, online at www.berkshiresouth.org, or by calling 413.528.2810.

For more information, please contact Laura Martin, Director of Aquatics at 413-528-2810 ext. 20 or lmartin@berkshiresouth.org

Swim lesson



Help Protect Wetland Plants?

Jessica Dezieck and Brian Tenney



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Cattails are protected

As the seasons change, it is easy to see the striking transformation of nature awakening. The edges of Lake Mansfield are a prime growing space for many native wetland plants that help support the health of the water. At times though, these plants are often attractive to wildflower gatherers. It is important to understand these wetland plants and why they are protected. Enjoy the beauty of Lake Mansfield's cattails – perhaps they stand at the waterside as a reminder to protect the integrity of our beloved lake.

The 'Common Cattail' (*Typha latifolia*) is a perennial herbaceous plant. They are grass-like plants with strap-shaped leaves 1 to 5 centimeters wide and growing up to 1.8 meters tall. The male flowers develop in a dense mass above the female flowers. These last only a short time, leaving the female flowers which develop into the brown 'cattail.' In North America, it is native to all states except Hawaii. Cattails are "obligate wetland" species, meaning they are found in or near the water.

Traditionally, native North American cultures have used cattails as a source of food or medicine. The rhizomes (roots) are edible after cooking and removing the skin, while peeled stems and leaf bases can be eaten raw or cooked. The young flower spikes are edible as well.

One important function of the cattail's root is as a bioremediator. They absorb pollutants and thus are naturally "cleaning up" wetlands. Wetlands serve as important habitats for wildlife, and help maintain drinking water supplies and other waters. They serve as important spawning areas and contain food for fish and other aquatic animals. They are especially important for controlling floods. Activities that involve filling, excavating, or otherwise altering wetlands can impair their many valuable functions. Both the state and federal courts have determined that preservation of wetlands serves in the public interest; therefore activities that alter wetlands are regulated by law. In Massachusetts, wetlands are protected by the state's Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. 131 Section 40 310 CMR 10.02(1) which is administered by local Conservation Commissions and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

How can we as citizens protect wetlands locally? We can be effective in protecting wetlands by becoming familiar with the requirements of Wetlands Regulations, attending public meetings and public hearings, commenting on projects, and by working with the local Conservation Commission to ensure that Orders of Conditions meet the requirements of the regulations.

GB Trail Season Begins at Lake Mansfield

Christine Ward



Will Conklin, sawyer

behind the western hill just beyond Lake Mansfield. A violet light seemed to celebrate the day's amazing effort.

This workday was an auspicious beginning to the 2012 Collaborative Trail Work Season, coordinated through Great Barrington Trails and Greenways, and made possible by a grant from Housatonic Heritage. Throughout the season, four trail sites (Lake Mansfield, the Pfeiffer Arboretum, Fountain Pond/3 Mile Hill, and the McAllister Wildlife Refuge) will benefit from a variety of efforts including trail repair, trail maintenance, brochure development, and kiosk improvements. The project is



Rick Ciotola with Lukas & Larson

Strong partnerships and local talent were in the spotlight at the Sustainable Forestry and Draft Animal Power Workshop held at the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest this winter. The workday was conceived by Will Conklin, local sawyer and director of Greenagers. Will engaged the expertise of Rich Ciotola, a local farmer and self-taught teamster. But it was Lukas and Larson who stole the show. These nimble footed 1,800-pound oxen pulled the heaviest locust logs out of the sensitive forest area. Rich has been training “the boys” since their births, three and half years ago.

The connection between the teamster and his team was poignant. With his arm draped over Lukas, Rich seemed like a proud, but firm, older brother. When Rich spoke, Lukas and Larson listened; stepping lively to respond to verbal and tactile commands. This display of enthusiastic oxen power spurred on the efforts of our two-legged volunteers, who quickly teamed up to help move the available lumber to the awaiting trailer for transport to the mill.

Meanwhile, Will prepared his portable sawmill at the beach area. A team of volunteers worked to support him as he cut the logs into predetermined board lengths. The milled lumber has been donated by the Great Barrington Conservation Commission to be used in the repair of bog bridging at the Pfeiffer Arboretum. The milling team worked until the job was done, loading the last freshly-milled plank on the delivery truck as the sun slipped

built on the expertise, volunteer work, in-kind donations and support funding provided through the collaborative efforts of seven organizations: Great Barrington Trails and Greenways, Great Barrington Land Conservancy, Lake Mansfield Alliance, Greenagers, the Appalachian Mountain Club, Berkshire South Regional Community Center, and the Great Barrington Conservation Commission. The result of this work will be improved trails for our community. Our ultimate goal is to support community health by fostering appreciation for and stewardship of our bountiful natural resources.

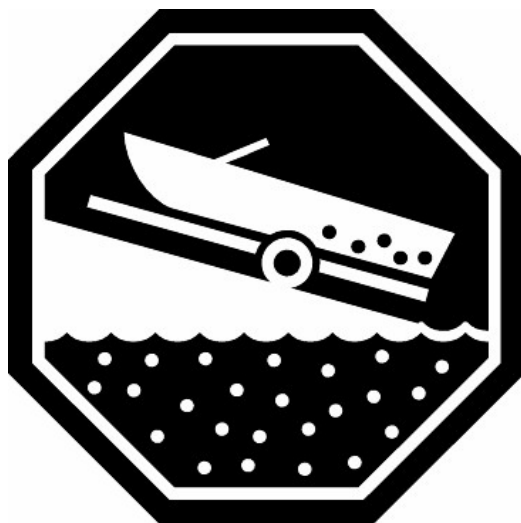
To keep abreast of these trail efforts and to find out about a continuing series of guided hikes in Great Barrington and beyond, go to www.gbtrails.org.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!

Prevent the transport of nuisance species. Clean all recreational equipment.

If you are a water recreationist—boater, angler, water-skier, sailor, or canoeist—there are some important things you can do to prevent the transport of invasive species from one lake or river to another.

All non-native aquatic plant and animal species have the potential for negatively impacting our lake. But zebra mussels are the big concern at the moment. Lake Mansfield has the chemical conditions that zebra mussels need to thrive. Once established zebra mussels drastically impair the ecology of a lake. Currently there is no way to rid a body of water of zebra mussels once they have become established. Are we doomed? NO! We have a couple things in our favor. First of all, Lake Mansfield does not have the physical conditions that zebra mussels prefer to colonize such as lots of rocky substrate and other



structures such as docks. Also, zebra mussels prefer the low-light conditions of deeper waters. Lake Mansfield is a shallow lake and the light penetrates the majority of the water column.

But our best defense is you.

Faithfully follow the steps outlined below and help remind lake visitors to do the same.

For more information go to:
www.mass.gov/dcr/watersupply/lakepond/publications.htm

- Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment.
- Eliminate water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that came in contact with water (Boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.

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Boaters: ALWAYS COMPLETE YOUR CLEAN BOAT CERTIFICATION FORM.

These required forms are posted at the boat launch and the beach area.

Become a Member of Lake Mansfield Alliance 2012

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



Lake Mansfield Alliance
PO Box 944
Great Barrington, MA 01230

A project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

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“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 Sunday April 29, 2012 10:30-3:00



Rain date: Sunday May 6

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!