

THE IPA NEWSLETTER

Mystic Lake, Middle Pond, and Hamblin Pond

Winter 2008

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CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Indian Ponds Association is 50 years old this year. Established in 1958 by residents of Marstons Mills living in the vicinity of the Indian Ponds, the motivating concern was an early recognition of the threat to the ponds by overpopulation and exploitation of their fragile ecology and that of the surrounding watershed. Throughout the past half century, the organization has been an effective advocate in a number of landmark decisions benefitting the ponds and the adjacent land. As the IPA prepares to celebrate its half-centenary, it is timely to recall a few of its important achievements.



In 1961, the organization convinced the Town of Barnstable that larger lot sizes were essential to prevent contamination of the ponds from septic discharge, and the first one-acre zoning on Cape Cod was established in the IPA area. In 1975, the organization was successful in persuading the Town to establish a maximum motor size of 10 hp on boats using the ponds. This was to minimize ecological damage and as a safety factor for swimmers. The organization has continued to be a vigilant and concerned participant in matters of local zoning, conservation, and preservation of water quality.

(Continued on page 7)

TOWN TO OPEN DANFORTH LAND ON MYSTIC LAKE TO PUBLIC ACCESS

The Town's Growth Management Department recently disclosed a plan to open the 23-acre parcel of former Danforth property on the south side of Race Lane adjacent to Mystic Lake to public access. A 12-car parking lot and a new looping trail from the parking lot towards the lake will be constructed ([see figure on page 3](#)). The new trail will connect with an old existing trail that descends down to the lake shore. The existing trail, not used for many years, will be cleared, improved, and terminate on a small level area at water's edge. In addition, an old, dilapidated cottage located near the top of the slope will be dismantled and removed.

A Conservation Commission (ConCom) hearing on February 5 considered a Request for Determination pertaining to the portion of the overall plan within 100 ft of the lake. Despite concerns raised by a half dozen members of the Indian Ponds Association and after a lengthy discussion, the Commission approved the plan, but not before adding some conditions stemming from the concerns expressed by the IPA speakers.

The IPA has long opposed opening this parcel to public access out of concern for the rare and endangered plant and animal species residing there. These concerns have been expressed verbally at meetings of the Town's Danforth Property Advisory Committee and in writing to the Town Manager. The lake itself has been designated a "Core Habitat" by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The surrounding area that has the greatest potential to influence the environment conditions in the "Core Habitat" has been designated a "Critical Supporting Watershed". Much of the 23 acres is within the "Critical Supporting Watershed".

(Continued on page 3)

– IN THIS ISSUE –

- CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE
- TOWN TO OPEN DANFORTH LAND ON MYSTIC LAKE TO PUBLIC ACCESS
- SCHWARM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP NEWS
- DOG WASTE POSES THREAT TO WATER
- PHASE TWO OF MYSTIC LAKE ALUM TREATMENT BEING CONSIDERED
- GRAY WILLOW REMOVAL UPDATE
- TOWN TO IMPROVE WAYS TO WATER
- SHOULD THE TOWN HAVE A PARKS DEPARTMENT?
- DOWN THE DRAIN
- KID'S QUIZ – WHO AM I?
- WINTER WATERFOWL ON THE INDIAN PONDS

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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 over 650, is a forum for the exchange of ideas on matters germane to the IPA mission and, as such, the views expressed by authors of articles do not necessarily represent official IPA policy.

SCHWARM MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

It's time to remind college-bound, graduating high school seniors living in Marstons Mills who attend either Barnstable High School or Sturgis Charter Public School to consider applying for the IPA's Edward Schwarm Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship was established in 2005 in memory of Ed Schwarm, a former IPA Director and officer, who died in May 2005.

Applications must include a 500-word essay and/or a written description or documentation of a community service, action, or accomplishment related to the mission of the Indian Ponds Association. The deadline for submission is April 1. The winning applicant will be recognized and receive a check at the July 2008 IPA Annual Meeting.

In its first year, a \$500 scholarship was awarded to Michael Crowley. Last year, thanks to the generosity of IPA members, the amount of the award was increased to \$750, and two scholarships were presented. The recipients were Terri Anne Guarino and Katherine Patellos. This year, the Board agreed to increase the amount of the award to \$1,000.

The fund was recently bolstered by the transfer of over \$2,000 from the Erla Z. Schwarm Memorial Scholarship established at The Federated Church of Hyannis by Ed Schwarm in memory of his wife (who died a few months before Ed). Since the Church has not had applicants who met the criteria of the scholarship, intended for teaching students pursuing an undergraduate college education, Thomas Schwarm and his sister and brother, in collaboration with the Church's Memorials Committee, decided to close the scholarship at the Church and transfer most of the funds to the IPA's Schwarm Scholarship Fund.

The IPA is extremely appreciative of the Schwarm family's generosity and confidence in our willingness and ability to continue administering the Schwarm Memorial Scholarship for the benefit of college-bound high school graduates from Marstons Mills.

On a related matter, the Board of Directors recently established the IPA Memorial Fund to accommodate financial gifts made to honor a wider range of individuals and their accomplishments. Contributions to this fund will be used to support specific future activities or possibly new scholarships.

DOG WASTE POSES THREAT TO WATER

For as long as the dog has been man's best friend, dog waste has posed a menace to man's nose and foot. Now science has revealed a more unsavory truth: it's an environmental pollutant.

At some beaches, dogs help raise bacteria levels so high that visitors must stay out of the water. Goaded by studies, some cities have directed as much as \$10,000 in the last few years to encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets. A few municipalities have started issuing citations to those who ignore pet clean-up ordinances.

From mutt to blue-blooded champion, all dogs harbor coliform bacteria, which live in the gut. The group includes *E. coli*, a bacterium that can cause disease, and fecal coliform bacteria, which spread through feces. Dogs also carry *Salmonella* and *Giardia*. Environmental officials use measurements of some of these bacteria as barometers of how much fecal matter has contaminated a body of water.

It has been estimated that a single gram of dog waste can contain 23 million fecal coliform bacteria [*B. van der Wel, B. 1995. Dog Pollution. The Magazine of the Hydrological Society of South Australia. 2(1):1*]. Accordingly, an average dog dropping produces 3-4 billion fecal coliform bacteria. The US EPA estimates that a typical dog deposits three quarters of a pound of waste per day which equals 5.25 pounds per week. This translates into nearly 55 billion fecal coliform bacteria produced by a typical dog per week.

Many dog lovers are in denial about their pooches' leavings, but it is becoming clear that dogs are a significant source of water pollution. Locally, dog pollution was a factor in the temporary closing of the Hamblin Pond Town beach several times last summer.

The IPA urges dog owners to consider the health of the ponds when they are taking their pet for a walk anywhere near the water. **Pick up after your dog!**

Excerpted in part from June 6, 2002 article by Traci Watson, USA TODAY

TOWN TO OPEN DANFORTH LAND ON MYSTIC LAKE TO PUBLIC ACCESS

(Continued from page 1)

A report, *Danforth Property Land Use Feasibility Study*, prepared for the Town in September 2005, stated: "A careful review of existing site features on this parcel including the existing trail down to Mystic Lake should be undertaken. Increased recreational use of this area may also adversely impact the area's natural resource value as a MNHESP Living Waters Core Habitat area and a Coastal Plain Pond Shore. Additional impacts from the addition of parking here include storm-water pollution, erosion and sedimentation from land clearing for parking areas and the use of trails, disturbance of rare wildlife by increased human activity and conflicts with nearby residential areas." The report also states: "A wildlife inventory/survey is strongly recommended prior to development of a final land use plan." **Such a survey has never been done.**

At the ConCom hearing, the **IPA speakers** emphasized the environmentally sensitive nature of the area, identified a number of potential risks to the land and lake from the trail and its use, and **recommended that the Town conduct a proper, scientific, baseline determination of the existing conditions** (e.g., plants, animals, slope stability, litter) **prior to development of any plans**. Concerns included dumping of trash by hikers, feces left by pets (e.g., dogs, horses), ATV activity on the trails, fires caused by carelessness, adolescent rowdiness, creation of new trails by hikers, and erosion down the trail to the lake (a 50-ft drop in elevation from top to bottom). Runoff containing fecal material and coliform bacteria could adversely impact lake water quality (see article on page 2 indicating a typical dog deposit contains 3-4 billion fecal coliform bacteria).

The main point by Commissioners and others who spoke in favor of the plan was that the Town had invested a huge sum of public money in the purchase of the Danforth property and that the general public now was entitled to access this space. In addition, while acknowledging the concerns raised by the IPA, Commissioners were not convinced that the potential risks were sufficiently serious to warrant rejecting the plan.

However, recognizing the concerns raised by the IPA, the ConCom added some conditions to its approval of the plan. These conditions include 4-ft wide trails, posts and rocks at trail entrances to prevent access by ATVs and other vehicles, signage prohibiting dumping of trash, trash barrels, and plastic bag dispensers for pet feces. The ConCom also encouraged the Growth Management Department to keep local residents (including the IPA) fully informed of the details of the final plans for the project and give them the opportunity to offer constructive comments. Individuals wishing to contact Growth Management staff on this matter should get in touch with Alisha Parker, Property Management Coordinator (e-mail: alisha.parker@town.barnstable.ma.us, telephone: 508-862-4749).

When the trails in question are opened and begin to be used, the IPA will monitor the situation and observe whether hikers and others act responsibly. If conditions deteriorate because of trash, dog activity, or other problems, the IPA will alert the ConCom and the Town and request action.

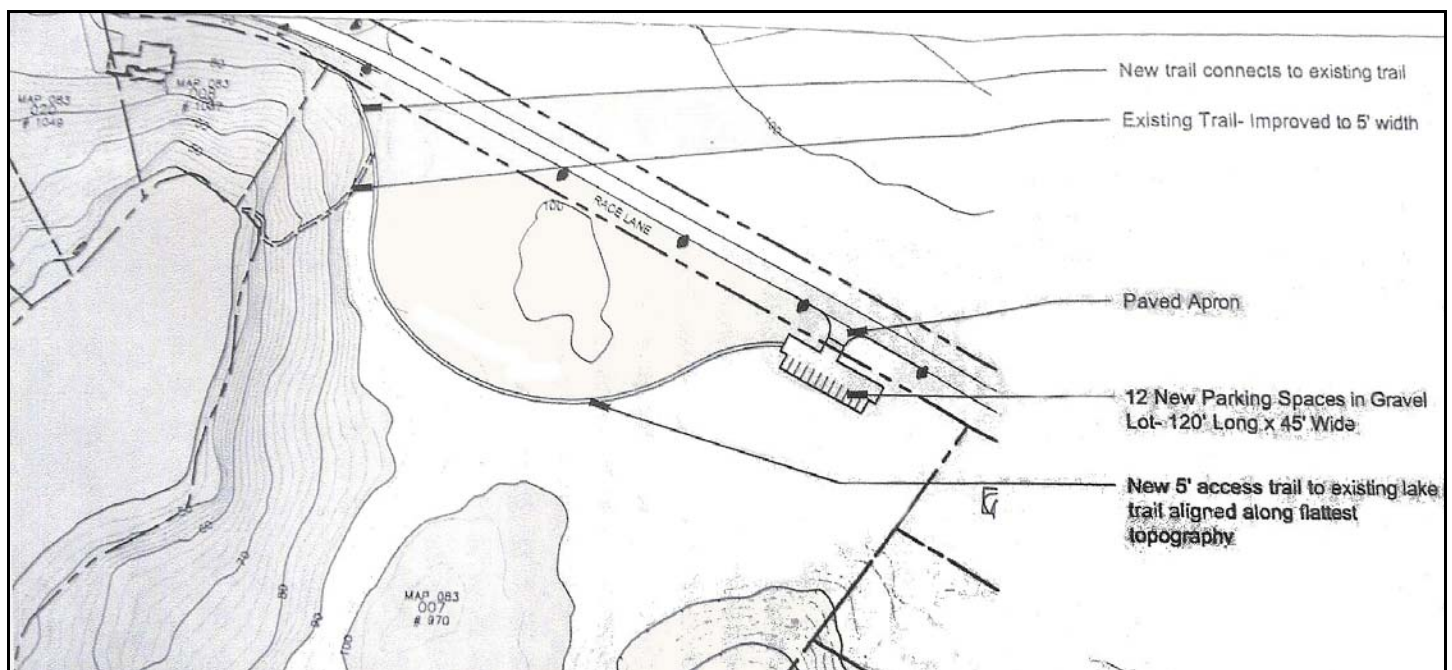


Diagram showing parking lot and walking trails to be constructed on 23 acres of former Danforth property south of Race Lane adjacent to Mystic Lake.

PHASE TWO OF MYSTIC LAKE ALUM TREATMENT BEING CONSIDERED

Phase two of the alum treatment for Mystic Lake is now on the desk of Town Manager John Klimm for possible inclusion in his FY 2009 Capital Budget request to the Town Council. This phase is the actual implementation of the alum as well as post-treatment water quality monitoring.

Phase one, which is the design and permitting process that includes detailed data collection and analysis, development of a conceptual plan for the actual alum treatment, permits from appropriate local and State agencies, and preparation of a report, was included in Klimm's FY 2008 Capital Budget request and was unanimously approved by the Town Council in April 2007.

Extensive reporting on phase one was included in the Fall 2007 issue of this newsletter (www.indianponds.org). Additional field sampling is scheduled for spring 2008, with the final report for phase one due by the end of June 2008. If funded, and if no regulatory concerns are encountered, it is

anticipated that phase two would be scheduled for implementation in the fall of 2008.

The approval and funding of phase two would fulfill the Town's commitment to remediate the excessive levels of residual phosphorus that led the Cape Cod Commission's Water Resources Office, in its final report of the major study of the three Indian Ponds released in March 2006, to declare Mystic Lake impaired.

IPA members and any other concerned citizens who feel that phase two of the alum treatment for Mystic Lake should be funded this year are encouraged to contact Mr. Klimm in this regard by sending letters to him at Town Hall, 367 Main Street, Hyannis, MA 02601, by calling him at (508) 862-4610, or by sending e-mails to him at john.klimm@town.barnstable.ma.us. This should be done as soon as possible as his decision will probably be made no later than mid-March.

GRAY WILLOW REMOVAL UPDATE



Gray willows on shore of Mystic Lake in October 2006.

In the Fall 2007 issue of this newsletter, it was reported that **a new plan had been agreed** by the IPA Board of Directors, the Town Conservation Division, and Bartlett Tree Experts of Osterville for the **removal of invasive gray willows** from private waterfront properties on the Indian Ponds.

Letters were mailed by the IPA President on February 7 to all waterfront property owners explaining the removal plan and inviting their participation in this effort to eliminate this serious threat to the well being of the ponds, but also to clear waterfront property for better recreational use and pond views, and improve property values. **The deadline for signing up to participate in this gray willow removal program is March 31, 2008.** The cutting of trees/brush and the treat-

ment of stumps with the herbicide "Rodeo" is scheduled for July 14–28, 2008.

When two gray willow experts, Tim Simmons from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and Tom Rawinski from the U.S. Forest Service, Simmons and Rawinski, visited the Indian Ponds in October 2006, they complimented the IPA for launching such a bold initiative and being at the forefront of efforts to remove gray willows. Last November, Rawinski wrote the following in an e-mail message: ***"I received my copy of the Indian Ponds Association Newsletter today. My heart soared as I read about the pending work to control large gray willow! This plant is undoubtedly one of the worst invasive species on Cape Cod. The shade it casts totally eliminates habitat for some of the state's rarest and most beautiful wildflowers, such as rose coreopsis and Plymouth gentian. I commend the IPA for leading the charge. What you learn at the Indian Ponds will, I hope, be applied by others elsewhere in southern New England where the willow is problematic."***

Such strong support from these State and Federal experts is welcome news to the IPA as we continue our efforts to improve and protect the natural environment and ecological systems of the Indian Ponds and the surrounding watershed.

The IPA Board of Directors strongly encourages all Indian Ponds waterfront property owners to take advantage of this offer to rid their property of an unwelcome and troublesome invasive plant and at the same time to benefit the ecology and well-being of the ponds.

TOWN TO IMPROVE WAYS TO WATER

In his April 12, 2007 State of the Town address, Town Manager John Klimm proposed a Coastal Access Plan to improve public access to the Town's many ponds, lakes, and the ocean. **The Town Manager is to be commended for recognizing the poor condition of many of these ways to water and for proposing a major initiative to improve them.** At its December 6, 2007 meeting, the Town Council voted to appropriate **\$1,985,000** to fund improvements to the Town's ways to water.

In his April address, the Town Manager, in proposing the Coastal Access Plan, listed a number of sites where improvements were needed. Included in that list was pond access in Marstons Mills.

With the Town now moving forward to allow **public access to Mystic Lake** by trails through the 23 acres of former Danforth property (see article on page 1), a new way to water will be created. However, **an existing sizable Town beach and boat-launching ramp at the north end of Mystic Lake adjacent to Race Lane is in desperate need of improvement.** The IPA has, on several occasions, made such a recommendation, but has never received a definitive response from Town officials as to whether and when such improvements would be made.

The **Race Lane site on Mystic Lake** has a nice sandy beach along approximately **600 ft of shoreline.** The problem, how-

ever, is that **much of this beach is either inaccessible or uninviting.** Many **invasive gray willows** and other plants have taken over a considerable portion of the sandy shoreline. **The boat-launching ramp is in very poor shape,** is narrow, and poorly suited for unloading or loading anything other than a canoe or kayak by hand. It is impossible to back a trailer to water's edge. The parking area is also quite limited, with space for perhaps only half a dozen vehicles. The site also lacks any kind of container for the disposal of trash.

We urge the Town to give some attention to improving this valuable asset which is used by many people both from the immediate area and from elsewhere.

Another site on the Indian Ponds that could be improved is the Town beach on Hamblin Pond. As reported in the Summer 2006 issue of this newsletter (www.indianponds.org), the condition of this beach has deteriorated badly over the past two decades by being overgrown by dense patches of a number of invasive plant species such as purple loosestrife, *Phragmites*, and gray willow, as well as poison ivy. Only about half of the beach area available 20 years ago remains suitable for use today.

The IPA encourages the Town to authorize control measures for these invasives to reclaim the full beach area for public use.

SHOULD THE TOWN HAVE A PARKS DEPARTMENT?

Most residents of the Town of Barnstable recognize that **the Town has a poor record in managing and properly maintaining its many properties open for public use.** Complaints are frequently heard about the terrible condition of some parks, playgrounds, beaches, or other facilities.

Marstons Mills has several Town-owned sites that fall into this category. Mystic Lake has one Town beach (see story above) and soon will have another way to water (see story on page 1). The present beach on Race Lane lacks a trash barrel, and the accumulation of litter is deplorable. **IPA volunteers over the past several years participating in Coastsweep have collected and removed vast quantities of trash of every sort from this site.**

Hamblin Pond has two sites. The first a beach that has life-guards, toilet facilities, and trash barrels. The second is a boat-launching area that has no trash barrels. Nearly all of the waterfront property between these two locations is owned by the Town and includes Burgess Park, the Burgess House, and a parking lot. The park is a popular area for various activities, but residents increasingly complain about the accumulation of trash, broken glass, and general lack of upkeep by the Town.

These are several examples of inadequate maintenance of Town facilities in Marstons Mills. Other villages in the Town undoubtedly have similar problems.

Although residents are appreciative of the acquisitions of open space by the Town for public access, **the Town has fallen short in its ability to properly maintain these sites.** The recent initiative to improve public ways to water is commendable. But, when public funds are appropriated to acquire new or to improve existing facilities, monies also need to be set aside to ensure their ongoing maintenance.

According to Conservation Commissioner Scott Blazis, "It is a gross failure of the Town that individuals who love nature are at odds with one another due to the Town's past lack of action on the very management issues that you [IPA] are concerned with. There is a chronic problem of insufficient funds available to Town government to provide all the services that residents would like to see. I would not want any individual or Town department to mistake my words as being criticism of the job that these entities perform. Our elected officials need our support to continue their present efforts as well as encouragement to garner increased local, state, and federal funding."

Perhaps it's time for the Town to consider establishing a Parks Department, such as exist in many towns and cities, to properly care for the Town's many valuable and beautiful recreational properties. If you feel the same, let us know and also inform the Town Manager. Comments to the IPA are welcome (e-mail: info@indianponds.org).

DOWN THE DRAIN

Clean water is fundamental to life. Yet many septic systems do not rid sewage of pollutants that may be harmful to human health before discharging the sewage to groundwater—and in some cases before it contaminates drinking water wells.

Silent Spring Institute scientists made this discovery after monitoring—for the first time ever—water for hormone-disrupting chemicals such as natural estrogen and alkylphenols, as well as certain pharmaceuticals, as the water passed from the septic system into the ground. The study looked at a typical septic system on Cape Cod, where septic systems serve more than 85 percent of residential and commercial properties. Two other chemicals the researchers detected indicated the presence of sewage fallout: optical brighteners, which are found in laundry detergents, and caffeine.

The presence of hormone-disrupting chemicals in the environment has been associated with the feminization of male fish and reduced fertility in other wildlife. The scientists note that additional research is needed to determine whether the concentrations typically observed in the environment produce similar adverse effects on the human hormone system. Exposures during critical prenatal and childhood stages of reproductive development may be most critical.

Effects on hormonally responsive cancers are an additional concern. Chemicals that mimic natural estrogen, for example, may contribute to a woman's cumulative lifetime exposure to estrogen, a factor that has been linked to an increased risk of developing breast cancer.

One in every four citizens of the United States relies on septic systems for wastewater treatment. At least a portion of the residents in a number of states—including Delaware, Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York—also rely on private, shallow groundwater wells for their drinking water. With housing density increasing and lot size shrinking to accommodate population growth, the likelihood is growing that wastewater from a household's or neighboring household's septic system will contaminate a drinking water well.

"While septic systems may be effective at preventing bacterial contamination of these water supplies," says Chris Swartz, lead researcher for the study, *"our results suggest that these systems do not remove hormone-disrupting chemicals from septic wastewater before they infiltrate into groundwater."*

"And since groundwater feeds many drinking water supplies," Swartz adds, *"further research is needed to determine the extent and potential effects of drinking water contamination."* Previous research on hormone disruptors focused on surface waters receiving discharge from wastewater treatment plants. This study was the first to directly link the infiltration of these hormone disruptors into groundwater—and therefore residential well water—from onsite treatment systems.

"Our findings should encourage communities to consider more restrictive land use policies to protect their public and private drinking water supply wells," Swartz says. *"Communities may also consider replacing onsite septic wastewater treatment systems with improved onsite technologies or centralized wastewater treatment plants, at least in densely populated areas that rely on shallow groundwater as a drinking water source."*

The study appeared in the August 15, 2006 issue of *Environmental Science & Technology*.

Reprinted from *Silent Spring Review*, Summer 2007, published by Silent Spring Institute, a nonprofit research organization dedicated to studying the environment and women's health, especially breast cancer. For more information, please visit www.silent.spring.org.

IPA NOTE: The most important finding of this study is that septic systems may not prevent natural hormones and pharmaceuticals from entering ground water. These substances are not normally included in septic system tests, yet they have the potential to harm pond wildlife and enter wells that are used for drinking water. Natural hormones come from urine, so not much can be done about that if you have a septic system. However, pharmaceuticals can come from disposal of unused pills in sink drains and toilets. Modern sewage treatment plants can eliminate these potentially harmful chemicals. Unfortunately, only about 15% of the properties on Cape Cod are connected to sewage treatment facilities. The Town of Barnstable recommends that used syringes and unused pills be deposited in a red medical waste container at either the Health Division (200 Main Street, Hyannis) or one of three Fire Stations (Centerville, Cotuit, or West Barnstable).

Carl Thut, Ph.D.

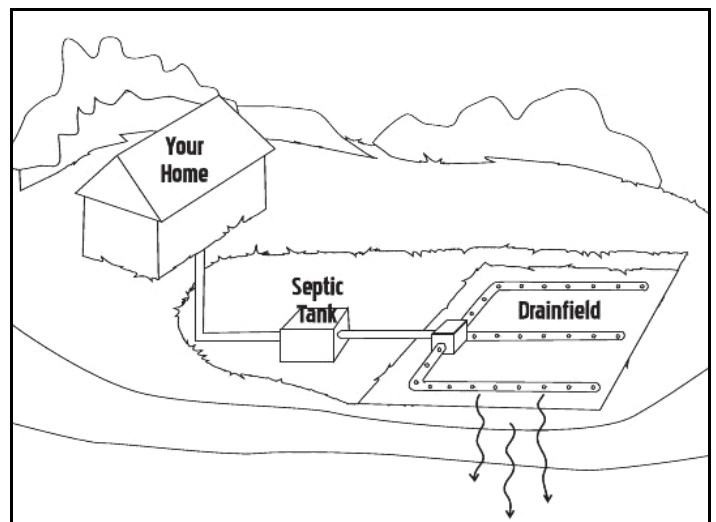


Diagram of basic modern septic system and drainfield (courtesy The Groundwater Foundation).

CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

(Continued from page 1)

The IPA strongly supported the Town's purchase of the former Danforth property in 2003 and the retention of the Cape Cod Airfield as the prime use for the property. The overriding concern was that any commercial and/or residential development of that land, with the resulting septic system discharges, would have a detrimental long-term impact on the Indian Ponds. The IPA has been represented on the Town's Danforth Property Advisory Committee and has advocated consistently to retain the 23-acre parcel adjacent to Mystic Lake in its natural state strictly for conservation purposes so as not to risk damage to the rare and endangered plants, animals, and their habitats in that area.

In 2004, the IPA launched a major study of the three Indian Ponds in collaboration with the Cape Cod Commission and the Town of Barnstable to delineate the watershed, define the water budget, and investigate the water quality. This study, initiated and largely funded by the organization, has been applauded by Town and Commission officials as the prototype of a model to be followed by other lake associations or groups. The results of the study indicated that Mystic Lake is impaired by excessive levels of residual phosphorus contained in its sediments. The Town has committed to remediation of the excess phosphorus by an alum treatment, with phase one funded in 2007 and phase two being considered for funding in 2008.

In 2005, the IPA discovered the presence of a major invasive plant species, purple loosestrife, around the shores of two of the Indian Ponds. A three-year permit was subsequently obtained from the Town Conservation Commission to remove these plants. In the summer of 2006, and to a lesser extent in the summer of 2007, IPA volunteers labored faithfully to pull or dig out these stubborn plants. A final effort will be mounted this summer to eliminate any remaining plants. In 2006, the IPA became aware of two additional invasive plant species in the Indian Ponds—the common reed *Phragmites* and the gray willow tree—and has worked tirelessly since then with the Town's Conservation Division to develop plans for their removal from both Town and private waterfront property.

The above efforts highlight the mission of the IPA which is "... to preserve and protect the natural environment and ecological systems of the Indian Ponds and surrounding parcels of lands


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."

Organizationally, the IPA has evolved from an initial small group of members to a potent association currently numbering over 170 household memberships, many of whom live outside the IPA area and even outside Massachusetts. About 60% are not waterfront residents, but are members because they strongly support the mission of the IPA. In 1984, the IPA was granted 501(c)(4) status by the IRS qualifying it as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization. In 2002, it was officially incorporated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and designated a public charity. In 2003, it received 501(c)(3) status from the IRS making it possible for membership dues and other donations to be deductible as charitable contributions for Federal income tax purposes.


The IPA first published a newsletter in 2001, initially issued three times a year. Since 2003, quarterly issues have been mailed to a distribution list now numbering over 650. An IPA website [www.indianponds.org] was established in 2002 which contains all previous issues of this newsletter. Readers who wish to learn more about the work of the IPA and its activities are encouraged to check out the website.

The Board of Directors has begun making plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary. One major activity will be to revise and expand the booklet published in 2003: "A Resident's Guide to Living on the Indian Ponds". Under the editorship of Vice President Holly Hobart, the new booklet will, among other things, contain greater detail on the Indian Ponds and their history; information on fish and other animals and plants; guidelines for residents living on waterfront properties regarding clearing of vegetation, construction, docks, floats, and moorings; and background information on the Indian Ponds Association. It is expected to be completed and available for distribution this summer. Other celebration activities either planned or proposed include a parade of boats around the ponds on July 4, a poster contest for children, and special emphasis at the July Annual Meeting. Ideas for additional commemorative events or activities are welcome (e-mail: info@indianponds.org, phone: 508-420-2303).


KID'S QUIZ – WHO AM I?




A




B



C



D



E

Bird pictures courtesy of Waterford Press, Inc. A. Gull B. Mallards C. Heron D. Osprey E. Canada goose

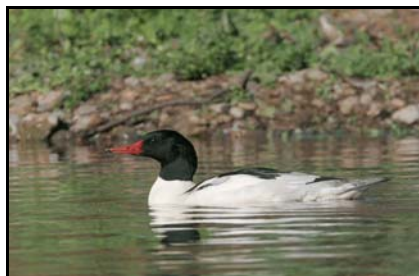
WINTER WATERFOWL ON THE INDIAN PONDS

I had a really good day last week. On my way to work that day, as I passed Mill Pond, I was treated to a flight of Canada geese coming in for a landing on the pond. For the most part, I share everyone else's opinion of Canada geese. I have to tell you that the group I saw that morning was spectacular. With their wings cupped to catch the air and provide braking for their descent, they looked like a flight of Klingon battle cruisers coming in for a landing. Just Google that term and you'll see what I mean.



Goldeneye

Later in the afternoon, I picked up Emory and Geri Anderson and we went on a tour of the Indian Ponds. At the first stop we made, at the south end of Mystic Pond, a neighbor reported seeing a goldeneye. At first, we saw a few hooded mergansers sailing along with their hoods raised. As we were searching the pond for other ducks, sure enough, the neighbor's goldeneye paddled right in front of us. It was a common, and the light was just right to get a really good look at his bright gold eye and the little white puff-ball on his cheek.



Common merganser

While we were enjoying this guy, Emory spotted a flight of birds landing out in the middle of the pond. When we got the scope on them, they turned out to be common mergansers, very distinctive with their shiny green heads and bright orange bills.

As we continued to travel around all three ponds, we saw so many hooded mergansers that we became blasé about them and if we saw a group of birds it became "Oh, just more mergansers".



Hooded merganser

Most of the early arrivals such as the wiggeons on Mill Pond and the year-round residents, such as mallards, are dabbling ducks. They feed on grasses growing just under the surface by rotating the front of their body under the water and sticking their rump in the air. They rip up the grass with their beak which, if you look really closely, has a little point on the end called a nail. These ducks are found mainly on very shallow ponds or very close to the edge of deeper ponds.

The mergansers and the goldeneyes migrate down from Northern Canada, for the most part, and eat small fish and crustaceans. They catch their food by diving completely under the water and chasing their prey. Serrated rims around their beaks allow them to hold their food when they catch it.

The goldeneyes come from the farthest north and are the last birds to leave their home range. They migrate south, stop at the first open water they find, and then move further south only far enough to find open water. As a result, they usually don't get much further south than Cape Cod. There are two subspecies, the common and the Barrow's. The Barrow's is quite rare on the East Coast. They mostly breed from Alaska down through Oregon, but there is a small range in the far northeast of Nunavut in Canada. When they come to Cape Cod, they rarely get further south than Falmouth, but they are really worth seeing.

Dave Reid

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

Be sure to read the enclosed letter inviting you to renew your membership in the Indian Ponds Association. If you have not previously been a member, join now.

Annual dues of \$20 help support our mission of preserving and protecting the Indian Ponds and surrounding area.

IPA CAPS FOR SALE

Support and publicize the IPA!

Price: \$15

To buy caps, call Geri Anderson (508-420-2303)

