



SOMES · MEYNELL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the Somes Pond Watershed

Summer/Fall 2018

Issue No. 19

SOMES-MEYNELL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

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1898 – 1990

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Message from the Board *by Roberta Sharp*

Sanctuary: "a sacred place, a place of refuge, a reserved area in which animals or birds are protected from hunting or molestation" - The American College Dictionary.

If I had to choose one word to describe my relationship with Somes Pond and the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary, it would have to be "sanctuary." Let me tell you why... Perhaps you too have had similar experiences, or maybe you will be inspired to explore a relationship for yourself.

It was in this watershed that I spent a year in my Maine Natural naturalist program making silent observations and recordings. Sometimes I just sat with my eyes closed to acutely listen to the arrival of migratory birds - the high pitched notes of warblers, the wails and tremolos of the returning loon pair, the enchanting flute-like notes of the hermit thrush, or the splash of an osprey catching its first alewife. There is so much to hear in the quite periods of spring. There is the predictable transition from spring to summer amphibian chorus - wood frogs to peepers, green frogs, and finally the bullfrog. One day I was interrupted by the loud ruckus of crows in the canopy above me, entrapping a barred owl below.

A quiet walk along the trails of the Sanctuary reveals many visual delights. I'm always thrilled to see the first bloom of gold thread as its dainty white flowers carpet the forest floor. Soon after a great variety of fern croziers unfurl, affording an opportunity to identify close to a dozen species of green fronds. It slows one down to scrutinize the abundance of colorful mushrooms and lichens on

trees, rocks, and soil. If you look closely, there's a miniature world to explore in the moss beds.

I look forward to summer swims, feeling the cool, silky water on my skin. I'm often surprised when a loon feeding its chick suddenly appears frantic as an eagle soars above. Occasionally a snapping turtle pokes its head above the water, startling me. Paddling my kayak around the pond, I'm apt to spy a calypso or rose pogonia orchid, a pitcher plant, numerous damselflies or dragonflies buzzing about, and other humans enjoying nature's bounty. I've been amazed at all the other aquatic life I've observed along the shoreline: fresh water mussels, newts, crayfish, water spiders, pickerel, alewives, and minnows. I have been lucky to spot mink running along the rocks, deer swimming across the cove, and beavers interrupting the evening stillness with the slap of their tails.

When winter arrives, I anticipate new activities with excitement. That first skate across the glasslike surface, fills me with elation. I know I'm joining a community of like-minded people who love the solitude of the solo skate or the social group outing. Although I don't ice fish, the pond is busy with earnest anglers with their tip-ups, tents, sleds, and fires - awaiting the catch to come.

Each individual can experience their own sacred moments here, but the concept of Sanctuary encompasses a broad spectrum of meaning to those concerned with protecting this special space and its inhabitants. Immerse yourself within its boundaries to develop your own sense of place and connection here. Breathe in the wonder, spend a moment in contemplation.

Director's Message *by William Helprin*

If sustainability depends on transforming the human relationship with nature, the present-day gap between kids and nature emerges as one of the greatest and most overlooked crises of our time, threatening people and countless other species. Helping children fall in love with nature deserves to be a top national priority, on par with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preserving species and wild places.

- Scott D. Sampson, from his book *How to Raise a Wild Child: The Art and Science of Falling in Love with Nature*

Increasing the Sanctuary's value to our local community is an overarching goal of our organization. Facilitating the connection of young people to nature is a major component of that endeavor. That connection does not have to come solely from field trips to the Sanctuary's forest or paddling on Somes Pond. It may be made looking at plants along the edges of the Pemetic School playing field, in the forest surrounding Trenton School, or on a kayak trip from Tremont School into Bass Harbor Marsh. The connection for a child may also come from backyard exploring at home or tending to a small garden, wondering about creatures climbing, burrowing, and flying nearby. We should foster the idea of nature, not as a place to visit a few times per year, but a place to be immersed in every day - in our schoolyards, backyards, and local neighborhoods.

In his inspiring book, Scott Sampson refers to a disturbing study finding that the average American child spends only four to seven minutes per day outdoors versus seven hours of screen time of some sort. Other studies cited by Sampson found an average child's daily outdoor time to be 30 minutes. Whatever the exact amount, it is severely diminished from the norms of earlier generations.

Children around Mt. Desert Island likely have a significantly less extreme indoor/outdoor ratio, nevertheless, we recognize the issue of disconnection from our natural environment amongst today's youth. Children without bonds to "other-than-human" nature does not bode well for their future, nor for the rest of nature's health. Passionate connection to the places we love is what can protect them from unnecessary damage. If we don't love that place, who will advocate for it when it is threatened?



Community School students examining interesting ice formations along the inlet stream of Somes Pond during our "frozen classroom" field day, January 25th, 2018.



The high temperature was 20 degrees but that didn't deter Community School students from having a blast ice fishing, animal tracking, telling stories around the campfire, and sliding on the smooth and dry ice!

Trips to national parks with my family when I was young likely played an important role in creating direction for my academic and vocational choices of wildlife ecology and environmental education. I have fond memories of walking around beautiful West Thumb geyser basin at the edge of Yellowstone Lake, witnessing the majestic scale and colors of the Grand Canyon, and camping in the spruce fir forest of Acadia. More foundational than these big trips, however, was time exploring nearby streams, wetlands, and woods near home in Connecticut. Making woods forts with friends, feeding and watching birds in the backyard with my mom and brothers, and local camping trips with my dad had a lot to do with my strong connection to nature.

As late summer progresses, the Sanctuary is gearing up for the Floating Classroom watershed science program for 7th and 8th grade students on Somes Pond, helping develop more outdoor classroom opportunities at local schools, and playing our part in fostering the connection between nature and our children. If you are interested in learning more about Sanctuary programs or would like to discuss ways that you can guide children towards outdoor experiential learning and exploration please contact me at the Sanctuary. Your financial support is vital to our efforts. Thank you for helping us increase our conservation and education value to the community!



Bar Harbor students and teachers collecting water samples to develop top to bottom dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles of Somes Pond, as part of the Floating Classroom watershed science field day, October 4th, 2017.

The Return of Summer Field Assistant Alex Douwes

We are very happy to have last year's Summer Field Assistant Alex Douwes return for a second season! Alex helps significantly with all Sanctuary projects and his experience with Mt. Desert Island places, people, and wildlife makes him even more valuable this year. Alex grew up in Maryland and graduated in late May from the University of Delaware with a marine science degree. He would like to attend graduate school in the same field, starting the fall of 2019. We are trying to find opportunities nearby for a marine science related job this fall, so we can keep him in the neighborhood!

Alex shares some of his thoughts upon return to the Sanctuary and MDI below.

"I am honored and incredibly happy to have the same opportunity I had last year, here on this beautiful island. Having just graduated from the University of Delaware, not knowing exactly what I am going to do before graduate school, returning to this island for another summer eases the tension I had been feeling during and directly after graduation. I drove from Maryland to Connecticut, stayed the night, and drove straight to Sanctuary headquarters the next day. While I did not mind the drive, once I saw the "you are now entering Maine" sign on I-95, I started to find a sense of comfort in my return. I was looking forward to the familiar special places and people I met last year, and getting to know new ones this summer.

The sounds of loons on Somes Pond upon my return were less terrifying than last year! When I first arrived at the Sanctuary last year I had a few rough nights sleeping, as the loon wails had me up all night. This summer it has been almost the opposite - I look forward to falling asleep listening to the loon pair chat away into the late evening.

While hearing and seeing all the wildlife and beautiful scenery here is calming, knowing I am returning to a welcoming community of selfless volunteers and partners makes it easy to come back to the Sanctuary. It feels like home. Back to the island, back to Somes Pond. I am looking forward to another successful summer, filled with loon chicks, alewife, and many hours of Courtesy Boat Inspection time!"



Alex in the Long Pond outlet stream, helping alewife get to the fish ladder channel



Field Assistant Alex Douwes on Somes Pond looking for loons



Alex explaining elements of the alewife migration to visitors on the Sanctuary deck



Alex teaching techniques of boat and trailer inspection for aquatic invasive species to Courtesy Boat Inspection volunteers

Alewife Migration 2018

Spring time in Somesville brings a sense of excitement and anticipation to those who know what is soon to happen in and around the watershed. Local osprey, eagles, gulls, and harbor seals certainly know. Many human residents, visitors, photographers, and students know too – the alewife river herring migration is about to get underway! From a low number of 361 alewife returning in 2005 to almost 40,000 last year, we are always wondering – how many alewife will come to spawn next season? No matter what the actual number, the watershed is a place of wildlife spectacle during the run, with all sorts of predators trying to capture and eat some of the 10 to 12 inch fish.

Alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) arrived in Somes Harbor at the beginning of May this year from nearby coastal waters. Similar to the past two years, we had high stream flows from heavy late winter and early spring rains. Despite the high volume of water cascading over the Somesville Mill Pond dam and blasting down the fish ladder, the first alewife ascended on May 12th, the same day last year's run began. Footage of water flows (and fish ladder maintenance work) in late April and early May can be seen at <https://www.facebook.com/somesmeynellwildlifesanctuary/>, and scrolling down to posts from those dates.

The first day of the 2018 run, 345 alewife entered when we opened the gate and they ventured into the Mill Pond, on their way to Somes Pond and Long Pond to spawn. By the end of the first week of the migration we had counted 11,272. Last year's first week yielded only 46 fish, but there was a very large migration pulse on the 9th day of almost 13,000 alewife! Graph 1 represents a comparison of 2018 and 2017 migration timing

and number of alewife arriving at the Mill Pond and at Long Pond (1.5 miles upstream).

Volunteers and Sanctuary Staff counted 37,678 alewife entering the Mill Pond and 12,745 (33.8% of total) at Long Pond this year. Last year's count numbers were 39,813 (MP) and 8,669 (LP, 21.8%). These are actual complete counts at both locations, with a (likely) very small margin of error.

At the Mill Pond site, after opening an 8-inch wide doorway in the slotted outflow grate, we watch fish emerge from the top chamber of the fish ladder. The fish sense the stronger water flow through the larger opening, move towards it, and cross a bright aluminum plate as they enter the Mill Pond. We use a simple hand clicker counting device to keep track as we watch the dark-backed fish cross the plate. Oftentimes, the alewife come out one or two at a time, but if there are many hundred or more in the top chamber they come out faster than that, and you can get a sore thumb while clicking away to keep up.

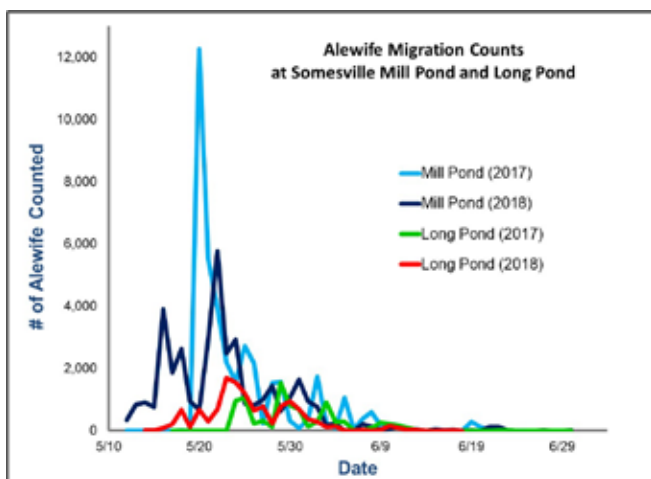
At the Long Pond outlet dam and fish ladder, we actually net each fish from a temporary trap and place the fish in the lake. We count each one as it leaves the net. Over the past several years Sanctuary volunteer JF Burns has done most of this transfer work (see photo). Thank you JF! Travel time for the first alewife entering the Mill Pond to arrive at Long Pond was only 2 days! A significant feat, given the blasting water flows and an obstacle filled mile and a half swim.

During the inbound migration, we release and count fish 2-3 times per day in an effort to document the status of this watershed's run. We are required by the State Division of Marine

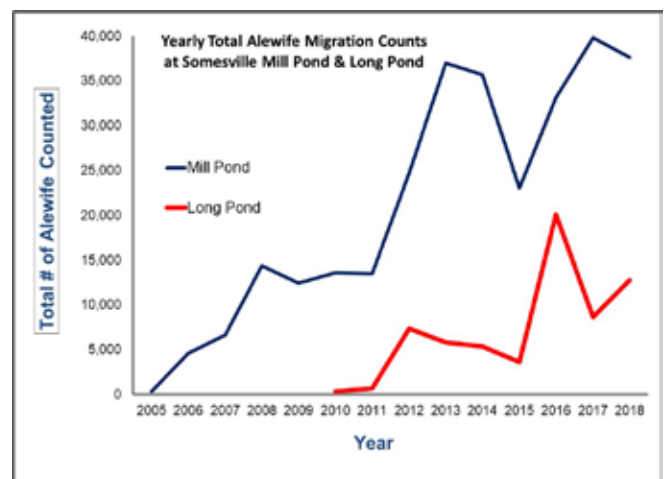
Resources to monitor the recovery of the local alewife population after significant fish passage improvements coordinated by former Sanctuary Director David Lamon 12 years ago. Graph 2 shows the yearly total returning alewife counted at the Mill Pond (2005-2018) and Long Pond (2010-2018) – a significantly positive overall trend.

The Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) supplemented the alewife population in Long Pond from 1985 to 1990, then again in 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2013. The total number stocked in Long Pond was 22,227, according to a report from former DMR Staff Biologist Claire Enterline, while Somes Pond received a total of 1,384 alewife in 2006 and 2007. The sources of the spawning condition fish were the Androscoggin River (Brunswick Fishway), Union River (Ellsworth Dam), and Sebasticook River (Ft. Halifax Dam). The Sanctuary started tracking returning fish at Long Pond in 2010. Alewife were also stocked in Long Pond in the early 1950s.

While total numbers have increased significantly, the age structure of the returning fish population suggests some issues with the health of the population. We take several scales from the backs of 100 alewife at both the Mill Pond and Long Pond each year. These samples are spread throughout the time of the run from beginning to end. Scales are sent to DMR for analysis under microscope to detect the number of annual rings present for aging and to see if these rings have been scuffed up. If a scale shows signs of abrasion, it means the fish sampled has made its way upstream before to spawn, scraping across ledge and rocks to make it up – a repeat spawner.



Comparison of 2017 and 2018 alewife migration counts at the Somesville Mill Pond and Long Pond, Mt. Desert, Maine



Yearly total alewife migration counts at the Somesville Mill Pond and Long Pond from 2005-2018

Alewife make spawning runs from age 3 to 9. Results from the past few years' scale sampling show that most returnees are 3 or 4 years old, with some 5 year olds, and very few older fish. Not surprisingly, a wider age range would be representative of a healthier population. Older fish are generally larger fish, and females can carry more eggs as they get bigger. Our repeat spawning rate the past two years has been in the 10-15% range. We are not sure why we don't have more older fish returning. Possibilities include predation, ocean harvest, and drought induced low stream water levels during outbound migration. We look forward to comparing this run to others along our coast and trying to understand more fully. This fall we'll get another snapshot of this population from analysis of 2018 scale samples.

Overall, the Somes Brook run is much better off now than in the recent past, thanks to fish passage improvements and a great deal of partner and volunteer help. Financial support will be important, too, as some of the fish ladder chambers have already deteriorated and require patching and replacement. Labor and material costs for parts of the project we can't do ourselves adds up quickly. We need to tackle needed repairs and replacement so we don't reverse course on alewife recovery and the ability of other species, like eels, to move up and down the watershed.

Thanks to our volunteer fish counting crew: Sharon and Enoch Albert, John Correa, Anna Farrell, Elli Hartig, Lindsey Jones, Emma Kimball, Barbara Myers, Sanctuary Board Member Chris Petersen, Xochitl Ortiz Ross, Rusty and Julie Taylor, and James Zordan. Volunteer scale sampling help this year came from Kira Wilson, Xochitl Ortiz Ross, Jake Jacobson, Liz Laverack, and JF Burns. Bruce Connery, Bik Wheeler, Chis Heilakka, Erickson Smith, Chris Long, Lara Katz, Morgan Ingalls, and the rest of the Biological Staff at ANP are always a big help with installing the Long Pond fish trap and work up and down the watershed. Other stream passage maintenance crew include John Correa, Gilly Gilmartin, Michael Marion, Kira and Xochitl, Chis Petersen, David Lamon, James Zordan and a great College of the Atlantic student group. EBS in Town Hill was helpful again this year in offering the purchase at cost of many sandbags, needed for temporary channel refinement. Special thanks to JF Burns who does the vast majority of counting and moving of fish from the trap into Long Pond. Thanks to all!



Park Biologist Bruce Connery and College of the Atlantic students work on Earth Day 2018, shoring up fragile fish ladder at second dam in preparation for the alewife migration.



Alewife headed up Somes Brook to Somes Pond and Long Pond to spawn. There are four fish ladders and many cascades and high velocity narrow chutes to overcome on the way. These fish are remarkable athletes - impressive strength and endurance!



This large, early arriving alewife was spotted, grabbed, and swallowed by the black-backed gull waiting for such an opportunity.



Sanctuary Volunteer JF Burns netting alewife from top of the fish ladder trap into Long Pond, counting along the way.

Volunteer Profile: Alan Parks

"Barely a day passes when I am not hiking, walking, birding, or working outdoors. I grew up in a birding family in Massachusetts, but spent most of my life in Maine from Tenants Harbor, to Patten, Bangor and eventually Mt. Desert Island. Living in the Town Hill area the past 20 years, I greatly appreciate what the Island has to offer.

I came to know Billy Helprin when he was the MDI Land Steward for Maine Coast Heritage Trust and developed the Kittredge Brook Forest Trail, which borders my property. I took an interest in helping maintain the new trail, and offered to help at Somes-Meynell when Billy became the Director. My involvement at the Sanctuary began with weekly nature walk participation, and progressed to volunteering as a Courtesy Boat Inspector (CBI) starting in 2017 at Pond's End on Long Pond.

Interactions with boaters and tourists provide the perfect opportunity to help them understand what's needed to keep Maine's lakes as free of aquatic invasive species as possible. So far I have found every boater to be cooperative with the courtesy inspections and appreciative of the work that SMWS spearheads to protect our environment and natural resources. CBI is 5% hands-on inspection and 95% education. While Courtesy Boat Inspection is a serious endeavor, it is also has a funny side, such as the time a boater from Connecticut asked me if I was there to make sure boaters were polite!

I'm truly appreciative of the experience and training provided by Billy and Sanctuary Assistant Alex Douwes. I'm glad to be able to give back to the land that has given us so much!"

Alan has also helped with the new MDI Loon Watch interpretive program at Echo Lake Beach and serves as a host for groups using the Sanctuary building when staff members are away. Volunteers like Alan make the Sanctuary's scope of work possible. We do a lot with a little in terms of staff size and budget – volunteers, partners, and supporters in various roles are essential to our success!



Invasive Species Forum

The Sanctuary and partners held an invasive species forum at the Neighborhood House in Northeast Harbor on Saturday June 16th to help our island community learn about invasive species presence, identification, and trends. Conservation partners included Acadia National Park, Maine Forest Service, Land and Garden Preserve, and the Sustainability Committee of the Town of Mt. Desert. This was one educational event in our overall effort to increase awareness of the issues, actions, and helpful contacts for dealing with invasive species of all types.

Maine Forest Service Entomologist Colleen Teerling shared the latest news about current distribution and management of invasive forest insects pests; Acadia National Park Exotic Plant Team Manager Jesse Wheeler and Land & Garden Preserve Land Foreman Jesse Hartson spoke about terrestrial invasive plant control efforts; and Sanctuary Director Billy Helprin profiled aquatic invasive species work on MDI, including the Sanctuary's Courtesy Boat Inspections at Long Pond.



*Invasive Species Forum
information and specimen displays*



*Invasive forest insect pest
information table*



*ANP's Jesse Wheeler introducing
the invasive plant challenge for
Mt. Desert Island*



*Maine Forest Service Entomologist
Colleen Teerling discussing the cold
tolerance of red pine scale*

The Great Fish Migration Collaborative Education Program

This past spring, many of our local schools visited the alewife migration scene in Somesville to observe and learn about the spectacle of this natural event. Middle School and Elementary school students, teachers and parents were the primary participants. This is the second year we have conducted these educational activities in partnership with Acadia National Park Education Rangers, MDI Historical Society Staff, and Sanctuary Staff and volunteers. The program provides participants with

an opportunity to learn about alewife ecology and Somesville history, while helping count migrating fish. Our program also connects students with the natural heritage of our local environment. Seeing fish up close, as they exit the top of the fish ladder, rest in handling containers awaiting scale sampling, and being carried off by frequently successful osprey, ignites curiosity and excitement in young and old alike. "How can they make it up this strong, whitewater current? What other species

try to capture and eat them? How long do they stay in freshwater before returning to the ocean?" These are just a few of the questions students ask during visits and many of them are answered from their own observations during the field experience. Reinforcing the connection between young people and the rest of nature is certainly an endeavor we will continue to pursue. Thanks to the recovering local alewife population, we have a great educational opportunity to assist that effort.



*Students getting a close up view of alewife
before measurement and scale sampling*



*Students watching and counting alewife
entering and leaving the mill pond*



*Students watching alewife ascend the
Somesville mill pond fish ladder*

2018 SUMMER & FALL PUBLIC PROGRAMS

THURSDAY MORNING

BIRDING/NATURALIST WALKS

Every Thursday - summer, fall, and even into winter, from 9:00 - about 10:30.

Meet at Sanctuary headquarters to explore Sanctuary trails, and sometimes beyond, looking for whatever the group is inspired by and working on our bird ID skills by sight and sound. Join the camaraderie of the group by sharing your recent sightings around the island and growing our collective knowledge of nature. Check the Sanctuary Facebook Page or send an inquiry email to be on the list for information on exact times and meeting places.

COURTESY BOAT INSPECTION PROGRAM TRAINING

Monday, June 11th, 1:00-2:30

This training is for volunteers who value our high quality lakes, ponds, and streams and want to help keep them that way by reducing the likelihood of an unwanted introduction of invasive aquatic plants and animals. One of our best ways to ensure their protection is to help educate visiting boaters about the threat posed by these invaders and the simple techniques for checking their boating and fishing equipment before and after launching. For those who enjoy interacting with MDI visitors and residents, talking about what makes our lakes special, and gaining perspectives on how invasive species affect people and wildlife elsewhere, a few hours a week devoted to this project is a great fit! You will be making an important contribution that benefits all.

INVASIVE SPECIES FORUM

Saturday, June 16th, 1:00-3:00, Neighbor House, Northeast Harbor

The Sanctuary is working with conservation partners including Acadia National Park, Maine Forest Service, Land and Garden Preserve, and the Sustainability Committee of Mt. Desert to learn about invasive species presence, identification, trends, and share information with land owners, gardeners, landscaping companies, interested citizens, and other land managers. Join us to learn about current distribution and management of invasive forest insects pests from Maine Forest Service Entomologist Colleen Teerling; Acadia National Park and Land & Garden Preserve terrestrial invasive plant control efforts; and aquatic invasive species programs, including the Sanctuary's Courtesy Boat Inspections at Long Pond, to prevent their spread and aid early detection.

RIVER OTTER NATURAL HISTORY WITH KIRK GENTALEN

Tuesday, July 10th at 7:00

River otters are the largest member of the Weasel family in Maine but often go undetected due to their (largely) nocturnal habits. Otters are actually plentiful in the state and especially numerous along the coast and near-shore islands. Kirk will discuss river otter natural history and behavior as well as tricks and tips to heighten your experiences with these creatures, what otter sign is and how to find it, and where to put your game camera for the best chance of getting otter photos. Come join us for otter photos and stories galore!

STORM SURGE PROJECT SCIENCE CAFÉ: PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A CITIZEN SCIENCE APPROACH TO MEASURING STORM SURGE-ESTUARINE INTERACTION IN MAINE

Wednesday, July 18th 5:00-7:00 pm

Researchers, project volunteers, and interested members of the public will gather to share results of this ongoing study. Dr. Kim Huguenard (Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Maine), Dr. Laura Rickard (Department of Communication and Journalism, UMaine); and graduate students Abby Roche and Kyah Lucky designed the study to investigate the phenomena of storm surge. Volunteer data collectors have been measuring water depth at various locations since late last summer and it's time to look back at what we have so far. This information will be critical for communities planning for future coastal development and climate change adaptation. The study design compares three Maine estuaries with varying characteristics, Bass Harbor, the Penobscot River, and the Bagaduce River. Physical characteristics of estuaries and harbors may intensify or attenuate the effects of storm surge – let's find out how.

USING ALL SENSES TO CONNECT WITH NATURE - EVENING TALK AND TRAIL WALK WITH KAREN ZIMMERMANN.

Tuesday, July 24th 7:00 to 8:30pm

Maine Master Naturalist Karen Zimmermann will share techniques for

improving our sensory awareness of the outdoors. Honing night vision is part of this experience, but encouraging people to use their senses of smell, touch, taste, and hearing are also important. After indoor talk and discussion, we will fully experience an evening exploration of the trails on the south shore of Somes Pond. Bring a flashlight with red lense/cover if you have one.

FERN IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM WITH ROBERTA SHARP

Saturday, July 28th 10:00-12:00

Maine Master Naturalist and Sanctuary Board member will introduce participants to a simplified fern key to help identify seven or more common ferns found around the Somes Pond watershed. There will be time for identifying ferns on Sanctuary trails after an introduction with the key and Roberta's fern herbarium. Bring a journal if you are inclined to sketch your findings.

LET NATURE INSPIRE YOU – CHILDREN'S ART WORKSHOP WITH REBEKAH RAYE

August 11th 10:00-12:00 am

Join artist, illustrator, art educator and children's book author, Rebekah Raye for a morning of observation and inspiration, drawing and painting from nature around the Sanctuary. Rebekah is a wonderful artist and so great with kids – we are happy to have her coming back this summer! We'll start out with an informative walk on Sanctuary trails where we will learn about different habitats and sketch what we observe. We'll then gather at the HQ building and deck to turn our sketches into paintings expressing our experiences onto paper. Ages 6+. All materials provided. Open to families, registration required.

LOON PADDLE WITH MAINE AUDUBON'S SUSAN GALLO

Wednesday August 15th 1:30-3:30

Bring your canoe or kayak to paddle around Somes Pond with wildlife biologist and loon specialist Susan Gallo. We'll watch our resident loon pair with their chicks (hopefully) and learn about their feeding, parenting, and territorial behavior.

LOONS AROUND MAINE - TALK WITH SUSAN GALLO

Wednesday August 15th 7:00 pm

Learn about the state of Maine's loons – population trends, survey methods,

ongoing threats, research needs, and conservation efforts. Sanctuary Director Billy Helprin will give an update on MDI loons as well.

FULL MOON PADDLE

Sunday August 26th at 6:30

Watch the moon rise over the mountains from the vantage point of kayaks or canoes on Somes Pond. Open your senses to the sights and sounds as we transition from dusk to moonlit night. We'll watch our resident loon pair with one fast growing chick, hopefully catch a glimpse of bats, nighthawks, and muskrat. Catch up on what has been happening around the pond from Sanctuary staff. Bring your own canoe or kayak and meet on the pond near the island.

INVASIVE PLANT PATROL TRAINING AND MDI LAKE SURVEYS

Weekend of September 7th, 8th, 9th at Sanctuary HQ. Survey locations and meeting times to be shared later

Participants will learn how to use field guide keys to help identify suspected invaders, become familiar with common native plants, and practice the skills needed to be an effective early detector. Novices will be paired with experienced "IPers." This is an opportunity to develop more highly trained local citizens to help with future survey work in Hancock County. The program will be led by the Lake Stewards of Maine (formerly the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program) and co-hosted by Acadia National Park, Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary and other partners.

INTRO TO MUSHROOM NATURAL HISTORY, IDENTIFICATION, AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Friday, September 14th at 7:00 pm for the talk and Sanctuary walk Saturday the 15th 9:00-11:00 am

Maine Coast Heritage Trust Land Steward and Naturalist Kirk Gentalen will join us again to share his enthusiasm for the natural history of mushrooms, their role in ecosystems, interactions with humans, and mushroom photography. Every species is different "so you can never tell what's going to come up on a fungus walk. Having a group search, find, and really discover the world of fungi is a unique focus for a walk – and there can be discoveries at every turn." These events are for all interest and knowledge levels.

Please call for details. Space is limited and registration is required.

For more information or to register, please call 244-4027 or email us at somesmeynell@gmail.com

Species Spotlight: Wood Duck

Wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*) are beautiful creatures we don't often get to see, at least not for very long, due to their secretive nature and their preferred forested wetland habitat. They are small dabbling ducks about 20 inches long with omnivorous feeding habits. Occasionally through the winter a male can be found amongst mallard and black ducks resting along the banks of the mill pond in Somesville, however, most wood ducks typically start arriving in our neighborhood ponds and wetlands early to mid-March.

Adult males (drakes) and females (hens), and ducklings during the summer, can be seen in the marshy edges and inlets of Somes Pond and similar habitats with plentiful emergent aquatic vegetation and overhanging trees and shrubs. It's easy to look at a wetland, with rushes and sedges standing tall mid-summer, and not find any wood ducks. Suddenly, camouflaged ducklings can emerge, darting left and right as they chase down emergent mayflies, jump up to catch a spider, or inspect the inside of a yellow spatterdock flower for

flies contained within. Plant material makes up the majority of wood duck diets throughout the year, with red oak acorns a favorite.

Wood ducks have larger eyes, longer tails, broader wings, and legs farther forward than other dabbling (primarily surface feeding) ducks. These adaptations, along with sharp toe nails, enable them to maneuver safely around their bottomland forest and wetland matrix habitat, to perch in trees, and climb in and out of tree cavities. They are also the fastest ducks on land, running up to 7 miles per hour.

Wood duck boxes on posts are a familiar sight in many small pond edges and wetlands. These boxes are substitutes for this duck's preferred tree cavity nest sites. Nest cavities high up in larger hardwoods are ideal but sometimes scarce. Cavities created by Pileated woodpeckers certainly benefit these ducks. Where cavities are not plentiful enough for the density of breeding hens, "dump nesting" may occur, with one or more hens depositing eggs into the

nest of another. This nest parasitism can result in egg counts of up to 40 or more! Once the ducklings hatch, they have to climb up the cavity wall, jump out of the opening, parachute to the forest floor, and then follow their mother (surrogate or biological) up to a mile to the nearest water. What a start to life on the outside!

Wood ducks are believed by some researchers to have been the most abundant duck in eastern North America in the 1800s, but nearly went extinct by the early 1900s due to excessive market hunting. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 completely outlawed open hunting seasons on wood ducks until 1941, when the ban was lifted. After that, restricted seasons were allowed. These protective measures, along with the species' wide range, diverse diet, and reproductive potential, has enabled them to rebound significantly. While not often easily seen on Mt. Desert Island, there are more around than we probably know, and it is always a better day when we do find one.



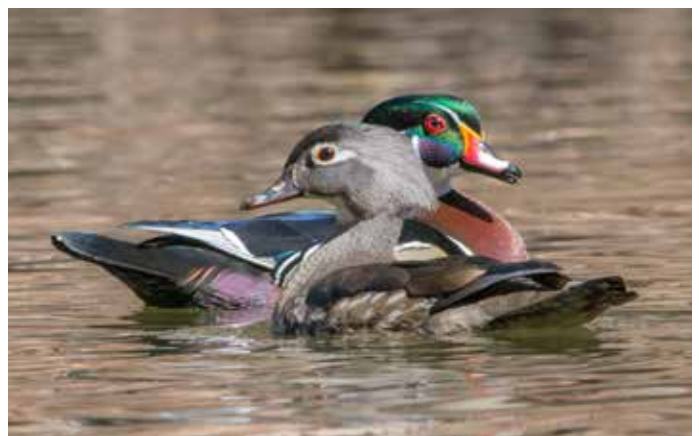
RAY YEAGER



RAY YEAGER



JOHN RIVERS



RAY YEAGER

Holding the Line Against Aquatic Invaders

Acadia National Park's Exotic Plant Management Team Leader Jesse Wheeler and Sanctuary Director Billy Helprin recently gave a presentation about MDI aquatic invasive species (AIS) efforts at the 2018 Maine Lake Monitoring Conference in western Maine. The Conference, hosted by the Lake Stewards of Maine (LSM), formerly the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program, attracted 130 certified lake monitors, in addition to government agency personnel and numerous sponsors.

Beyond the high quality of our lakes, we discussed public awareness talks we have offered at the Sanctuary, invasive plant paddle trainings, and survey work accomplished over the past three years with the help of LSM. Below are some of the results of our work and plans for the future.

OUTCOMES

- No aquatic invaders found
- Updated aquatic plant species list for each lake or pond
- Establishment of local trained citizens
- Increased awareness of invasive species community wide
- Strengthened relationships with Lake Stewards of Maine and volunteer expert botanists

NEXT STEPS

- Invasive Species Forum (*see related story*)
- 2018 survey of remaining lakes & revisit likely inoculation spots September 7th, 8th, and 9th
- Help Hancock County AIS coordinators survey remote lakes with little recent attention
- Develop "travel team" for rapid response to invasive species reports
- Continued education and identification/survey practice on the water
- Expand Courtesy Boat Inspection Program at Long Pond

The Lake Monitoring Conference offers the opportunity to learn about the contrast between lake conditions on MDI and lakes at the opposite end of the spectrum. Our clear lakes and ponds, with their high water quality and no known invasive plants, are of great value in many ways, but are easy to take for granted. While on Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) duty at Long Pond,

we are often reminded by boaters from other states how lucky we are. They share stories of having to mow their lakes to keep invasive vegetation mats down, cut channels for boat passage, and witnessing algae blooms causing oxygen depletion and massive fish kills.

Our CBI prevention efforts are aimed at directing boaters to check their own boats, trailers, and fishing equipment each time they leave and enter a water body. "Clean, drain, and dry" equipment that goes in and out of the water and "remove all plants" are the basic messages. These efforts will only be effective at protecting the scenic, recreational, and wildlife values of our valued lakes if they are implemented by everyone. If you would like to join the CBI effort, even for a couple of hours per week, please contact the Sanctuary. Thanks to Alan Parks, Ron and Karen Greenberg, JF Burns, and Alex Douwes for shouldering the load this summer.

One need not be an aquatic botanist to recognize a change from "normal" lake/stream conditions to "strange" conditions. If you know what is typical for lakes and other water bodies with which you are familiar, you can alert others when something seems different or "odd." There is no harm in sharing your observations or samples collected for identification and confirmation. Remember to mark the site

where the plant in question was found. The Sanctuary has a supply of simple to use "quick key" guides designed by LSM that identify 11 aquatic plant species we do not want in our lakes. We would like to get these in the hands of more lake observers, so please contact us to get one. The more people we have looking below the water surface, the better off we'll be. Contact the Sanctuary if you would like to join our September survey effort!



Easy to use aquatic invasive plant identification keys are available from the Sanctuary.



Our clear, aquatic invasive plant free lakes are some of Mt. Desert Island's greatest natural assets. We're working on keeping them that way.

2018 MDI Loon Update

Loons started returning to MDI lakes in early April, just after this year's ice out – a variable process depending on each lake's dimensions and exposure to wind. A wet late winter and early spring created high lake levels at the start of breeding season. Male loons are typically the first ones back to re-establish their former territory or try to take one over. The long-time Somes Pond resident male returned April 6th, when a third of the pond was still covered with ice.

We know it was the resident male because he has a unique combination of bands on his legs. The bands were placed when he was an adult territorial male on Somes Pond in 2002, so he is at least 20 years old. Identifying individuals with certainty allows us to learn a great deal about loon life spans, nest site fidelity, mate fidelity, breeding success, migration range, and more. Thanks to banded loons we know that some of them can reach 30 years of age and still be breeding! The Sanctuary would like to support banding more loons in the future, with the help of experienced partners at Loon Conservation Associates and Biodiversity Research Institute.

Beyond Somes Pond, loon pairs established territories in most of the usual locations, but not all of them actually nested. Some pairs started nesting, but did not lay eggs (at Long Pond Outlet, Rum Island/Northern Neck Cove of Long Pond). One egg was laid on the Eagle Lake nest, but it was abandoned by June 18th for unknown reasons. Here are the numbers on chicks that did hatch:

CHICKS HATCHED / SURVIVING (AS OF AUGUST 1)

SOMES POND:

2 hatched, June 12th / neither survived,
1 lived 5 days, 2nd chick, 4.5 weeks

LONG POND - SOUTHERN NECK COVE:

1 hatched, June 13th / did not survive after 2 weeks

UPPER HADLOCK POND:

2 hatched, June 22nd and 23rd / still going!

ECHO LAKE SOUTH TERRITORY:

2 hatched, July 10th / still going!

These numbers are close to last year's, when six eggs hatched and four chicks made it to fledge in the fall. We still have a ways to go for the four remaining chicks to fly away from their natal lakes.



Echo Lake South male with his ten day old chicks.

RAY YEAGER



Upper Hadlock loon family. One and two day old chicks partially under wing of one parent, while being fed by the other.

RALPH JOHNSON

It is not unusual for a small chick to fall prey to an underwater predator like a large bass, chain pickerel, or snapping turtle. The longer-lived Somes Pond chick, however, most likely died from other causes related to intruding loons visiting the lake. We have seen more "intrusions" on Long Pond, Somes Pond, and Echo Lake than in past recent years. One unwelcome visit is described in the field report below:

JULY 5TH SOMES POND REPORT

"We had interesting loon observations during our weekly public walk this morning. There were 3 adult loons in Somes Pond in front of the Sanctuary deck, swimming in a tight group at 0900. Somes Pond is a one territory lake, with the territorial pair and their single, three week old chick as residents. Visiting, intruding loons can be a problem - potentially attempting to oust the resident birds and go after chicks. The resident male (ID'ed by a sighting of his unique leg bands) was with the intruders, expressing his displeasure with displays of agitation such as the "penguin dance" - rising up on legs, vertical posture, bill tucked down, and running on water. There was quite a bit of flying around and trying to escort the visitors away. We weren't sure at 1st if the resident female was one of these three, but we did not see the chick. We hoped we would find

the chick with its mother on the east end of the pond, so down the trail we went to look. We eventually did find those 2 on far side, east end. Phew! The chick was being fed small fish, and they were far from the skirmishes the male was engaged in. We had to leave after a couple hours of watching - hopefully the whole family was able to get back to less stressful activities.

"During the 2nd week of July, visits from groups of intruders to Somes Pond continued, and after the 12th the chick was no longer seen. The cause of death was the result of one of two probable options. Option 1: the Somes Pond adults were distracted while dealing with the intruders; the chick was left by itself; and an observant eagle swooped in and grabbed it. Option 2: one of the numerous intruding loons went after the chick and killed it directly, in an attempt to disrupt pair bonds of the existing territorial adults.



RAY YEAGER

Sizing each other up on north end of Echo Lake . . . territorial defense by residents and probing effort by intruders to possibly take over the territory for next year's breeding season.

"We will continue to monitor the survival of the remaining chicks and loon behaviors until all birds leave the lakes before ice covers them this winter. We will, of course, be awaiting their return at the beginning of next spring. If you would like to receive updates on the status of MDI loons send an email to somesmeynell@gmail.com and ask to be placed on the MDI Loon Group email list. You can also follow loon and other Sanctuary activities and see photos at the Sanctuary's Facebook Page: [Somes Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary](#)."

NEW MDI LOON WATCH PROGRAM AT ECHO LAKE

A new loon education and outreach program called the **MDI Loon Watch** was launched this summer at Echo Lake Beach. The effort is a collaboration between Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary and Acadia National Park (ANP). Park and Sanctuary staff and volunteers were on the beach for several hours most days to share

information about loon ecology, conservation, and behavior. Loon Watch interpreters also provided visitors with close-up loon viewing using binoculars and spotting scopes. The program has been a great opportunity to reach many people, who have hopefully taken new awareness and knowledge about wildlife back home with them.

Staff and volunteers spoke with beach visitors about loons each day. The stars of the show were the Echo Lake South resident loons, incubating their two eggs on the nearby nest raft. Some days more than 200 beach goers came over to the loon watch station to have a look and talk with us. It was surprising how many people thought that the loons were actually ducks; fortunately we had lots of books, photos, and other loon related props to help young and old learn a little more during their day at the beach. We had meaningful education contact with about 2,300 visitors and 100 hours of interpretive presence! We are looking forward to educating more people about loons and other wildlife next season, provided that the Echo Lake South pair successfully nests there again.

Thanks to our great ANP Education and Interpretive Staff partners for help in planning and staffing the station; Loon Conservation Associates Director Lee Attix and ANP Biologist Bruce Connery for help training Loon Watch staffers; and Sanctuary Volunteers and Staff Alan Parks, Unn Boucher, Ray Yeager, and Alex Douwes for staffing the station.



Loon Watch station at Echo Lake Beach, June 26th. 2,300 visitors were able to observe adult loons fishing, incubating eggs on nest raft, and chicks emerging from eggs, with the aid of spotting scopes and binoculars over a one month period. It was a great opportunity to ask questions about loon life history, look at educational materials, and share loon stories.

ECHO LAKE BEACH LOON NEST RAFT A SUCCESS

The Echo Lake South loon readily adopted the nest raft Director Billy Helprin built this spring, just after Park Resource Management and Sanctuary Staff placed it in the water. Use of a nest raft is never a

sure thing, but this territorial pair acted like they were expecting delivery of their platform and couldn't wait to get to work customizing the nest. The raft was positioned off the beach and boulder line where they have nested in the past.

The raft location was a compromise to balance the following key site features: 1) more distance/less potential disturbance from swimmers and beach walkers than in past years, 2) deeper water around the nest raft with greater distance from the progressively more shallow and drying mouth of Lurvey Brook, and 3) a decent distance from the eastern shore of the lake. Significantly lowering water levels the past 3 summers have resulted in mostly dry land around their nests, allowing for easy predator attacks by mink and other mammals. A large loon egg would be a great energy/food prize for any predator.

Last year, persistent mink nest disturbance near the beach resulted in both eggs not hatching. In past years the resident loons here have had to wait until a chosen site was dry enough to start building, but their first nests quickly become high and dry. Because their legs are located very far back on their bodies for superior underwater swimming, loons cannot walk well at all. Ideally, they need to be able to approach and depart from the nest underwater. Therefore, the better nest sites are adjacent to deep water. In 2016, the pair built three nests, progressively farther from the expanding shoreline, resulting in eggs hatching August 18th – way late! This year's chicks hatched July 10th. That earlier date gives them the needed time (10-12 weeks) before winter's approach, to grow, to learn how to fish for themselves, and to fly.

Thanks to Eric Henry, Duane and Ruth Braun, and Ronan McLoughlin for providing materials to make the raft; and ANP Resource Management Staff and Lifeguards for signage and floating line to help ensure swimmers and boaters would not approach too closely. It has been a great cooperative effort to provide an improved opportunity for this pair's nesting success.



Happy birthday! One of the two chicks hatched the day of this photo, July 10th, making its way over to a swimming father loon, while mother sits on nest with the sibling under wing, July 10th.



The nest raft has an arch made of lobster trap mesh to provide aerial predator (eagle) protection and has pine boughs attached to provide shade. The arch also provides protection from attack from the water on the north and south sides. Native sod was placed as a nest material base. The raft was open to the west (main body of the lake) and the east for loon access.



Echo Lake South resident adult rotating eggs before sitting down to continue incubation on nest raft, June 27th.



Echo Lake Beach, July 4th afternoon, with temperatures in the 90s. This loon pair is remarkably tolerant of their noisy, splashing daytime neighbors!



Busy day at Echo Lake Beach, July 4th afternoon. The nest raft is out there, with a loon on it probably wondering what all these strange creatures are doing here everyday.

RAY YEAGER

RAY YEAGER

RAY YEAGER

Story of an Unusual Visitor

The Sanctuary's loon monitoring program relies upon many volunteer observers and partner organizations, including Acadia National Park, to help keep track of nesting success, movement patterns, and chick survival. We continue to add members to the MDI loon observation group, increasing our capacity to share sightings, photographs, and information about these very interesting creatures we share our lakes with. In April, the group shared observations that revealed an opportunity to learn about a rare wildlife interaction and unfortunate outcome.

Here are some edited excerpts from Sanctuary updates to the loon group about an unusual visitor and a forensic investigation, made possible by our loon network:

On Sun, Apr 22, 2018 at 9:17 AM, **Somes Meynell** <somesmeynell@gmail.com> wrote:

Good morning loon people, a quick note to be on the lookout for a different kind of loon...

*Eben Salvatore sent me some photos yesterday of a loon at the very north end of Long Pond to the west of the Pond's End boat ramp. The loon was fishing in the shallows near some docks. The bird had winter or immature plumage but when I saw the photos I immediately thought of a relative of the common loon - a red-throated loon (*Gavia stellata*)! They are the smallest loon species. Red-throated loons (RTLO) are about 25" in length compared to 32" for our common loon (*Gavia immer*); weigh about 3.1 lbs. vs. 7-9 lbs.; wingspan = 36" vs. 46" for common loons, and are usually only here on migration - not at all frequently. Observations of them in Maine are usually along the coast during migration to and from their high arctic breeding grounds, particularly in late October and November*

and occasionally during the winter non-breeding period. They are sometimes spotted on Christmas Bird Counts along our coast. They have a slender build, have a thin bill typically tilted slightly upwards, and can look grebe-like.

I looked for this bird late yesterday in the northern cove of Long Pond without success. It is possible it ventured somewhere nearby but may have continued on towards the arctic.

On Wed, Apr 25, 2018 at 8:17 AM, **Somes Meynell** <somesmeynell@gmail.com> wrote:

Good morning loon group,

After the excitement of Eben's sighting of a red-throated loon, early Saturday morning on Long Pond, I have some bad news to report. Attempts to find the unusual visiting loon later on Saturday were not successful, but on Monday afternoon I received a call from nearby resident JF Burns. I was out on Long Pond with Sanctuary volunteer Mike Forbes fixing up the Southern Neck Cove nest platform and checking other nest areas and loon pairs. On our way back in, JF relayed that he had found a bird near the stream-side of Ripples Brook, below Long Pond Outlet. From his description I was concerned.... He sent a photo and I knew. It was the juvenile RTLO. Mike and I went over, and JF showed us where the bird was.

There were no signs of external trauma/damage. The juvenile red-throat was found about 375 feet below the outflow of Long Pond. There are two narrow outflow channels at the outlet through or over which the weak or dead bird would have been passively sucked downstream. The stream below the outflow is boulder strewn and turbulent with very high

water levels currently. It is also a densely forested stream corridor with closed canopy over the stream. As we know, the bird was observed fishing in shallow water near the north end of Long Pond early Saturday morning and was photographed by Eben. The bird looked alert and was active, head erect, diving and chasing small fish.



Immature red-throated loon found along Ripples Stream, April 23rd, 2018

My hypothesis about the cause of death is lead ingestion and subsequent poisoning.... perhaps it was still alive but weakened when it was swept downstream. Lead poisoning can have significant effects on behavior - did the bird strangely decide to get away from the water and shuffle along till it couldn't go any farther? Was it trying to get back to the lake overland? Over the years and more recently, the north end of Long Pond to the west of Pond's End has been a common place for people to fish in the shallow waters just off Pretty Marsh Rd. I have found fishing tackle and line recently and in the past in that location.

It would not be a big stretch to think that this loon ingested a lead sinker (use and sale of which, under one ounce and 2.5", are banned by the state due to their lethal effects) for its crop while in the area on Saturday. If that were the case, the poisoning effect would have to have been quite fast acting. Bruce Connery (ANP Biologist) and I have spoken with Tufts University veterinarian Mark Pokras and staff at Avian Haven Wild Bird Rehabilitation Center in Freedom, Maine (<http://www.avianhaven.org/>) about learning more from the bird via x-rays and necropsy (autopsy for non-humans). This bird is quite a bit smaller than a common loon and presumably the effects of lead ingestion would be felt even more acutely



Red-throated loon adult and chick



Immature red-throated loon

due to smaller body mass. I measured an approximate weight of the bird at 2.0 lbs which is on the light side for RTLO; it was 25" from tip of bill to tail, about typical. There were no obvious bone breaks or malformations/dysfunction of movement of legs or wings.

The bird has been double bagged and kept cool in the Sanctuary refrigerator the past couple of days. I am going to take it to Avian Haven later this afternoon. We'll find out from an x-ray if the lead poisoning hypothesis can be supported. I will let you know.

On Thurs, Apr 26, 2018 at 9:00 AM, Somes Meynell <somesmeynell@gmail.com> wrote:

Good morning loon group, we have results from x-rays and a necropsy of our little loon visitor. My lead poisoning hypothesis was not supported. The great folks at Avian Haven were very accommodating of our desire to find out what happened to the red-throated loon from Long Pond.

An examination of the loon's x-ray image showed no lead ingested. With that clearly evident we wondered what else might have happened to the bird. Dr. Caroline Neville, the staff vet at Avian Haven was kind enough to perform a necropsy exam, with me present, to explore other possibilities. We lucked out that she was available to do this at the end of the day. While the outside of the loon's body and plumage did not show any signs of trauma - that was not the case inside.



Red-throated loon x-ray showing no evidence of lead ingestion, at Avian Haven in Freedom, Maine, April 25th, 2018.

There was an obvious hole in the chest cavity caused by a penetrating pointed bill. It is quite common to find healed scars

in the skin and elsewhere, from survived incidents throughout an individual loon's life. There was a perforation of the liver and damage to the heart caused by this bill stabbing. It was clear that the wounds were quite recent, but impossible to say with certainty if they happened during the past few days on Long Pond or if they were incurred a little earlier, when the bird was likely in near shore ocean water. The bird had not eaten in a while and was somewhat deficient in body mass.

It is quite plausible that one or both of the Long Pond Outlet pair may have encountered this loon up close, and we know that the outlet cove is the core nesting area for the LPO pair. Finding our unusual visitor there would not have been a welcome discovery. We can be pretty sure that the way the RTLO ended up alongside Ripples stream was by going through one of the outlet channels involuntarily. There was significant bruising on the front of the neck/vertebral column - likely a result of the rough ride over boulders and other obstructions in the outflow channel and the fast rushing stream, particularly if the bird was significantly disabled.

We can't say for sure what happened but the scenario described above seems

reasonable. With all things observational, and with scientific study, we want to make sure not to jump to conclusions - our inferences are not always accurate statements of what has really happened. That is why I used the term "hypothesis" when conjecturing about the loon's cause of death. The lead hypothesis was not supported. At least we have a much better picture of what transpired for the red-throat - that is not always so clear even with careful necropsy. My great thanks to Caroline and Avian Haven for helping us all find out.

Lead poisoning is still the number one cause of death for loons in Maine. We want to continue to help get the word out about alternative materials for fishing gear and the laws regarding lead sinkers and jigs. But, our experience with this little loon is a reminder of how challenging life can be for non-human animals too. We are fortunate to be able to gain some insight into the successes and challenges of these interesting creatures. Thank you for sharing the observations that makes that perspective possible.

If you would like to be added to the MDI loon observation group list contact Billy Helprin at somesmeynell@gmail.com





Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary

*Dedicated to Conservation and Education in the
Somes Pond Watershed*

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These items would help us provide better educational experiences and accomplish our research and management goals. Used but workable items welcome!

- **Foldable or stackable chairs - for use on deck or in headquarters**
- **Snowshoes of all sizes**
- **Good condition life jackets**
- **Canoes and kayaks**
- **Canoe and kayak paddles**

All donations to the Somes-Meynell Wildlife Sanctuary are tax-deductible.

Thank You for your support!

A wonderful family from Hong Kong visited the Sanctuary in June and had some great views of the Somes Pond loon chick and both adults. Sanctuary Assistant Alex Douwes is shown here getting the short scope set up for the boys to view the loons. After the family returned home, we received a nice message from mother Rhiannon: "Back in Hong Kong now and really miss Mount Desert. We had such a lovely visit to your beautiful sanctuary and really appreciated the time you and Alex gave to us. The children learned so much about loons that day. Keep up the fabulous work you are doing!"

