

Local cottage and lake associations need a hand

JOHN ROBSON

Shoal markers are a good thing. There are many fun things to do at the lake, but hitting a rock isn't on anyone's list. So please give a hand to your lake association.

I mean it literally. I'm writing from Lower Beverley Lake, where I now chair the local association. But there are hundreds of lake associations across Ontario and across Canada and they all need help to do what they do. It's all hands on dock, folks.

Here let me confess that I've been on our lake for a decade and a half and mostly in blissful ignorance of this matter. When we bought our cottage a cheerful volunteer came to the dock with a welcome bag and sold me a history of the lake. But I had very little idea what the Lower Beverley Lake Association did, and especially how much it did, until I answered their urgent call for volunteers a couple of years ago. It's been a fun and remarkable learning experience.

The LBLA dates back to 1932, when it was the Lower Beverley Lake Protective Association. And of course it publishes that lake history, as well as a self-guided tour pamphlet and the memoirs of long-time lake dweller Jeanne Patric, now deceased. She grew up on "Whiskey Island" (yes, there's a colourful story attached) and her father Charles Broley was famously the "eagle man" for his early conservation efforts, which included climbing trees to band hatchlings while angry parents dive-bombed him. Your own lake doubtless has many such stories about many such characters, which



A view off the dock of Lower Beverley Lake. JOHN ROBSON

your association has probably collected (if not, what a project!). But there's much more to it.

Those shoal markers, for instance, don't just grow on rocks. Nor does the government do them in except those big navigation markers on that kind of lake and route. Here our volunteers go out each fall and replace the main markers with winter placeholders, then bring the main ones in for storage and repair. And of course someone coordinates this work including spring reinstallation.

If they sit in deep water we just have to reattach them to the

anchor lines... assuming those things made it through another winter. But for those in shallow water we have to collect the heavy anchors in the fall and put them back in the spring. It's a lot of work.

So is our annual picnic, extensive water quality testing and many other things to enhance recreation and conservation. In fact, I've discovered so many important activities that I've been devising a handbook to list them all and help onboard new board members, and it's taking a while because I keep discovering new items to add. Including our

latest initiative, which I heartily recommend, of providing receptacles where people can place used tangled fishing line, a potentially serious pollutant.

I'm not complaining, mind you. It's worth it. Our short-form mission statement is "Caring for Lower Beverley Lake" and the longer version includes "preservation of the pristine character of the lake environment," serving as "a focal point for lake stewardship and improvement" and providing information and a forum for the lake community "to meet and to get know each other." So what

I'm saying is that if you're not currently involved with your lake association, big or small, new or old, you should really consider it.

You'll enjoy it... mostly. Even the meetings, and that business of clambering about on slippery shoals handling cement blocks. And you'll help everyone enjoy your lake, now and for generations to come.

All kinds of people do all kinds of things for the lake in all kinds of ways, of course, including collecting trash. (Like the people far from here who accept and dispose of that used fishing line in an organized way.) So if you're already the sort who kayaks around and checks for loon nests or purple loosestrife, or you're a year-rounder who can keep an eye on winter conditions including storm damage, please think about getting in touch with your association formally and sharing the information.

There are various networking groups including FOCA, the provincial umbrella association, and we share information on everything from invasive species to water quality to boating safety. And the more information we have, the better we can care for individual lakes, watersheds and our entire environment.

So if you're not already involved, here's my plea to you. Next time you're out on the lake, or just looking at it, think about everything that's going on. Think about the markers, water quality, algae blooms warnings, bird habitat, swimming safety, youth events and everything else that goes into that most Canadian of traditions, the cottage. Then call up the local association and ask where they need a hand.

We need you, and you'll be glad you did.

*John Robson
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Lake Association*