

# THE IPA NEWSLETTER

Mystic Lake, Middle Pond and Hamblin Pond in Marstons Mills, MA

Winter 2016

A quarterly publication of the Indian Ponds Association, Inc.

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## BARNSTABLE: A LAKE MANAGEMENT SUCCESS STORY

At the 2015 North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) 35th International Symposium in Saratoga Springs, NY, the “Lake Management Success Stories Award” was presented to the Town of Barnstable. The special appreciation award is made annually to “individuals or organizations who have accomplished successful lake management efforts.” Conservation Administrator Darcy Karle represented the Town at the conference, with introductory comments read by society president **Reed Green**:

*“Barnstable is the largest town on Cape Cod and has many lakes that serve as major recreational resources and habitat for both resident and migratory wildlife. Since 1995, the town has battled algae blooms in half a dozen prominent lakes, fanwort in two, and hydrilla in two more. Many NALMS members and Certified Lake Managers have worked on these projects, and the experience gained has been valuable in developing programs for other lakes. The town supported a circulation project that ultimately did not work out, but it*

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## 2016 MARSTONS MILLS HERRING COUNT

Join the 2016 volunteer herring count training on Saturday, **March 19, 2016** sponsored by Three Bays Preservation, Inc. Training will be held at **noon at Liberty Hall**, 2150 Main Street, Marstons Mills. **Amy Croteau** from the Town of Barnstable’s Natural Resources Department will explain the status of the herring runs in town. She will be joined by **Scott Horsley** from Horsley and Witten Engineering, who has been working closely with the Cape Cod Commission on sewerage alternatives for the Three Bays watershed.

If you’ve counted in the past, please come again. If not, please consider joining in this fun and easy task. It only takes 10 minutes out of any given hour. The count is from 7 am to 7 pm seven days a week as long as the fish are here, about six to eight weeks in late March to late May. It’s a minimal amount of work for a very rewarding result.

Contact **Judy Heller** at [jheller@3bays.org](mailto:jheller@3bays.org) or call 508-420-0780.

Light refreshments will be served!

**See page 6 for an update on herring run improvements.**

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Scan the above QR code with your smartphone to go to the IPA website.

*The IPA is a 501(c)(3) organization and a registered public charity. All dues and contributions are tax deductible. This newsletter, with a circulation of 700, is a forum for the exchange of ideas on matters concerning the IPA mission, and the views expressed by authors of articles do not necessarily represent official IPA policy.*

## BIRDS OF WINTER

OK, the Super Bowl is history and we are due for another major snow storm so it must be time to get my fancy iPad cranked up and discuss birds that over-winter on Cape Cod. I think that only one bird, that red-bellied woodpecker, has left my yard this year. I have several male and several female cardinals, lots of tufted titmice, lots of chickadees, several white-throated sparrows, a pair of flickers—just the normal run of backyard birds on Cape Cod.

Now, before we get into a discussion of why birds stay or fly south for the winter, let me say that we have entered into an area of discussion with proponents on both sides. The question under discussion is whether or not these birds really do stay in your yard or whether they perform mini-migrations, flying short distances of say two to three hundred miles rather than thousands of miles. In my opinion, some remain and some do mini-migrations. I think my cardinals are ones that were born and grew up in my backyard but that the titmice have exchanged home ranges for the winter. I have no scientific proof of this, just my observations. The cardinals always seem to be here while the titmice all disappeared for a while and the white-breasted nuthatches seemed to appear all at once.

*(Continued on page 4)*



## CALLING ALL COLLEGE BOUND SENIORS

The Indian Ponds Association (IPA) is pleased to announce that it will offer a \$1,000.00 scholarship this spring to a graduating senior from Marstons Mills. The Schwarm Memorial Scholarship was established in 2005 in memory of **Edward Schwarm**, a former IPA director and officer. It is in his memory and the goals of the IPA to select a student who will balance his or her professional career with a continuing effort to preserve our environment.

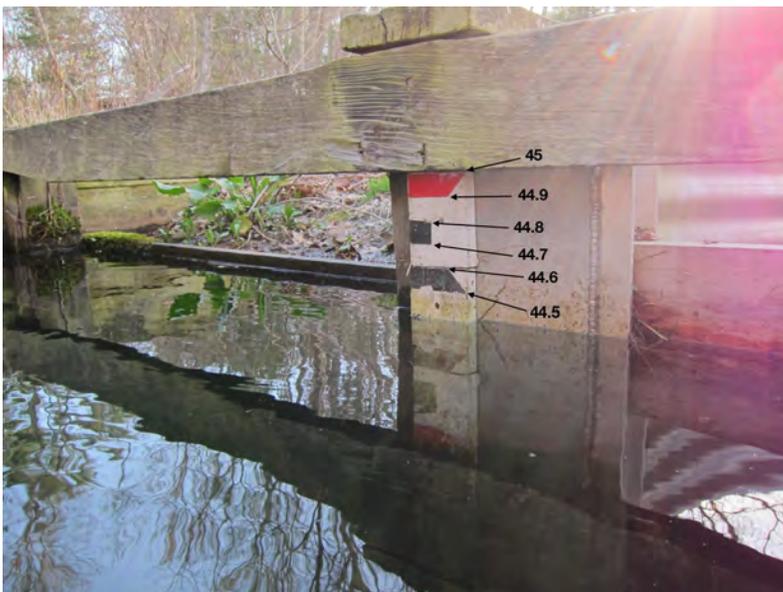
The scholarship is available to any graduating senior residing in Marstons Mills and attending either public or private high school. Applications are available at the Barnstable High School Guidance Office, Sturgis Charter School, or on the IPA website at [www.indianponds.org](http://www.indianponds.org). Deadline for submission is April 1st. We encourage our seniors to apply early.

## LAKE AND POND WATER LEVELS

We've all noticed how our pond water levels change significantly throughout the year. I've heard a legendary story about the time in the mid-'90s when the water level was low that you could drive a truck along the entire exposed shoreline of Middle Pond. In the fall of 2012 the pond level dropped so much that the outlet from Middle Pond into the herring run completely dried up, leaving the herring fry stranded in the ponds with no way to migrate to Nantucket Sound. This situation recurred in early September 2015 following last summer's prolonged drought. It wasn't until late December that year that the level in Middle Pond rose to where a trickle of water was again passing through the outlet. As I write this in early February, the pond water level has risen so there's now a healthy flow of water into the lagoon at the head of the herring run.

Cape Cod kettle ponds are areas where the land surface dips below the level of the underlying groundwater. The surface of the pond is the top of the groundwater aquifer, so pond water levels tend to track closely with the surrounding groundwater level. These levels fluctuate seasonally, commonly reaching a high in the spring or early summer and a low in the autumn. Pond levels usually vary by 12-18 inches over the course of a year. This might not seem like much, but it makes a big difference for us when we navigate the cut. (And for herring fry who want to swim out to sea before getting devoured by hungry largemouth bass!)

The US Geological Survey (USGS) manages a comprehensive water monitoring program throughout the country, including surface water and groundwater data. Data from this monitoring program is publicly available from their National Water Information System Web Interface. Several sites in Barnstable County are monitored continuously. Of particular relevance to the IPA ponds is the groundwater well located about 1.8 miles WNW of Mystic Lake in Sandwich, 50 feet south of Farmersville Road. This is a 70-foot-deep observation well equipped with a digital recorder and cell phone telemetry to provide real time ground water level data. The real time equipment was installed in 2012, but there are field measurements from that well dating back to 1962. The USGS web site is fairly straightforward to navigate—from the USGS main page follow links to water and then groundwater in Massachusetts. The Farmersville Road monitoring well is station name "MA-SDW 253."



The only Cape Cod fresh water pond monitored under the USGS program is Falmouth's Ashumet Pond. It's interesting to note how closely fluctuations in Ashumet Pond water levels correspond to those of Middle and Mystic, even though it's seven miles away. They are all part of the same aquifer and at a very similar water table depth. (Ashumet surface readings tend to be about a foot higher than our ponds.) Former IPA vice president **Bob Nichols** took regular surface water elevation readings in Mystic Lake from 2008-2013, recording high readings of 45.04' ASL in March 2010 and June 2013 and a low reading of 43.21' ASL in October 2012. There is currently a gage on the dam in the lagoon at the outlet of Middle Pond—see photo. Based on this gage, the current (2/4/16) Middle Pond water level is 43.94' ASL.

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**Greg Cronin**

## BIRDS OF WINTER

(Continued from page 2)

So, why do some birds stay and others migrate, regardless of how far? The question has a one-word answer: FOOD. Migration takes a very heavy toll on birds and if they can find sufficient food and shelter where they are they have no good reason to leave. It is a matter of economics, really. Energy economics. It costs a bird a great deal of energy to fly south and unless they are reasonably certain of being able to restore that lost energy at the end of the migration they will go no further than a reasonable assurance of being able to find food. On Cape Cod this results in some birds not migrating at all because we are so generous with food to get them through the winter. I know that the first thing I do



every morning is take the refilled feeders and suet feeders out for the day. This by itself has produced changes in birds in my yard. Under normal circumstances, you would not expect to see ground feeders like cardinals and sparrows using hanging feeders but that is where the food is.



Another factor is water. I have a solid granite block that has been hollowed out to form a water bowl. At this time of the year any water put into the bowl freezes in very short order. Birds, of course, are fully capable of getting their water from snow but really seem to appreciate the water between the time I put it out and the time it freezes. Once it does it is just a place to sit and wait for their turn at the feeders.

So, what birds do you see in your yards? As I said, I have cardinals, flickers, white-throated sparrows, hairy and downy woodpeckers, tufted titmice, dark-eyed juncos when the snow gets here, Carolina wren and house wrens. This morning, as I add pictures to this piece, I have seen both blue jays and red-bellied woodpeckers at my feeders.

There are winter backyard bird counts to join if you would like to help with demographic studies. I particularly like any sponsored by Cornell Lab of Ornithology, which you can find out about by Googling them. Oh well, I have pretty well exhausted this topic so I guess I'll hang it up. For now.

Keep on birding.

**David Reid**



*When I walked over to our pond the day after it snowed I saw an amazing sight! All around us was snow and ice. Only half of the pond was frozen but it was still beautiful. A canoe was in the middle of the pond and the people in the canoe were fishing. Snow was falling off the trees and onto the ice. That pond really needed the snow. I'm so glad that the water is at its normal height. I thought of how the herring would be back soon as I left.*

**Taya Robillard, age 10**

## NALMS AWARD

(Continued from page 1)

provided experience and lessons that have aided other projects. Aluminum treatments have been conducted with spectacular results, the most recent of which was the re-treatment of Hamblin Pond, which reverted to excessive nutrient loading and algae blooms over a year after 18 years of excellent conditions after the first aluminum treatment on Cape Cod in 1995. Hamblin Pond improved immediately following treatment, boasting an August 2015 Secchi value of 8.8 m.

“Multiple people in the town have contributed, from the Selectmen who have consistently voted to financially support projects through the Conservation Commission that regulates projects under authority from the Commonwealth. Now-retired Conservation Administrator **Rob Gatewood** was a staunch supporter of lake management for 20 years, and his long-time assistant and now successor, **Darcy Karle**, is continuing the tradition. The Health Department samples lakes and monitors algae populations to ensure user safety. Private citizens have participated in many projects, encouraged by the town to get actively involved with their lakes. Lake associations like the Indian Ponds Association, which covers three prominent lakes, routinely interact with the town and have received support to improve management practices.

*“Lake management is highly interdisciplinary, and involves science, economics and institutional organization. Projects fail more often due to inadequate institutional support than either scientific or economic shortcomings. It is a pleasure to recognize a town that knows the*



*importance of institutional support and walks the walk when it comes to lake management.”*

**Ken Wagner**

**Photo: Dr Ken Wagner with Darcy Karle**

**Photo Credits:** Birds, David Reid, pages 2 and 5; Water gage, page 3, Gregory Cronin; Taya in Winter, page 4, Eric Robillard; NALMS award, page 5, Ken Wagner; Herring Run, page 6, Alex Frazee; Bald eagle, page 7, Betsey Godley.

## HERRING RUN IMPROVEMENTS: SOON TO BE A REALITY

The Indian Ponds Association has been working to protect these magnificent ponds since 1958, with an ebb and flow of activity required. It was in 2001 that it became apparent to a group of local residents that greater involvement with the herring run was again necessary.

Since that time the run has continued to be on the Town of Barnstable's radar and I am glad to report that cooperation between various town boards, the state, IPA and a cadre of interested volunteers is bringing an exciting result. About mid-June this summer, shortly after the upstream fish run concludes at the end of May, major state of the art reconstruction of the run will occur between the Middle Pond sluiceway and the end of the present wooden structure. All construction will occur within the Town Layout, and great care will be taken to protect private property on both sides of the run. A pre-existing way along the east side will allow placement of materials and allow for continued maintenance.

The project will take about three months to complete while the present wooden structures are removed and replaced with concrete blocks on the sides and native stones on the bottom. The blocks will fit together like legos and will be supported by native stone backed up with soil. Using modern technology the fishway will provide a consistent gradient between the river and the pond with three slightly wider and deeper resting pools provided along the way. Consistent velocity of water will be able to be maintained, with the entry pool at the downstream end specially designed to speed the flow enough to make it the attractive choice for the fish, keeping them out of the bogs.



The Barnstable Department of Public Works will manage the project designed by the firm of Wright- Pierce. The plan is very nearly finalized and then will go out to bid for a contractor to be selected. After completion the Town Department of Natural Resources will continue to be responsible for the amount of water permitted to go down the run. At this time there will be no changes to the Middle Pond side of the controlling concrete structure although the resting pool immediately south of that structure will likely require some alterations.

Sometime in the next several weeks Cape Cod Mosquito Control will dredge out the sand bar at the shoreline of Middle Pond blocking free flow of water out of the pond down to the head of the run. Rains over the winter have restored pond levels, but sand and leaves build up and restrict the flow just at the shoreline. They will use Barnstable Land Trust land to access the site and to de-water the dredged materials.

*Alex Frazee*

TO SEE NEWSLETTER PHOTOS IN FULL COLOR  
GO TO THE IPA WEBSITE: [www.indianponds.org](http://www.indianponds.org)

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: BETSEY GODLEY

There's little about our area, its flora, fauna and quirks that **Betsey Godley** doesn't know about. A lifelong Cape Codder, retired letter carrier, avid kayaker, birder, walker and gardener, Betsey has put her local knowledge and energy to great use on the IPA's behalf for seven years.

Betsey joined the IPA board in summer 2009, soon after she and her husband John moved to their home at the northeast tip of Mystic Lake. In addition to her director's role Betsey took on management of the IPA database. This conferred the often unenviable task of keeping all the member and potential members' details current; processing dues, donations and receipts for contributions; and printing letters, envelopes and labels for newsletters, notices and other membership mailings. That she managed with painstaking accuracy for years using increasingly clunky software is a great testament to her determination and patience! She has been invaluable support and backup as the IPA migrates the database to a modern platform that will better suit our needs.

Born and raised in the Town of Barnstable, Betsey earned a degree in sociology and anthropology from North Adams State College and returned to the Cape upon graduating. Her ties to the area run deep, and though she has stepped down from the board after serving the maximum six consecutive years as a director Betsey remains actively involved in IPA activities.

Thank you Betsey for all your work for the IPA!



### BALD EAGLE ON MYSTIC LAKE

*The bald eagle came swooping down the cove in early February. He didn't stop, just turned and went back towards Ram Island. It's not the best photo, but I got a good look at the 3- or 4-year-old juvenile, with his white head and tail and mostly dark torso with some splotchy white.*

*As Vern would have said, "Keep your eyes to the sky."*

***Betsey Godley***

*“ To preserve and protect the natural environment and ecological systems of the Indian Ponds and surrounding parcels of land and watershed and to participate in studies and work with other agencies, individuals, and groups to educate the public, serve the community, and promote and preserve the Indian Ponds and surrounding areas.”*

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

