

**Friends Wolcott Pond Annual Meeting
via Zoom
13 August 2020**

Board Members in Attendance: Jan Roy, Gail Osherenko, Florence Falk, Roean McClellan, Victor Kubanek-Young, Bill Morrison, Juliet Falk, Fay Lauber, Stephen Schneps

Additional participants: Marci Young, Taylor Kubanek-Young, Jan Kubanek, Tom Young, Steve Young, Rita Schneps, Barbara Bramble, Sheila Goss, Oran Young, Phil Bertocci, Cate Garvey, Judy and Larry Dunn, Clive Gray, Sara and Bob Schlosser, Julie and Paul Berkman, Katherine Berkman, Linda Young, Lois Eby, Scott and Joyce Holsten, Eric Hanson, and Donna Overbrook.

Florence Falk hosted the zoom meeting beginning at 5:30pm

5:30-6:12 pm Introductions and informal chat. We had participation from many in Vermont (Wolcott, Stowe, Morrisville, Montpelier) and from as far afield as Montana, Maine, Massachusetts, Quebec and Germany. Steve Schneps brought his puppet friend who sang for us.

6:12 pm President Jan Roy opened the formal part of the meeting

Approval of minutes: Motion to accept Minutes of Annual Meeting of August 7, 2019 by Florence Falk, seconded by Clive Grey (MSP)

Treasurer's Report:

At the beginning of FY 2019-2020, Friends of Wolcott Pond held \$450.41 in the savings account and \$1116.87 in the checking account for a total of \$1,567.29. We donated \$500 to the Vermont Loon Project of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies during the last fiscal year.

Bill Morrison, Treasurer, reported on holdings as of 8.13.2020

\$ 125.00 Dues received for FY2020-2021 and not yet deposited

1,031.87 Checking account balance on 7.31.2020

450.81 Saving account balance

\$1,607.68 TOTAL

Dues for 2020-2021 are due now. Please send checks payable to Friends of Wolcott Pond,

c/o William Morrison, 556 Pond Brook Lane, Wolcott, VT 05680

Dues are \$10 for an individual membership, \$25 for family membership. Additional donations are welcome.

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Election of Board Members: Terms of two members of the Board of Directors are expiring today, Stephen Schneps and Fay Lauber. Both have agreed to serve an additional 3 year term.

Motion by Gail, seconded by Barbara to reelect Stephen Schneps and Fay Lauber for another term. (MSP)

Presentations:

Eric Hanson, of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies has overseen the Vermont Loon Project for 20 years. Eric reported that loon nests in Vermont have expanded dramatically from 38 nests in 2000 to 72 in 2010 and topped out at 100 nests in 2019. This summer there were 94 confirmed loon nests in the state of which 63 were successful in hatching chicks. About 80 chicks survived at least until July 18 (loon count day). Most but not all chicks that survive to 6-7 weeks survive to migrate in the fall.

Unfortunately, neither of this year's 2 chicks on WP survived. One disappeared at the end of its first week and the almost 8 week old chick was found dead on August 8 [by Julie and Paul Berkman]. Cate Garvey who was monitoring the loon nest in June reported the first siting of a chick on the pond with the parents on June 14, so we believe the first chick hatched on June 13 or 14.

Gail delivered the dead juvenile loon to Susan Hindinger of Vermont Center for Ecostudies who took it to VINS in Quechee where we hope a necropsy will be done. We hope to learn the cause of its demise.

Eric pointed out that Wolcott Pond is unique in having loon pairs nest at a number of different locations on the pond over the past 15 years. We have been using nest warning signs less in recent years as the nesting sites have not been easily visible.

Eric divides nesting in Wolcott pond into 3 periods: 1989-99 during which there were 10 nests (90% successful); 2000-2010 – 8 nests (100% successful); and 2011-2020 – 10 nests with only 70% success. Survivorship of chicks has dropped in the last 10-year period.

In 2003 an adult loon died from a lead sinker on WP. Since the passage of legislation banning the use of lead in fishing gear in 2007, the rate of loons killed from lead fishing gear has dropped by over half of what the rate was prior to 2007. In mid-June of 2011 a dead loon was found on the shore of WP but was too decomposed to be analyzed.

Steve Young gave a talk on the pond's history, formation and other features. It was formed by a glacier.

The last glaciers disappeared 13,000 years ago leaving areas hollowed out to create places for lakes and small drainage basins. Wolcott Pond might be compared to lakes much further north in Canada. It is a dystrophic lake, meaning it has a lot of carbon. The humic acids in the pond create the brown color, This type of lake is uncommon in Vermont.

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The first settlers came to Wolcott over 200 years ago at the end of the 18th Century, although earlier hunter gatherers would have temporarily occupied the area. By 1790, farmers were settling the Lamoille Valley. Steve has been living here and observing about 1/3 of the time since farming began in the area. He reports occasionally finding old farm implements on land around the pond. The land was heavily logged and used for agriculture at the turn of the 20th century. Now there are no farms around the pond that would be feeding pollution (fertilizer or other nutrients) into the pond as they may have in the past. The soil is poor, not good for farming. The land records show lots of changes in ownership of farms for not much money.

Loons arrived on the pond, perhaps for the first time in a century or more, in 1987. The first nesting record is 1989. Beavers were probably trapped out in the 1700s so the pond level may have been much lower 200 years ago. With their return, the level of the pond is regulated by the beaver dams. There are tree stumps in shallow water in the eastern end of the pond. There are also large stumps of on dry land adjacent to the shore; some are over 4 feet in diameter and are more or less unchanged for the past 70 years. It would be good to get these studied by scientists to determine their age and species. They may be hemlocks or white pine. The large stumps are indicators of a more mature forest.

Re aquatic vegetation, Steve explained there are 3 waterlily species in the pond. The white lilies were planted by Mrs. Palmer in the 1940s or '50s in the smaller back bay. Now they have spread around the pond edges and are the most dominant of the 3 species. The native yellow lilies now only occur in smaller patches. And there is a newer species *Brasenia* or Water Shield that has the stem coming from the middle of the leaves. It has small reddish brown flowers; this species can handle marginally deeper water than the other two species.

Another notable change in the pond is the large logs. There is one on the north shore near the Field camp that was there when Sara Palmer was still a kid (70 years ago). It is still there and looks like an alligator. Do notice the interesting plants on it. Recently beavers have raised the level of the pond so some of the large logs are now below water level or have floated away.

Thirty or forty years ago there was a bloom of a native plant (*Elodea canadensis*) that created a floating mat of vegetation that frogs could be seen all over, but the bloom has not reoccurred recently.

We have 2 species of turtles in the pond – painted turtles are the common turtle and snapping turtles that are seldom seen. Steve saw a massive snapping turtle of about 60 lbs some years ago. Snapping turtles are most likely seen on old beaver houses, but they will drop into the water as soon as they spot a human. Snapping turtles are capable of taking loon chicks up to 5-6 weeks old.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

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Gail Osherenko & Juliet Falk