

Lake Front

Volume 5, Number 1
Summer 2008

The Salem Lakes Association newsletter



Keeping you current on lake area news.

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Turning a New Leaf...



Welcome to the latest issue of *Lake Front*, chief chronicle for the Salem

Lakes Association and one we take great pride in delivering to you. I wish we could produce it more often. It's a joy to create, particularly since it's done just as I'm about ready to scratch at the windows like a frantic hamster in an effort to get out and head north to open up the camp, and breath in the sweet air of the Northeast Kingdom.

Five years have passed since I took up the digital pen on *Lake Front* and I'm glad to hear it's well received among the readership thus far. This new four-color magazine format is one way of making your reading experience even more enjoyable. I'll speak for myself when I say it's a real perk to be able to view the images in color and in larger format. Like many Vermont vis-

tas, Salem Lake is something that one must see to believe. So why not view it in a format it deserves, the way nature presents it, and in the style that the good Lord intended.

As always we welcome contributions and input. If you have thoughts for stories or great images to share, we'd love to see them. Memories are made every year along the shores of this water body and the stories they inspire deserve an archive beyond the confine of a car or the brief blink of an email. Don't be shy. If it turns out we have more to share than what can be accommodated in this format, then we'll create an electronic version that can carry the message on throughout the year.

I don't mind the work!

Tim Votapka
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Above View: Upstream toward Little Salem.



Cover View: Downstream toward Big Salem

Keep a Line on Your Assets

Your camp is open and aired out. Your moorings are set up. The floats are out and the dock is all set up and ready for summer. Now do yourself a favor; secure these floatables with a line to something stationary. Salem's water level falls and rises depending on the rainfall and docks that appear to be high and dry today can easily go for a ghost ride if you're not around to watch over the scene.

Sometimes you get lucky and find these pieces nearby, but loose, partially submerged flotsam can be a safety hazard to boaters out on open water.

If you think you may have lost anything to high water, call 766-2662 to identify or reclaim.



Lake Front

Published annually on behalf of the Salem Lakes Association, Derby, VT.

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- Tim Votapka—Editorial Director
- Roger Cartee—Printing & Circulation

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Watchful Eyes Keeping Invasive Weeds Out

Effective Friday, May 23, the Salem Lakes area greeter (monitor) program began its summer session. Veteran Vonnie Ogilvie, along with new hires Eric Bingham, Jarren Puckett and alternative Jeremiah Barker assumed duties at the Salem boat access. The new hires, along with directors Lois Young, Andrea Ogilvie and member Andy Major attended a Department of Environmental Conservation, division of Lakes and Ponds, day-long workshop which covered:

- ◇ aquatic invasive species biology, threats to Vermont and the importance of unchecked spread
- ◇ aquatic invasive species identification hands-on workshop
- ◇ access area rules and regulations, baitfish regulations, and invasive species laws
- ◇ tips on delivering invasive species messages and interacting with the public
- ◇ boat inspection demonstration

The State of Vermont Department of Environment Conservation states that over 200 water bodies are infected by invasive, noxious species. Each year two to three lakes are added to the list of infected water bodies. Alarming enough, the proliferation of these aquatic nuisances is attributed to human activity.

Prevention is enormously less expensive and troublesome than the eradication process.

Salem Lakes are, so far, free of ecologically devastating plant species. It is hoped that residents who have private launch areas will assure that their equipment is clean before going into the lake. The same goes for their visitors, should they launch there. Residents are also invited to stop by the boat access to meet our monitors to learn more.

Logging in monitoring time is another great way to show support. This volunteer time, indicated as in-kind service, is measured in dollars when applying for our state grant.

Our prevention must continue in order to keep our lakes free, clean and pure from any and all invasive plants or living bodies, most common of which are milfoil and zebra mussels; there are many others. Our program is funded by a state grant, an allocation from Derby taxpayers and by dues from residents around the lake. May we count on your contribution by joining the association and paying dues or by volunteering to keep an eye out for noxious species? Speak to your directors, access monitors and attend the annual meeting, July 19.

The State of Our Lake

For 30 years, the Vermont Lay Monitoring Program has encouraged a watchful eye among the state's fresh water bodies, and the Salem Lakes Association has been active for the bulk of that time span. The good news is the lake has been quite stable during this time and the statistics prove it.

In terms of clarity, Salem rates very well when compared to other lakes in the three areas measured: clarity, chlorophyll, and phosphorus. By clarity we

mean how many meters deep can a black and white object (secchi disk) be seen from above the surface. Chlorophyll concentration is another indicator. This is the amount of chlorophyll in the water directly proportional to the algae living in the water. Less is better in this case.

The third characteristic is total phosphorus concentration. Phosphorus is a nutrient and is most likely to stimulate plant growth. Here again, less is better. Vermont state takes a phosphorus

reading every three or four years as soon as the ice breaks up as this is the time for the greatest phosphorus level. We take these three measurements weekly during the summer months and the state gathers the results every two weeks.

For clarity, we rank 21 out of 43 lakes; for chlorophyll, we rank 37 of 42. Remember, less is best, only five lakes have less. For summer phosphorus, we rank 30 of 42.

David Wood

This Time, the Fish Throw One Back

Years ago, the protocol for bringing a fish into our boat was simple: all lines in, tackle boxes closed, net ready. Being the smallest and generally the one most willing to lean over the side, I was responsible for the netting the struggling beasts from below.

Now as any good angler knows, a wet fish in a tangled net with barbed treble hooks does not start one off in a productive frame of mind as you move into the “admire and release” phase of the sport. Small- and large-mouth bass tended to survive this tourist torture with far better success than their pickerel cousins do. Not that it happened often, but occasionally we did lose a few great ones in Salem summer lore. Fish that sacrificed so much for 90 seconds of human indulgence.

I don't recall exactly when the greater sensitivity kicked in, but some time later on, while in my 20s, enough guilt had piled up to push me into a search of less traumatic methods for handling my catches.

My research arrived in the form of PBS television (this is before the Internet now) and a broadcast of *Rod & Reel*. Boy, the guys make it look easy. First they catch the best bass on every cast and in just 20 minutes too. Secondly, they bring the fish alongside their gleaming bass boats, reach down and with finger and thumb haul the darn thing right up. No nets. No tangles. No thrashing,

and amazingly, no hooks in any fingers. I was sold, and immediately anxious to try this myself on the next trip up to the lake.

The first couple of catches were easy. Small pickerel who were too exhausted to put up much of a fuss. That gave me the confidence I needed to try it again and eventually make this policy after just three of four more successes. In fact, I had even gotten to the point where I could bring most of the pickerels alongside and unhook them without even taking them out of the water. Again, pickerel are notoriously poor at recovering from out-of-water experiences, so the modification was well worth the effort. It even made me feel like a better steward to the world of fresh water fish.

You'll notice most of the best fishing pictures people have are of basses or perch, not pickerel. That's because they don't have time to pick up a camera and shoot images while performing CPR on a pickerel. It's just not workable.

Now one night, I'm out there

plunking along with my favorite green speckled popper. The night was ideal and the surface of the lake was like Jell-O. The perfect night after a perfect day. I landed my plug just next to a raft moored down at the end of the lake where the drop off takes a nose dive to 70-something feet.

I let the plug hit the surface with a wet slap and then gave it a twitch just after the rings had spread to their fullest range. That's when the big bass attacked. Oh, it was great. What a splash. It leaped. I held the line firm. It dove. I brought pole tip up. It ran figure eights and all sorts of evasive patterns. I held on and kept my wits, remembering everything my *Rod & Reel* masters had shared.

A minute or two later, the fish seemed ready to acquiesce. I guided it to the side of the boat and looked down to see a maw



Vermont Classics: Family photo album images courtesy of Francis McCarthy, Jr.

One the Fish Throw Back *(continued)*

that reminded me of Roy Scheider's classic scene in *Jaws* when he gets his first real glimpse of the Great White shark. It comes just before Chief Brody backs up into the cabin of the Orca and utters the phrase, "I think you're gonna need a bigger boat."

Well, I wasn't in as dire a situation and I felt reasonably sure I had the upper hand...until I remembered my new policy. Bare hands. No nets.

Well, I'm not a coward and I'm not one to abandon agreements. Yet, this policy seemed to have certain exceptions that were, well, implied even if they had never been laid out in writing. In other words, I didn't think this situation called for a literal execution of protocol. Ok, I chickened out on this one. I opted for the net to save my fingers from certain stabbing.

I raised the tip of the pole skyward to keep line taught and reached down to grab the net with my free hand. The bass in turn followed its own protocol

and slammed its full weight downward snapping my line and taking my great speckled lure with him into unknown fathoms.

Usually, bass surface to throw a hook, and if you keep an eye out, you can typically row over and reclaim your property. However, this fish never reappeared. He dove and took with him any chance for me to dismiss my novice error, recapture my favorite lure and get on with my career. He also ensured I'd feel guilt over having caused him pain and chronic duress now as a result of having a lip ornament dragging along under his jaw. How do we know those hooks rust away? That could be a myth.

Deflated and now ready to quit for the night, I motored home to mope. My uncle and cousin next camp over were pushing out to go trolling and I told them my story. They shook their heads in acknowledgment. Nice fish. Nobody else in the boat to witness it. Favorite lure gone. Got it.



Jonathan Votapka stands where the great speckled lure was found.

The next day I figured I'd clear my head with a good canoe trip up and down a ways. The morning was bright and sunny and the water hadn't been rippled up yet by the breeze. I passed by my relatives again during their daily troll patrol. My cousin asked me what color my lure was. Green with black speckles, I said. He bent down to the floor of their boat and held up my lure, dangling in the sun from a foot and a half of line.

Incredulous, I asked him where on the lake he found that. He said it was about eight feet from my dock this morning, floating in about five inches of water.

He tossed it into my canoe and my joy was indescribable. Hope had returned. The vacation could go on. That bass had given me another chance (I was going to say he let me off the hook). He gave me back my dignity with a simple act of forgiveness right in front of my camp.

I haven't used a net since.

Tim Votapka



Lake Front

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Visit us online:
Salemlakesvt.org

Key Dates & Facts

July 4 Holiday Parade

Float Design & Prep on July 3 at
Andy Major's camp beginning at
10 a.m.

July 19

Annual Meeting
6 p.m.

Coutts-Moriarty Camp
Includes Potluck Dinner
Bring food, place settings.

Guest Speaker

Susan Warren, Lakes and Ponds
Division to discuss waterfront
protection.

August 2

Coin Drop
Main Street, Derby
(rain date August 23)

Jane Bingham & Matt Murphy

Thank you for your dedication
and work toward keeping a
concerned eye toward the water
below as lake monitors. We're
sorry to see you won't be
returning.

Thank you for your support and stewardship

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your annual membership dues. Every dollar is significant in supporting our association and the programs it administers on behalf of all property owners around the greater Salem Lakes area.

Participation is the other major component. If you have any interest in volunteering time and talent in any way, we need to hear from you. Many hands make lighter work and there are many tasks at hand. Most are not massive chunks of time and they are often very enjoyable even if you're only here for a week or two at a time.

Annual Association Due Rate \$10 (Jan. 1—Dec. 31)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I'm interested in helping with:

- ◇ Lake Monitor
- ◇ Fundraising
- ◇ Communications
- ◇ Director/Officer
- ◇ Recruitment Other _____

To pay dues and other donations, contact treasurer Janet Cartee,
Salem Lakes Association, P.O. Box 134, Derby, VT, 05829.