

# THE IPA NEWSLETTER

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

Spring 2017

A quarterly publication of the Indian Ponds Association, Inc.

Vol. 17 No. 1

## MARSTONS MILLS RIVER HERRING COUNT



We have had a wonderful and wild time this year with the herring count program. Official counting began on April 1 at Mill Pond. A total of 75 volunteers signed up to do counting; some of these individuals also signed up to count at the Middle Pond flume. It wasn't until April 9 that we counted our first fish. It was quiet for a few days, and then on April 13 we really started seeing a lot of fish passing through. During April 13–18 we counted almost 3,000 fish! That's more than we had all season last year and those were just the alewives! There was a little lull until April 26 and then the bluebacks arrived. From April 26 until May 17, when counting at Mill Pond ended, we counted over 2,200 more fish for a total of nearly 5,300. We are very heartened to see the numbers come back up a little this year. Last year the entire run count was only 2,043 fish for both the alewives and the bluebacks. And, as you know, for the first time this year, the fish passing through the flume up at Middle Pond were officially made part of the record.

—Judy Heller, Program Director, Barnstable Clean Water Coalition

(Related article on page 4)



## **MARK AGOSTINELLI WINS SCHWARM SCHOLARSHIP**

Mark Agostinelli graduated from Sturgis Charter School having participated in a number of Computer Aided Design programs with MIT, including design for a dolphin rescue vehicle for WHOI. He is headed to college at Princeton.

Congratulations, Mark!

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

- Herring Run Restoration
- Gray Willow Removal Initiative Approval
- Ponds and Septic Systems
- Herring Count Program
- Pond Testing
- Birds in Trinidad
- Schwarm Scholarship

AND MORE ...

## IPA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2016-17

**President**

Emory Anderson

**Vice President**

Peter Atkinson

**Treasurer**

Greg Cronin

**Clerk**

Maggie Fearn

**Directors**

Christine Bizinkauskas

Kathy Bryan

Aaron Fishman

Alex Frazee

Roberta Gough

Holly Robillard

Barry Schwartz

**Database Manager**

Maggie Fearn

**Newsletter Editor**

Kathy Bryan

**Webmaster**

Tamar Haspel

IPA, Inc., PO Box 383  
Marstons Mills, MA 02648

<http://www.indianponds.org>  
[info@indianponds.org](mailto:info@indianponds.org)



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 approximately 700, is a forum for the exchange of ideas on matters concerning the IPA's mission, and the views expressed by authors of articles do not necessarily represent official IPA policy.

## POND TESTING BEGINS

On May 12, testing of the three Indian Ponds by IPA volunteers began for 2017. This represents the continuation of routine sampling of the water quality of the ponds by the IPA that began about 20 years ago. The testing, done at approximately two-week intervals from May until about mid-October, consists of several measurements of water quality. Over the deepest part of each pond (48 feet in Mystic Lake, 33 feet in Middle Pond, and 63 feet in Hamblin Pond), measurements of dissolved oxygen and temperature are taken at 1-meter intervals from the surface to the bottom, and water clarity is determined with a Secchi disk. Each such sampling takes about half an hour per pond.

In addition to the above measurements, at one of the testing dates in late summer, water

samples are also collected at various depths for subsequent laboratory analysis to determine the levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, alkalinity, chlorophyll a, and pH. This is done as part of the Cape Cod Commission's Pond and Lake Stewardship (PALS) program.

This year, the volunteer pond testing will again be done in Hamblin Pond by Bob Dederian and in Mystic Lake and Middle Pond by Emory Anderson and various other volunteers. We welcome anyone who wants to assist in the testing, learn how to use the equipment used, and better understand the importance of this program. To volunteer, contact Emory Anderson at 508-420-2303 or [emoryanderson@comcast.net](mailto:emoryanderson@comcast.net).

—Emory D. Anderson



## NOTICE: FLOATING DOCK ON BEACH

This floating dock has washed ashore along the east side of Mystic Lake on Wheeler Road. If you own this dock, please retrieve it, as it is starting to break apart.

This is gentle reminder to keep your property free of trash and ensure that any property or equipment is securely stowed, year-round.

## GRAY WILLOW REMOVAL PROJECT APPROVED

A proposal by the IPA, in collaboration with the Bartlett Tree Experts Cape Cod office, that was submitted to the Town Conservation Commission to authorize the cutting of invasive gray willows from waterfront properties on the Indian Ponds has been approved. A Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) was submitted to the Conservation Division office on March 8, notification letters were sent the same day to interested property owners and their abutters, and a public hearing was held March 21. The Commission unanimously approved the RDA and issued its Determination of Applicability on March 24, which is valid for three years.

As reported in the previous issue of this newsletter, only 12 property owners had responded to the invitation to contact Bartlett Tree Experts to request cost estimates for the removal of gray willows from their waterfront properties. Accordingly, only those 12 properties were included in the RDA and now are authorized, any time in the next three years, to have their willows removed. As of this writing, half of these owners have already made arrangements with Bartlett for the work to be done. According to Steve Heywood of Bartlett, this work will most likely be done in late summer or early autumn, but could be done earlier if circumstances permit.

This constitutes the continuation of a long-term project launched 10 years ago by the IPA to encourage waterfront property owners surrounding the Indian Ponds to have the invasive gray willow removed from their properties. Two earlier initiatives by the IPA

and Bartlett Tree Experts in 2008–2010 and 2010–2012 resulted in gray willows being removed from about half of the roughly 140 properties bordering the three ponds. Letters were sent by the IPA in November 2016 to the owners of the remaining properties encouraging them to join in the removal effort. Although only 12 owners responded, as noted above, we are hopeful that more owners will recognize the long-term benefits to the ecological welfare of the ponds and the value of their own properties and consider such action in the future. If there is expressed interest by a sufficient number of additional owners, a new proposal to the Conservation Commission can be initiated. Any owners who are interested should write to Bartlett Tree Experts, PO Box 177, Osterville, MA 02655 or call Steve Heywood, manager of Bartlett Tree Experts' Cape Cod office, at 508-428-2397 (or e-mail him at [sheywood@bartlett.com](mailto:sheywood@bartlett.com)).

—Emory D. Anderson



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



## MARSTONS MILLS RIVER HERRING COUNT

*(Related article on page 1)*

A volunteer count program was established at the Middle Pond flume this year by the Town's Natural Resources Program. A total of 60 people signed up to do the counting, which, as at Mill Pond, involved doing so for 10 minutes in a given hour. Counts from this location will be instrumental in determining how many of the general river herring population (counted at Mill Pond) actually make it to spawning grounds in Middle Pond and Mystic Lake. These counts may also aid in the Association to Preserve Cape Cod's (APCC) grant proposal to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for funding needed by the Town to bridge the cost-gap for the reconstruction of the 1000-foot

fishway at Middle Pond that is currently functioning, but is greatly impaired. In years when water levels are low, the fishway goes completely dry, which was a concern going into this spawning season, given the low rainfall amounts in 2016 and early 2017. The visual counting at Middle Pond was concluded on May 20. Individual counts were generally lower than at Mill Pond, so when the count data are fully compiled it will be interesting to compare how the numbers match up with the total count at Mill Pond. There is some speculation that the fish at the flume moved in mass quantities during the night (when counts were not conducted) and with some data comparison, this speculation may become more of an objective conclusion.

—Amy Croteau, Town of Barnstable  
Natural Resources Officer



## BIRDS OF TRINIDAD

Hi there, I'm Baaaack!

Let me tell you about an adventure that Claire and I had during the February school vacation this year. We took a birding vacation to Trinidad and it was quite spectacular. I don't know how many of you maintain a life list of birds seen but I got fifty new birds for my list in very pleasant surroundings. Caligo Ventures is the sole North American agent for the Asa Wright Nature Center in Trinidad so your stay there must be coordinated through them.

The Asa Wright Nature Center is located on 400 acres of an old coffee plantation at the top of a rather steep hill in Arima, about an hour's drive from the airport. When you come off the plane, you will

see a man with a sign for the Nature Center waiting to pick you up for the drive up the hill. It is a rather winding road and, at spots, quite precipitous. I had a little bit of a problem up and down the hill with my dislike of heights. I made it by not looking out the windows. It was quite late when we got there and when we got to our room we found a plate of sandwiches and a cooler of water on our nightstand.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## PRIVATE BEACH WATER TESTING

For many years the Regency Drive Owners Association (RDOA) has contracted with the Town of Barnstable Health Department to have a section of the Association beach on Mystic Lake tested periodically for water quality, at a cost of over \$500 per year. The testing is for levels of E. coli in the water, which at a certain level would make the water unsafe for swimming.

Each year, the testing began in the spring and the water quality was typically fine for swimming. As the weather got warmer, however, the testing began to show E. coli in the water. It seemed that the source of the problem was the ducks and geese that would congregate on the dock at the water's edge and around the float. Thanks to some dedicated homeowners, short cloth strips were hung on cord placed along the water's edge of the beach, as well as on elastic cord around short posts attached to the perimeter of the float and the dock. Other homeowners with lakefront property similarly placed cords with cloth strips along the water's edge. In a matter of a week or so, the ducks and geese understood that this was not the location to hang out and moved to other sections of the lake (Sorry!)

The Association then decided to test the lake ourselves. The process is fairly straight forward. You must use a sterile specimen jar (available at the Barnstable County Lab,

which is located up the hill and across from the Courthouse), fill with water from the lake and return the specimen jar to the County Lab with a \$20 deposit for each specimen. They analyze the results and mail a copy of the results. However, this method does not allow an Association to post that the water is safe for swimming. To get that designation, an Association must file for a permit (\$200) and agree to weekly testing (\$200).

Karen Malkus (Coastal Health Resources Coordinator) is a valuable resource on water quality. A current concern is cyanobacteria, which was recently identified in Mystic Lake and may also be in Hamblin Pond. This is sometimes referred to as "blue green algae" but is actually a bacteria that can kill dogs if they drink the contaminated water. A bloom is not necessarily an indication of toxicity and Karen suggests any suspicious blooms be photographed and emailed to her ([Karen.malkus@town.barnstable.ma.us](mailto:Karen.malkus@town.barnstable.ma.us)). You can also drop off a photo and sample of the water to the County Lab for analysis.

For questions about the County Lab and testing, one can call Bethany at 508-375-6844 or for Karen, call 508-862-4641.

—Barry Schwartz

## IPA ANNUAL MEETING PREVIEW

See you at the IPA annual meeting!

Of all the ways to spend a Sunday summer afternoon in The Mills, you'd be hard pressed to find a more enjoyable option than the IPA Annual Meeting.

Held on the idyllic shores of glistening Mystic Lake, it's a chance to catch up with neighbors, get updated on the IPA's latest efforts to preserve our precious natural habitat, have your say on the membership of the IPA's Board of Directors and key issues, hear words of wisdom from our guest speaker, and enjoy some wonderful food, drink and conversation.



The meeting is open to all regular and FIPA (friends of the IPA) members. All it takes to join or renew your membership for one year is \$20, which covers all members of your household.

Details of the 2017 Annual Meeting:

- Date: Sunday, July 16
- Time: 4–6 pm
- Place: 32 Heath Row, Marstons Mills
- Guest speaker: Zenas Crocker, Executive Director of Barnstable Clean Water Coalition

Our friend and neighbor John Kayajan has graciously offered to host the meeting at his home this year. John's lovely home is next door to that of Lewis and Nancy Solomon, who hosted the 2016 meeting. The business meeting will include a brief president's report, approval of minutes of the 2016 meeting and treasurer's report, election of new members of the board of directors, presentation of this year's Schwarm Scholarship recipient, vote on proposed changes to the IPA by-laws, and address by the guest speaker.

Don't worry, though – it's not all procedural stuff! We try to keep the formalities brief to allow time for our guest speaker and for socializing.

A word of explanation on the proposed changes to the IPA by-laws. Article VI (Association Funds), Section 2 (Maintenance of Funds) currently reads:

*"All funds will be kept in an account maintained in the name of the Association. Withdrawal in excess of \$100 will require the signature of the president and treasurer. Withdrawal of funds in excess of \$500.00 will require the approval of the board of directors."*

*(Continued on page 7)*

## IPA ANNUAL MEETING PREVIEW

(Continued from page 6)

When the current by-laws were initially approved in 2004, and later revised in 2006, routine IPA expenditures (e.g. postage, newsletter printing and mailing, supplies) were much smaller than today. For example, the typical cost for printing and mailing one issue of the newsletter (about 700 copies) today is around \$700, while 10–12 years ago, the cost would have been half that amount. In light of inflation, the amounts specified in the by-laws are considered impractical, and the Board of Directors recommends the following revised wording:

*“All funds will be kept in an account maintained in the name of the Association. Withdrawal in excess of \$500 will require the signature of the president and treasurer. Withdrawal of funds in excess of \$1000 will require the approval of the board of directors.”*

Hope to see you at the meeting. If you haven't renewed your membership or joined yet – we love new members! – you can do so on that day, before the meeting starts.

For more information please get in touch with us at [info@indianponds.org](mailto:info@indianponds.org).

—Emory D. Anderson and Maggie Fearn

## CARING FOR YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

A new septic system installed will cost about as much as a new luxury car. The car will receive oil changes and careful maintenance to ensure it will last 10 or 12 years. The septic system needs a tiny fraction of that effort and will last up to 50+ years. Skip the care and you could need repairs or a new system in a few years. There's not a lot to a septic system, but two things need to be done to protect it: pump out the tank every two or three years, and don't drive the car over it (so, when you have 20 guests for Thanksgiving, don't let them park just anywhere on the lawn!)

The septic tank separates the solids (which remain in the tank) from the waste liquid, which is sent to the leaching fields through a D (distribution) box. The D box ensures that each leaching trench receives an equal amount of waste water to redistribute back into the ground. A typical system will have

two or more leaching trenches. If the D box is tilted an uneven distribution will occur and one leaching trench will carry most of the waste water. The biggest cause of D box disturbance is driving over it with heavy vehicles. Sometimes tree roots are the cause. Also, the septic tank may not be able to hold the weight of a truck and may crack or break (ditto the leaching fields.) These items can be as little as two feet below the surface. The best way to evaluate the overall health of a septic system is to observe water flow in the D box. Passing Title 5 inspection (required in order to sell a house in MA) will typically start at the D box. So, know where each component of your system is. If you don't have a clue, talk to the pump-out person when he or she comes. A drawing of your system can be found at the Board of Health, which approves all systems and keeps details of each component and its location on the property. This information is kept on file.

(Continued on page 9)



## BIRDS OF TRINIDAD

*(Continued from page 4)*



We stayed right in the old plantation house for the coffee plantation. It had a veranda looking down the hill side and out into the valley below. At ground level, below the veranda, management had set up three or four feeding tables which they kept stocked with fresh fruit at all times and there were 10 to 12 hummingbird feeders hanging from the roof all along the veranda. You could sit on the veranda, and between the feeding tables and hummingbird feeders, you could pick up 40 differ-

ent species of birds. At night the bats took over the hummingbird feeders so it was fun to sit out on the veranda after dark and watch the bats feeding on the nectar for the hummingbirds. In all, there are about 140 species of birds that have been spotted in Trinidad. Over 100 have been seen on the Nature Center. I added 13 species of hummingbirds right from the veranda.

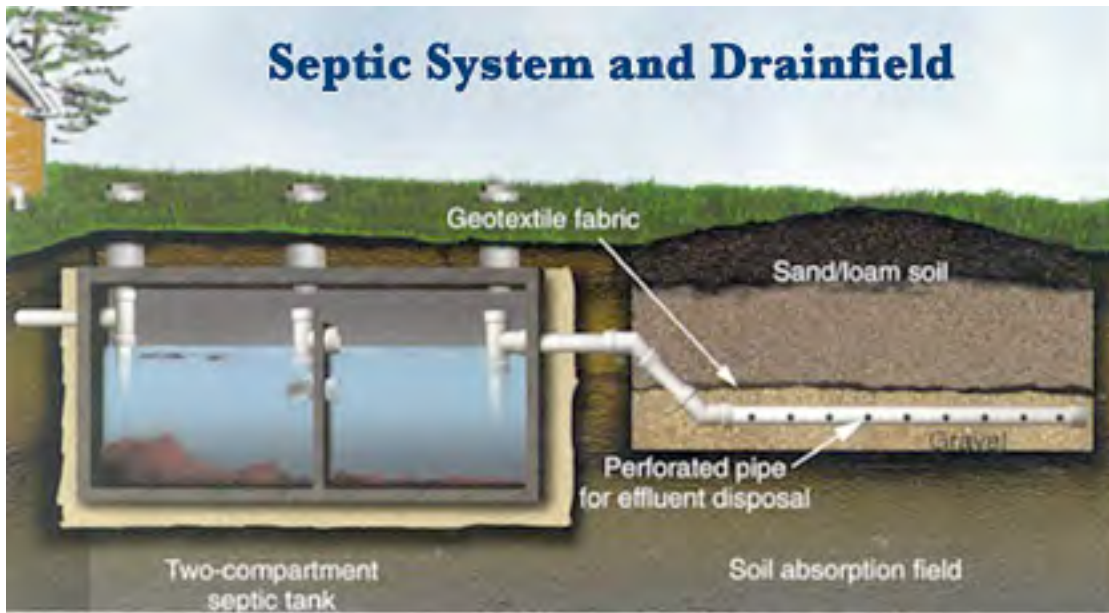
They also ran tours of the grounds conducted by members of the staff who are excellent at identifying the birds you are looking at. These tours were practically required because there were a number of birds that you would not see from the veranda. These included the bearded bellbird and the oilbird.

We also took a tour of the Caroni Swamp. In addition to seeing a tropical screech owl, a small boa constrictor and a caiman, we were there to witness the amazing sight of thousands of scarlet ibis coming together to roost for the night on just one island! We can heartily recommend a week spent at the Asa Wright Nature Center. Flying Caribbean Air direct from New York is a good move. Due to bungling by United Air, we came home that way and found it much more pleasant than our trip to Trinidad.

—Dave Reid







## CARING FOR YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

*(Continued from page 7)*

Emptying the solids is done with a monster liquid vacuum cleaner (the septic truck) euphemistically referred to as the “honey wagon.” A large diameter hose is connected in sections between the truck and your tank. After the dirt over the septic tank cover is removed, the cover is taken off and the hose is inserted to remove the contents. The bottom of the tank is then scoured to remove any non-floating solids such as sand that may have settled. Caution must be used with the hose so as to not disturb any of the piping: a broken or dislodged pipe is a big deal to repair. Most tanks have two covers; one at the input from the house and one at the other end, the output. The pipes are all at the output end. Choose to pump out at the input end if you can.

As there are no moving parts (except the waste liquid), nothing will wear out. A well-maintained system will stop working (after many decades) when the leaching fields become saturated and can no longer let waste water seep into the ground. A puddle may

appear over the system. An uneven distribution box will cause one trench to carry a larger burden, shortening its life. By waiting five or 10 years between pump-outs, the fields become saturated sooner than they would have. Environ-

mentally, the fewer solids in the tank, the less material there is to mix with the liquids and get carried to the leaching fields. Although the septic tank separates the solids from the liquid, the liquid is not clear by any means. The tank “digests” the solids, breaking them down (through bacterial action) into their more basic constituents and reduces the volume of the solids. Chlorine compounds, ammonia, many household cleaners, grease and paper do not help the process. Plastic, plastic-lined materials (e.g., diapers), paint, paint thinners, varnish etc. (bring them to hazard waste days at the recycling center) down the drain are a no-no. Nitrogen, phosphorus and other materials that go down your drains do make it to the leaching trenches and on to the aquifer. With sooner rather than later pump-outs, the amount of these and other undesirables are held to a minimum, helping to preserve the wellbeing of the ponds and watershed as well as increasing the longevity of your leaching fields.

—Aaron Fishman

*"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." IPA Mission Statement*

INDIAN PONDS ASSOCIATION, INC.  
P. O. BOX 383  
MARSTONS MILLS, MA 02648

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

