



Friends of Green River Reservoir

Fall 2017
Newsletter

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Loon Update 2017

BY RON KELLEY

This was a good year for loon reproduction, both in the park and statewide. The Access Bay loons (nearest the dam) and the northern Loon Island loons both nested during the fourth week of May. Eggs incubate for about 28 days. Two chicks hatched in each location, with both Access Bay chicks surviving into September and one Loon Island chick surviving. The Southern Loons nested near Site 4 during the first week of June but that nest was fairly low to the water and eventually was flooded out due to all the rain that month. The Merganser Inlet pair that has been attempting to nest since 2012 nested very late on the small island just north of the Big Island. They hatched one chick around August 4 for their first reproductive success. That chick was still around in late September. It is likely to be very lonely by the time it is big enough to migrate to the ocean for the winter, as all the other loons will probably have left before then. The Zack Woods loons produced two surviving chicks, bringing the park total to six for the year.

The FGRR has taken responsibility for surveying Green River Reservoir for the

annual Vermont LoonWatch, held the third Saturday in July each year. Board members Sally Laughlin, Sheila Goss, Tom Kastner and Ron Kelley conducted the count for the reservoir on July 15 and submitted the information to Eric Hanson at VCE. We counted 12 adults and three chicks on that day but this was prior to the fourth chick hatching in early August.

Statewide, there was a record 97 nest attempts, with at least 72 successful nests. Many pairs produced two chicks, with 113 chicks hatching out. Typically, about 70–80 percent of chicks survive till August. This is a dramatic change in numbers from 1986, when only seven nesting pairs of loons occurred in the state (including one pair on the reservoir) and they were listed as endangered in Vermont.

The final tally showed that this past season Vermont welcomed 93 newly fledged birds to the state's Common Loon population, breaking the previous record of 81, according to the Vermont Center for Ecostudies who monitor and manage loons in partnership with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

RON KELLEY





Update on GRR Dam Relicensing

Overview

The Friends of Green River Reservoir committed to preserving the Green River Reservoir and to protecting and enhancing its ecological habitat. These goals are fundamental to our mission.

As our members are aware, the FGRR Board is monitoring Morrisville's Water and Light's (MWL) Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Green River Reservoir Dam relicensing process, a complex legal process involving multiple parties that began in 2010 and is now before the Vermont Environmental Court (EC). Absent a settlement among all parties and subsequent approval by the Environmental Court, a trial focusing on unresolved issues is scheduled to begin in early 2018. The Board has committed significant human and financial

resources to review and respond to EC filings and court processes

In November 2016 in order to be an intervenor and stay abreast of developments, the Board hired Anthony Iarrapino, Esq. of Montpelier to represent us before the EC and our intervention request was approved. Thus, the Friends can now participate in all legal EC appeal processes, including receiving all court correspondence, participating in Discovery, filing motions, presenting witnesses and expert testimony, cross examination of witness, and participation in potential settlement negotiations.

The Board has not predetermined its position on specific contentious issues raised by appealing parties, but will be actively participating in the review of required supporting evidence. Consistent with our mission, our goal will be to support reasonable and sustainable practices that support the continued existence of the dam and advance reservoir preservation and ecological habitat protection and enhancement. We will keep updating information on our FGRR website <http://www.fgrrvt.org/>.

required to disclose the identity of their expert witnesses by November 1, 2017. Thereafter will follow another round of discovery specifically focusing on the opinions the experts will offer in Court. The trial is tentatively scheduled for March/April 2018.

Meanwhile, the parties continue to exchange discovery requests and responses of a highly technical nature. The Agency of Natural Resources and Morrisville Water and Light are in the discovery process – an exchange of information whose purpose is to allow each party to test the strengths and weaknesses of the other's case. In September, Morrisville Water and Light was scheduled to conduct its own flow and aquatic biota studies downstream of the Green River Dam. The objective of these studies is ostensibly to challenge the scientific basis for Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' position that healthy aquatic communities of fish and other biota require more protective in-stream flow regimes than those currently achieved by Morrisville Water and Light. The results of the study and other expert opinions on all sides will be explored in further discovery through the fall with trial in the case expected in spring 2018.

Friends of Green River Reservoir, Inc.

— FALL 2017 —

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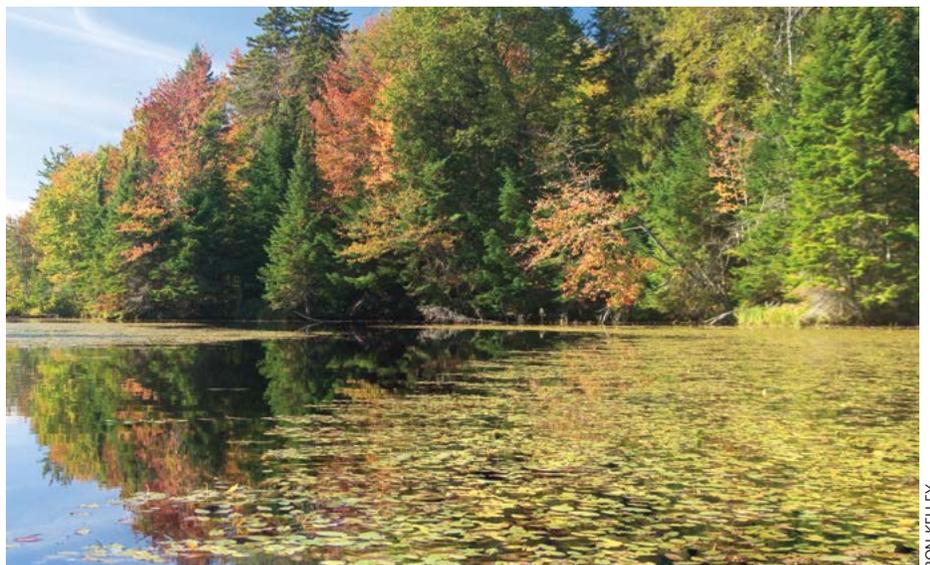
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Latest Update October 2017

The issue is now before the Vermont Environmental Court. In terms of schedule, the principal parties are



RON KELLEY



Champ in the Rez? Or Were They Otters!

BY ERIC NUSE

I saw it with my own eyes – 20 feet long, vertically undulating and serpent like. Lake Champlain has its Champ, Lake Elmore has Elmo and no question about it, Green River Reservoir has its – drum roll please – otters! To be exact, two adults and three young, all porpoising single file just off campsite 34 at dawn on August 22nd. Witnesses included my two seven-year old granddaughters, Olive and Asha. And yes, with a fast look, you could easily see a 20-foot sea serpent. All I needed was a blurry picture to prove it...

The day before, we had looked at the eclipse of the sun, worked on the J-stroke and the girls provided perch for our dinner.

The following day I got up at dawn, made a cup of coffee and was sitting down by the water looking to the west. I noticed a wake out about 75 yards in the glassy water. Then I saw two wakes. Both dove cleanly and I saw the tapered tails. Definitely not beaver, had to be otter! Then more animals popped up. I ran up to the tent and got my binoculars. After much scrutinizing I decided I was watching an otter family of five feeding in the shallow water just south of the rocky island between the big island and the west shore.

About then the grandgirls emerged from the tent and came down to see what I was looking at. I offered to launch the canoe for a closer look, but they needed to understand that there would be no talking and no banging the canoe with paddles.

So out we went, slow and quiet. The otters were diving and splashing. We could hear the crunching of crawfish and the soft mewling calls between the animals. Combined with the morning glow on the trees reflecting



BOB MALBON

on the flat water and a few loon calls it was pure magic. Then they formed a line and swam toward the west shore. Looked pretty serpenty to us. But the gig was up – a diving row of otters – not a Loch Ness monster.

I've seen lots of wildlife and otter over my many years in the woods, but feeling my grandgirls' excitement at this rare show of undulating otter was extra special. After over a half hour of watching we took a short paddle past the loon-nesting island. Now it was the loons' turn to entertain us while feeding and talking to their chicks. Then the otter family ran over a point of land and dove into the water near us. I half expected a bull moose to wade out and join the show.

Otter can grow to 33 pounds and almost five feet long. They have webbed feet making them powerful swimmers. They can also close their ears and nostrils while underwater using special valves and have long sensitive whiskers to help them feel food in the dark. Like other predators they eat what is easiest to get. Food includes fish, frogs, amphibians and small mammals. A favorite food at Green River and in the Lamoille River

is crawfish. One study showed crawfish made up over 50 percent of their diet.

Otter are primarily nocturnal, so spotting them isn't easy. However, we have a healthy and stable population in Vermont. You are more likely to see tracks, slides and droppings than the animals themselves. Every winter I see signs of otter on the reservoir. They use cracks in the ice to get into the water and fish and old beaver houses for shelter.

As we paddled back to camp I told the girls that many experienced paddlers and outdoorspeople have never seen such a wonderful display. At camp over breakfast they described the action to little Pepper, age 1¾, who was on her first camping trip. I could see her catch the excitement even if she didn't understand what they were talking about.

Nope, we didn't see a sea monster, but we saw something better – wild critters in a special wild place – Green River Reservoir.

Eric is a retired game warden, avid paddler, board member from Johnson and proud grandfather of four great girls.



Update on Green River Reservoir State Park

BY MILFORD CUSHMAN



Wood and Storage Shed Building

Visitors to GRRSP during the summer of 2018 will most likely watch the construction progress of the new wood and storage shed. The 744 square foot building is composed of two 12 foot x 22 foot gabled wings and a 13.5 foot x16 foot connector and will be located between the existing contact station and the ADA trail/boardwalk to the reservoir. One of the 12 foot x 22 foot wings will be devoted to the storage of 11.5 chords of firewood which the Park will make available for sale to visitors as the surest method of preventing the influx of invasive insect species that could arrive on wood from other areas. The rest of the building will be used to store seasonally needed wood shavings for use in the campsite moldering toilets, hand and power tools, personal protective gear, a work bench, paddles and pfd's, and provide winter storage of Park watercraft. As with other buildings at GRRSP, the building plans and permitting have been coordinated and collaborated with the Park by Kelley Osgood and Milford Cushman, contributed services of Cushman Design Group.

Informational Kiosk Addition: Animal Tracks

In preparation for the installation next spring at the Park Informational Kiosk, board members Tom Kastner and Milford Cushman have been working on developing a system for fabricating durable animal tracks to fill the empty spaces on the back side of the kiosk, joining the colorful and creative display about some of the animals who make their home in the GRRSP area. Using wood forms, the track castings are made with a mixture of epoxy, sand and sawdust. In the attached photograph, please see the level of detail of the adult black bear hind foot print. Other animal tracks to be cast and displayed will be great blue heron, bull moose, snowshoe hare, coyote, mink, white tail deer and muskrat along with a sample of beaver fur.



Bear Track Replica

iNaturalist Biodiversity Project

BY RON KELLEY

There are currently more than 100 observations posted for the Biodiversity of Green River Reservoir State Park project, submitted by 9 observers. Seventy-five species have been identified with the help of 71 identifiers. Most observations are of birds, insects, flowering plants and amphibians. The most observed species to date are bald eagles, common loons, common snapping turtles, great blue herons and eastern newts. Recent pictures posted include an immature bald eagle, otters and a large snapping turtle just below the surface of the water. The project is part of the Vermont Atlas of Life sponsored by the Vermont Center for Ecostudies.

We encourage members and others to get involved with the project, as it's a great way to get your identifications confirmed or corrected. Just log into iNaturalist.org, sign up with them and then search for Green River Reservoir under Projects. Then follow the directions for posting observations.



The Past Season at Green River Reservoir State Park

BY PARK MANAGER ROSS BRYANT

Green River is a magical place to be. This was my fifth season in the park and my second as Park Manager. This has been another great and busy year.

We have checked and cleaned over 1,000 campsites this year. Sites are checked every time a camper checks out to ensure they are ready for the next guest to check in. This involves making sure the wood shaving bucket is filled, the fire pit is cleaned and the site is free of trash. Trash is only found on very few occasions since most of our guest are aware they we are a “Carry In...Carry Out” park and practice “Leave No Trace” camping.

The staff at GRRSP also checks Zack Woods and the camp sites there daily to assure that they are clean and the area is trash free.

We have been busy with projects this summer. The ADA Trail received six yards of stay-mat to correct the grade and several boards had to be replaced. We found and removed a bunker structure in the woods near the dam. A hazard tree inspection was done in the spring and another one in the fall and all hazard trees were removed. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps installed Food Storage Lockers (bear proof boxes) at seven of the camp sites and plans are being reviewed to install more next season. They also built and installed a kiosk at Zack Woods and a composting toilet by the Mud Pond camp site.

GRRSP has been host to around 13,000 campers and day users this summer. Many of these are repeat visitors that we look at as part of our reservoir family. Over the years we have become acquainted with their families and dogs and we look for-

The staff and I have had a great season and consider it a privilege to work here. We are proud that we can help our guests have an exceptional experience here and they in turn allow us to have an exceptional experience working here. Our hope for the future



PILAR LOPEZ-GOMEZ, VYCC

The Vermont Youth Conservation Corp crew rests after installing new bear-proof lockers. The difficult process involved bringing them down the lake by boat and hauling them uphill to campsites. The FGRR contributed \$5000 to VDFPR towards the purchase of the bear proof lockers.

ward to seeing them and seeing their children grow from infants to toddlers to big kids. Our guest come primarily from Vermont, but we also have some that come from VA, PA, NY and nearby states in the North East.

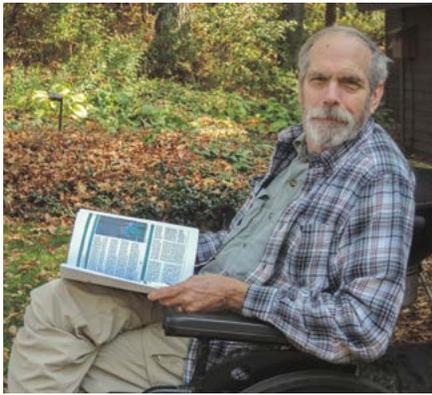
There is an abundance of wildlife in the park and this season staff and guests have seen moose, deer, coyotes, otters, beavers, snapping turtles, eagles and of course the ever-present loons. Our most frequently asked questions are about loons, their habits and were they are hanging out.

is that Green River can continue to offer both staff and guests an exceptional remote experience. I would also like to thank the staff for all their hard work in making this another great year on the reservoir.

Ross Bryant, Park Manager
Eric Zawadski, Assistant Park Manager
Tom Wachtler
Ethan Page
Gwen Marsha
Jen Westerdoll
Ben Decker



FGRR NEWS



LISA DIMONDSTEIN

Annual Meeting – Recognition to Bill Bartlett

At the Annual Meeting of the FGRR membership, held July 6, 2017 at Butternut Mountain Farm in Morrisville, the highlight was recognizing Bill Bartlett for his years of service on the Board and for all his contributions to the success of our organization. We presented him with a bound copy of all the FGRR newsletters from 1999 to Spring 2017. Our thanks to Sheila and Duncan Goss for scanning the newsletters and preserving them electronically. The entire archive is now available on the FGRR website!

Other business included reelecting Ron Kelley, Emma Marvin, Milford Cushman for a three-year term until 2020 and electing Sheila Goss to a three-year term – she was serving an appointed term until this annual meeting. The meeting was well attended and proceeded by a delicious pot luck supper. Ron Kelley and Eric Nuse presented and narrated a slide program *Green River Reservoir – a special place to explore nature*. They have presented this program to several organizations – if members are interested in scheduling it for a group, contact Ron at ronald.kelley76@gmail.com.

Jim Andrews Needs Report of Reptiles and Amphibians in Vermont

On October 13, Jim Andrews delivered the fascinating program, *Searching for the Frogs, Toads, Salamanders, Turtles, and Snakes of Lamoille County* to about 60 people – including some very competent young herpetologists – as our annual FGRR lecture for members and the public. He presented fascinating information on the lives of these creatures.

The FGRR Board was surprised at how many gaps there are in the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas and how much your reports are needed! Jim needs us to find, photograph, and report the species that have not been documented in Vermont towns. For example, in Wolcott the Wood Frog needs to be documented by photograph. In Cambridge, the Painted Turtle and the Ring-necked Snake both need photo documentation. In Eden, the Snapping Turtle and the Spring Peeper need photo documentation. We urge all members who spend time outdoors in Vermont to check out the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas website, and see what is missing in your town – photograph and report the herps you see to Jim at the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas <http://vtherpatlas.org/> or <https://www.facebook.com/VTHerpAtlas/>.

Earlier in the afternoon, Board members Eric Nuse, Ron Kelley, and Tom Kastner accompanied Jim on a search for Northern Dusky Salamanders, a species that likes mucky habitat, and were rewarded with the first documentation for the species in two towns – Morrisville (Beaver Meadows) and Cambridge (Smugglers Notch).



ERIC NUSE

Jim and Ron document Dusky Salamander with a photo.



Gift Membership Offer

For the next year – Oct. 2017 through Sept 2018 – the Friends of Green River Reservoir Board is offering each renewing member the opportunity to give a free gift membership, and will include that notice in each membership renewal. If you choose to enter someone as a member, the gift membership will run for one year -and then it will be up to that person to renew or not. We hope to increase our membership this way and have more support for all the work ahead!

Membership Renewals

Memberships run for a year from the month that you join. Volunteers (us Board members) send reminders – first electronically and then by snail mail a few months before your renewal is due (and again and again, if members don't respond to the first notice). Renewing immediately saves stamps, time and energy and we thank those that renew on the first notice.