

MAY 1998

"Foolin' around with fish"

By Neil Leighton

Well it was a quiet week at my home town....whoops, wrong lake! Alright, alright, what is this column all about? It seems that the officers of the Douglas Lake Improvement Association, or the D.L.I.A. for short, ganged up on me and asked me to write a column on something that I am absolutely no good at - fishing. It appears however that many of my cohorts on the lake are in the same boat, or at a minimum not in theirs. And therein lies the rub. Not enough of us are fooling around with fish and if we don't start we may end up with an 800 pound pike eating a jet skier. (And what is wrong with that some of you may ask?) The truth of the matter is that Douglas Lake is one of the better fishing lakes in the state, not only for pike, since none other than Tom Huggler (Midwest fishing guru) declares it the finest small-mouth bass lake in the state. What with all that clean water, beautiful shore line and little boat traffic it is a fishing paradise, and a relatively inefficient (but fun) way to put protein on the table at only five or six times the cost of purchased fish. Ah, but you can't lie about those finny critters you bought at the super market can you? Seriously, we are trying to psyche up the membership of ye olde D.L.I.A. to get out of the cabin and help manage the fish population. Our more than able Pike Marsh Team (P.M.T. for short) under the direction Wendell Judson and with the help of Scott Florence, John Davis, Bill McTaggart, Bruce McArthur, Charles McDougal, Jack Young, Bill Hutto and Chuck Wallace managed to "raise" a bumper crop of "pikelets" this year, somewhere in the neighborhood of 50,000. These were in turn hand delivered to the lake in five gallon buckets thus bumming out a whole school of perch and bass who had gathered at the mouth of Bessey Creek for their annual mid-May "snack". During the course of the annual pike lust season the P.M.T. had its usual bevy of tall tales, dunkings, and curious onlookers. Another part of this annual ritual was that the P.M.T. once again managed to produce a championship crop of mosquitoes. We are sure that this is the year that the D.L.I.A. will win "Best of Show" at the Cheboygan County Fair. A good time was had by all. What we need from you is not only your participation, but also spots on the lake where you landed the "big ones" whether they got away or not. Truth is not a major commodity for this little enterprise, hence your latest conquest is newsworthy. We welcome all contributions as to locations including your most treasured directions such as lining up the tall pine tree on the north shore (cut down in 1937) with the porch on the house where Father Marquette stayed in 1698, with the red cottage on the west shore (painted blue in 1967). There is nothing like winding your line and your bait around the prop of your outboard to get the old adrenaline pumping. Good luck.

Weather

By Mark Paddock

An old but accurate "rule of thumb" among meteorologists and climatologists is that the best predictor of forth coming weather is a continuation of the existing weather. For example if it has been warm and dry recently, then it is most likely to remain warm and dry in the future. That certainly has been the situation in Northern Michigan the past 8 months and there are no signs of a major change to wet & cool. The effect of El Nino in this region was to give us a very warm and dry fall, winter & spring. In fact it has been a glorious spring, quite the opposite of what one may expect up here. But now we are beginning to pay the consequences of all this sunny warm weather and suffer from a serious lack of precipitation. Lake water levels reflect this fact. Therefore this summer will likely see at least a season of normal water levels, or more likely a low water year. This is quite the opposite of what we've experienced the past 3-4 years.

As of May 30, Douglas Lake water level is 713.20 ft. The normal for this date is 713.62 ft.

Douglas Lake Precipitation October' 1997 - May' 1998

Actual Average Actual Average

Precipitation Precipitation Snowfall Snowfall

Oct.' 97 1.76" 3.49" 1.5" 0.6"

Nov.' 97 1.75" 3.21" 8.8" 14.8"

Dec.' 97 0.52" 2.39" 8.0" 30.7"

Jan.' 98 3.20" 1.91" 42.3" 31.1"

Feb.' 98 0.27" 1.33" 2.3" 20.5"

Mar.' 98 5.43" 2.14" 32.8" 13.5"

April' 98 1.51" 3.03" 0.0" 5.5"

May' 98 2.33" 2.83" 0.0" 0.0"

16.77" 20.33" 95.7" 116.7"

This year the "official" ice out date was April 7. Normal date of ice out is April 17.

Shoreline Erosion Problems?

By Mark Paddock

If responses from the recent questionnaire sent to association members are any indication, there has been some severe shoreline erosion problems on the lake in recent years. No doubt due to higher than normal lake water levels the past few years. This accelerated erosion is not

limited to private cottage sites. It has been observed on some of the University property too, along undeveloped natural shorelines. Property owners may be wondering what action to take to prevent or reduce erosion in the future. Depending upon the site, of course, there are many options. Some methods may be very extensive and expensive, yet are often not a permanent solution and may be environmentally disturbing. Others can be relatively inexpensive and still very effective. Some erosion control methods may solve one property owners problem only to shift the lake's erosive energy to neighboring shore lines. The essential thing is to obtain expert opinions before proceeding with a shoreline erosion control project. Recognizing this, the Douglas Lake Association is trying to help by creating a two person committee to assist property owners in their efforts to obtain expert advice. You are invited to give these people a call before you settle upon a method or contractor. They will put you in contact with shoreline control experts. It may save you time, money, frustration and at the same time be neighborly and environmentally correct for the lake. The people to contact are: Howard Gilbertson 616-537-2257 (lives on north shore) Mark Paddock 616-539-8952 (lives on south side) or call Doug Fuller at the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. Doug is probably the most knowledgeable person in the region on shoreline erosion control. (616-347-1142)

Zebra Mussels in Douglas Lake?

By Mark Paddock

"The day zebra mussels are found in Douglas Lake is the day I cry". That is a direct quote made to me by Professor John Burch of the University of Michigan Biological Station. Dr. Burch is a malocologist* at the University of Michigan's Museum of Zoology and is world renowned in his specialty. He knows that zebra mussels have the capability to severely disrupt the ecological systems in any body of water they enter and take up residence. We've read about the huge impact this small (about the size of a small grape) mussel has had in other lakes and streams in America since their introduction into this continent from S.E. Europe 10 to 15 years ago. They form thick layers in water intake pipes effectively clogging them, they incrust rocks, piers and any hard surface and smother native clams & snails. But most important, they disrupt the normal food chain of a body of water by consuming through filtration vast quantities of micro organisms at the bottom of the food pyramid needed by other animals. In the process of this filtration they clarify the water and permit more extensive growth of aquatic plants which then receive more sun light in the clearer water.

Fortunately, so far, Douglas Lake is free of zebra mussels; maybe a matter of luck more than care. But with a small amount of alertness and diligence we can postpone the day they enter our lake for a long time. All we have to do is carefully clean the bottom of any watercraft brought into Douglas Lake from a body of water inhabited by zebra mussels or let the boat dry

out for several days so the attached mussel larvae dry out and die. Of course, one should never empty a bait bucket into the lake! Incidentally one reason I am against a public boat launching site on Douglas Lake is because its presence greatly increases the possibility of boats being placed by the general public in Douglas Lake just a few hours after being pulled out of a water system infiltrated with zebra mussels. Groups of bass fishermen with their "bass boats" are an excellent example of this practice. They may go from lake to lake in rapid succession with their bass boats. Such occurrences did not occur before a public boat launch site existed.

*one who studies snails, clams, mussels, etc.