



Douglas Lake Improvement Association Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

February, 2006

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As I write this message I am having a hard time remembering that it is only February, with the warm days we have had I keep thinking it is time for spring with summer just around the corner. However, it is a good thing that it is only February as we still have to get the 2006 membership directory to press. Which leads me to - the most important thing you as members of the DLIA could do right now, is to check your information sheet and before you forget to do so send any corrections back. The directory is being compiled and it is important that we have correct information, especially as we only print this listing every three years. Do not delay, check and if necessary correct, follow the directions on the form and mail it back.

Over Labor Day weekend members of our organization had the opportunity to observe the conditions in the depths of Douglas Lake thanks to SEE-North and Michigan Technological University Researcher Mark Gleason. This was accomplished by using a Remotely Operated underwater Vehicle (ROV) which is a self-propelled unit that is attached to a long tether, and has two cameras that project a live, high-quality view of the subsurface onto a video screen. Doug Fuller representing SEE-North was our guide on the 1 ½ hour excursions. Our membership took full advantage of this opportunity to the extent that instead of the five trips in one day as planned we ended up with two days and nine trips. Doug has written his observations for this issue and in future issues we hope to print a few pictures taken on the trip. Thank you to both See-North and to Mark Gleason.

Our 37th annual meeting, held last August, was very well attended. Dr. Rex Lowe, our speaker for the evening, gave an outstanding talk on zebra mussels. Paul Nows reported that from May 31st to June 3rd about 8661 fry went into the lake, a very good year. The merchandise was selling very well and Sandy Segrist, our merchandise manager, reported sales to date for the year

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TRACKS IN THE SNOW, MAKING AND OBSERVING THEM

Mark Paddock

Living "up north" as we do all winter, snow is an enjoyment for its beauty and for XC skiing. We try to get out almost every day for an hour or two as long as the snow is present and decent for skiing. A huge bonus for us, aside from the great exercise, is observing and deciphering tracks in the snow. It is only in winter that you can find much evidence of some animals who live as our neighbors, because the rest of the year their naturally secretive presence is not announced by visible tracks

On a typical winter morning as we leave the house on our skis, we notice scores of tracks made by squirrels attracted to sunflower seeds tossed aside by the birds at our feeder. Most are made by the GRAY SQUIRREL, a lover of our extensive deciduous forests. The black phase is most common now, but 20-30 years ago most were gray color. Both are the same species. Occasionally we have a FOX SQUIRREL which is larger and a dull orange color. They usually inhabit more open forests and forest-field edges and are less common up north. Of course we have the small, highly energetic RED SQUIRREL who is fun to watch but unpleasant if one chooses to live in your attic. They rely upon coniferous trees for their food. In deep snow the red squirrel digs tunnels and pops to the surface only occasionally. All squirrel tracks are similar in appearance, characterized by their leaping gait. They seldom extend far out away from trees into open areas where they are more vulnerable to predators.

Almost certainly we soon see RED FOX tracks, dainty, dog like tracks, and when in their usual trot are in a straight line with each track about a foot apart. Foxes cover about five miles a night looking for food. Their larger cousin the COYOTE leaves a similar trail but his feet are twice as big and his tracks are about 18" apart. Both foxes and coyotes stop to urinate (they are dogs after all) and mark their territory. The fox urine is especially pungent and musky. We never see WOLF tracks around here. They may be getting established in the Lower Peninsula, but it is far too soon to tell.

PORCUPINE tracks with their pigeon-toed gait and a furrow caused by their squat, quill-covered body are also seen in the forest, but Porkys stay high up in the trees feeding for long periods and make tracks minimally, or just going from tree to tree.

Why have I not mentioned DEER and RACCOON tracks? Because once winter gets underway we seldom see their trails. Deer head for swamps or deep cover to better withstand deep snow and bitter cold. Coons go into semi-hibernation and stay holed up in tree hollows. BLACK BEARS go into an even deeper sleep in late October or so, and don't get up until April. I have never seen a bear track in

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University of Michigan Biological Station began offering minicourses over twenty years ago in response to alumni requests. Our minicourses are designed to let you enjoy being in the field and learning in a friendly atmosphere. Whether you are a practicing naturalist, student, Station alumni, or simply an interested individual, you will enjoy participating in a minicourse at UMBS. We are offering two non-credit, adult mini course sessions this summer. These small field courses will be taught by individuals who are leaders in their field and are well acquainted with the Biological Station and Northern Michigan.

The cost for a five-day course is \$390 (includes tuition & lab fee) plus \$160 for housing and meals at the Biological Station. Courses begin on Tuesday morning and run through Saturday afternoon. For more information contact the UMBS office, umbs@umich.edu, 734-763-4461 in Ann Arbor or 231-539-8408 in Pellston. Full course descriptions and registration forms are also available at our website:

www.lsa.umich.edu/umbs.

Early Summer – May 30 – June 3, 2006

Art in Nature (*Ann Singsaas*)

Birds of Northern Michigan (*Mary Whitmore*)

Flora of Northern Michigan (*Edward Voss*)

Natural History of Invertebrates (*John B. Burch*)

Late Summer, August 15 – 19, 2006

Aquatic Vascular Plants (*Barre Hellquist*)

Fungi of Northern Michigan (*Marilynn Smith*)

Photography in Nature-Digital (*Kim & Chris Cerrudo*)

Astronomy: Cosmic Genesis - How the laws of physics form and structure our universe (*Fred Adams*)

Water Resources of the Cheboygan R. Watershed (*Doug Fuller, SEE-North*)

Bio-Explorers, for children ages 8 - 12 (*Marty Samson, SEE-North*)

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2005 were over \$8000.00 with still more sales to come. John Perkins presented the Treasurer's Report, which is included in this letter and was re elected to his second term in office.

I would like to thank Mabel Spencley for her years as the zone representative for zone 15. Garth and Mabel have moved to their farm in Pellston and we wish them all the best. Jayne Morse has volunteered to step up to the plate and take over for Mabel. Thank you Mabel for your years of service and also thank you Jayne for offering your help, we look forward to working with you.

Have an enjoyable rest of winter, it could still happen, and don't forget Valentines Day.

Sincerely,



Barbara Wilkinson



**KNOW YOUR D.L.I.A.
BOARD**

*Their Douglas Lake History
Zone Representatives*

Holly Gedert Zone 71

My husband and I have been coming Up North for years. I worked on Mackinac Island during college, and we came up for downhill skiing in the winters. Our first visit to Douglas Lake was in 1989 when Bob and Gwen Kuehn bought property by Bessie Creek from a friend. We purchased our property in 1996, and completed our new home April 2000. Having lived on the western shore of Lake Erie since 1979 fully exposed to the NE wind, we welcome our little protected area on Marl Bay. It's a lovely place where one can hear the loons and see a deer swimming while drinking a morning coffee.

We enjoy all seasons here on Douglas Lake. We dock a 25' Catalina sailboat in Cheboygan, and sail it in Lake Huron and the North Channel. We enjoy boating, kayaking, walking, cross country skiing, downhill skiing and snowshoeing. Our most recent activity is mushrooming thanks to Marilynn Smith's See North program. We are UMBS Stewards and this is my third year as DLIA zone rep.

My work history is varied. I taught high school for 4 years down state, had a second career in Information Systems for 26 years, and am now into my third career of photography. My husband, Rich, retired from Libbey-Owens-Ford (now called Pilkington) after 40 years of service in Information Technology.

Rich has two children from a previous marriage so we started the animal kingdom in 1983 when we acquired a cat to add a new dimension to the house for the children. We then added another cat to keep the Siamese happy. We added a dog to raise the dimension to new heights. We are left with one 21 year old cat in the household. My stepson lives in New Mexico, and my stepdaughter lives on South Bass Island in Ohio.

We decided to live on Douglas Lake for its environmental quality, low population, and lack of direct waterway connection to the other lakes. We love it here because of the environmental awareness enhanced by or due to the relationship to the biological station, the wildlife, and the people. Now I think I'll pour a cup of coffee and see what the frogs are doing outside.



DUES

**DLIA dues are ten dollars per year and
may be mailed to:**

**Douglas Lake Improvement Association
Treasure
P.O. Box 472
Pellston, MI 49769**

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winter. SKUNKS and OPOSSUM are inactive in cold weather but do come out on mild nights to search for food. Actually all the mammals up here know enough to "hole up" when it is bitter cold and stormy, often for days at a time. They must be careful in the expenditure of energy vs. finding food. It is a life or death balancing act.

Ruth and I often leave trails and "bushwhack" when snow conditions warrant. I like to head for the Maple River where we can often find the tracks of the more aquatic mammals like the BEAVER, MINK, OTTER and MUSKRAT. Beaver in winter stay pretty much under the ice, going to their underwater food cache and then retreat to their spacious lodge. BEAVER tracks are especially distinctive by their large size and the huge webbed hind feet when they do get out on the snow. MINK rely upon aquatic animals in large part for food, and run along the stream edges investigating possible sources. Sometimes they leave the streams and lakes and go overland. We have had mink at our house for a couple days each winter seeking mice under the bird feeder trays who feed on dropped seeds. If we are lucky we find tracks of one of our favorite mammals the OTTER by the river or along the lake shore. Otters are much larger than mink (15lbs vs. 2lbs avg. weight) and also have slender bodies. Their feet are slightly webbed and they are excellent swimmers enabling them to catch fish, their principal food. Otter tracks in the snow are amazing, they often take several strides and dive head first sliding on their belly and chest for about 10 feet! They are playful animals and will make "toboggan slides" on icy or muddy banks. We found such a slide on the Maple River. Once an Otter came through our yard, a half mile from water and we have seen their sliding tracks other places far from water. MUSKRATS are common in marshy habitats in the river and along the lake. Their tracks are marked by places where their long hairless tail drags in the snow. But being very aquatic they seldom come out on the snow and set tracks.

We see WEASEL and ERMINE tracks often out in the more open areas with their twin-track pattern about six inches apart. Both turn all white in winter except for their black eyes and tail tip. These are ferocious carnivores and run tirelessly, it seems, all night searching for food, usually mice. BADGERS are also a member of the weasel family but are very large and squat in shape (also ferocious). I have seen them in person (one gave chase when I got too close) and evidence of their extensive digging, but have never seen their tracks in the snow for certain. Badgers remain in their burrows most of the winter and go into a semi-hibernative state. Ruth and I had a "pet" SNOWSHOE HARE in Colorado years ago and they remain one of her favorite animals. They live in cedar swamps and dense stands of young aspen. We often go to a few places where we can be sure to find their hop tracks with large, snowshoe-shaped hind feet. COTTONTAIL RABBITS seem to stick close to human habitation in this North Country and are quite uncommon elsewhere. The tiny trails of WHITEFOOTED AND DEER MICE are ubiquitous on the snow going from one tiny hole to another in search of seeds. They are about the only mice that run on top of the snow, MEADOW MICE or VOLES stay underneath the snow all winter and make tunnels to their vegetative food. Do we see BOBCAT trails? Although I know a few are around and have seen and heard them I have never seen their tracks for sure, probably because I don't ski into large dense swamps where they spend their very secretive lives. COUGARS? Never, and it would be a thrilling event. Their presence remains controversial in Michigan.

Leaving mammals for birds that get around on the snow, we find trails of RUFFED GROUSE almost every time we are out. They leave small chicken-like tracks about an inch apart. When the snow is soft and deep, grouse fly into it full speed covering themselves with snow in the process. There they will spend the night gaining shelter from the weather and owls and leaving a small pile of inch-long cylindrical droppings. Several times as we have skied along a trail, a grouse will burst noisily out from under the snow almost at our feet. A startling moment! TURKEYS hang around our yard from April to November but after snow falls they head for farm yards or feeding stations. We seldom find their tracks in winter where we ski. An especially interesting story can be surmised when an OWL plucks a mouse off the snow and leaves evidence of wing tips hitting the snow. We have found this numerous times.

Now it is time to get home, take off our skis and enjoy lunch by the fire!



Editor's Comments

An information sheet is included with this newsletter, PLEASE CHECK IT CAREFULLY- THIS IS THE INFORMATION THAT WILL APPEAR IN THE NEW DIRECTORY UNLESS YOU LET US KNOW OF ANY CORRECTIONS. Instructions for making changes are located on the information form, please be sure to follow them.

The next newsletter is scheduled for April or early May. If you wish to contribute you may forward your articles or announcements to me no later than the March 20th.

If possible e-mail the information to me at cdataserv@earthlink.net otherwise please type and mail the information to me at:

P.O. Box 1067 Jackson, MI 49204.

In the next newsletter "A Walk around the Lake", environmental updates, "THE HISTORY CORNER" will return as will the column "WE WILL MISS". Please let me know of any member deaths and if you can, submit a short obituary. As always we do publish events that are **not** necessarily D.L.I.A. sponsored as long as it would be open to all or of general interest to part of our membership.

For Rent

Charming Lakeside **cottage on Pells Island Drive.**

Maximum 4 people – No pets

Phone 970-925-6489 for more information

For Sale

New, aluminum, power shore station with cover, 4000lb. capacity located on Douglas Lake. \$4200.00.

Phone 248-882-9000 or 248-882-9094

Larry & Pat Horosko's **home on Pells Island.** This spectacular water front home



located on Douglas Lake with 570 feet of frontage. The home features 5 bed-

rooms, 3.5 baths, and a long list of options. Contact Ken Sines at Boyne Realty 526 -3193 or www.kensines.com for your personal showing

Douglas Lake ROV Trip Observations

Doug Fuller of SEE-North

Each of the nine trips typically went to four locations in South Fishtail Bay: the drop-off near Grapevine Point, a dense bed of submergent aquatic vegetation along the south edge of the Big Shoal, a 70' deep spot in the center of South Fishtail Bay, and along the drop-off on the south shore near UMBS' Lakeside Lab.

The sandy shallows were brightly sun-lit, but the light intensity and the color of underwater objects diminished quickly with depth. Although there was still enough light to plainly make out objects on the bottom in 35 feet of water (the depth we attained in the "channel" linking South Fishtail Bay with the main portion of the lake), light disappeared by a depth of 45-55 feet (depending on time of day) during the ROV descent to the 70' depth. Visibility seemed good, with objects becoming discernable within about 15' of the ROV camera lens. When the lighting orientation was right, the "fog" of phytoplankton, zooplankton, and fine sediment particles suspended in the water could be seen as pinpoint of white. Images of objects very close to the ROV camera lens appear magnified, and as a result large zooplankton (probably copepods) could occasionally be seen darting about.

The littoral shelf or "drop-off" resulted in a rapid transition from the coarse, un-vegetated sandy sediments to a bottom composed of both smaller-sized sediments (silt or clay sized particles) and lighter sediments (organic material) in deeper areas. Patches of submergent aquatic plants were generally observed along the drop-off. However, plants were not observed below about 25 feet, probably because there was not enough light to support them throughout the growing season. There was plenty of coarse woody material (logs and branches) strewn on the bottom along the drop-off as well as in somewhat deeper offshore areas. We observed one log with a sawed-off end—probably a saw log from the lumbering days that became waterlogged and sank. Dense accumulations of leaves were seen in several spots. The leaves represent an important food source for aquatic invertebrates.

Zebra mussels, invasive exotic organisms recently established in Douglas Lake, were commonly observed attached to bottom objects, including living native freshwater mussels (a.k.a. "clams"). Unfortunately, the zebra mussels will overwhelm their hosts, spelling eventual death for all of Douglas Lake's native mussels.

The plant bed along the south edge of the Big Shoal was very dense—so dense in fact that it made maneuvering the ROV difficult. Lowering the ROV down through the plants gave the impression of descending through a lush underwater forest. We had some interesting images as the camera lens was pointed upward from the bottom of the bed, giving a silhouette of the plants against the brightness of the water surface.

There was a good diversity of plants in this area, indicating a healthy, stable, productive aquatic ecosystem. Species observed included Chara (a.k.a. musk grass or stonewort, a filamentous algae resembling a vascular aquatic plant), pondweeds (including big-leaf pondweed, flat-stem pondweed, and white stem pondweed), bladderwort (a carnivorous aquatic plant), Vallisneria (a.k.a. or wild celery), water naiad, Elodea (a.k.a. water-weed), coontail, and water milfoil (one of the seven native species—none of the invasive, exotic Eurasian water milfoil was observed).

During the Monday cruises, we often encountered individuals or groups of what appeared to be large-sized smallmouth bass near the plant bed. They were on the deep side of the plant bed, where the bottom sloped away to deeper water. Over the course of the event, we saw about 7 species of fish: smallmouth bass (including some big ones near the plant bed), common or white sucker, yellow perch, bluegill, rock bass, and several species of minnows.

As the ROV approached the bottom in the dark, cold, still waters in the deepest part of South Fishtail Bay, the lights revealed a flat, nearly featureless plain that was grey in color and had a rough texture, like the surface of a sponge. The bottom had a jelly-like, flocculent (or fluffy) consistency that was plainly evident when the ROV touched-down. When the boat would swing on its mooring the ROV would plow a deep furrow into the bottom, revealing black underlying sediments and sending a plume of debris swirling into the overlying water. Detritus (dead organic material and tiny mineral particles) constantly rains down very slowly from the overlying waters onto the bottom, accumulating about 1/8" per year. This "detrital rain" was plainly visible in the lights of the ROV (although it actually looked more like snow flurries). Past research indicated that the depth of the accumulation of soft organic sediments on the bottom is up to 80 feet thick!

CONTACT LIST WITH WINTER ADDRESSES & PHONE NUMBERS

For comments, problems, suggestions,
News letter issues, articles, obituaries
Or items to be placed on meeting agendas.

Barbara Wilkinson, President
P.O. Box 1067
Jackson, MI 49204
(517) 787-0564
e-mail cdataserv@earthlink.net

Dues

John Perkins, Treasurer
Douglas Lake Improvement Association
P.O. Box 472
Pellston, MI 49769

Address changes

Nat Wilkinson
P.O. Box 1067
Jackson, MI 49204-1067

DLIA Annual Treasurer's Report – August 5, 2005
Submitted to the Membership on August 13, 2005
At the 37th Annual Meeting of the D.L.I.A.

Checking Account

Balance as of August 8, 2004 **\$13,668.04**

Income

Cookbook Income 425.00
McTaggart Memorial pike marsh 645.00
Membership Dues 4060.00
Merchandise Income 11846.10
Misc sales 420.10

Total Income. \$ 17,396.20

Expenses

Administration Expense 245.00
Donation 700.00
Insurance 691.00
Merchandise Expense 14971.10
Newsletter Expense 2506.42
Pike Marsh 225.00
Website Exp 301.80

Total Expenses \$19,640.9

Balance as of August 5, 2005 \$11,423.92

Assets

Checking Account \$11,423.92
Money Market Account 19,364.85
Certificate of Deposit 11,258.48
Pump – pike marsh 860.00
Merchandise on hand (approx) 8795.00
Cash on hand (approx) 1595.00
Cookbooks 3094.00

Total Assets \$ 56,391.25