



Les Cheneaux Islands Association

Fall Newsletter

October, 2017



1158 S Park Ave, Cedarville, MI 49719 ~ 906-484-2558 ~ lcia@cedarville.net ~ www.islandsassoc.org

President's Message

Dave Robertson

The 2017 season has come and gone in Les Cheneaux. Many of you regarded this "summer" as more of a long extended spring. In fact, the temperature of Lake Huron was 6-8 degrees less than the average over the past 5 years. If you wanted warm, sunny days, you should have stuck around after Labor Day! Summer finally arrived and LCI basked in a beautiful late summer. That's our LCI: saltless, shark free and hurricane free!

2017 saw the continued circle of life. We lost dear family and friends, such as LCIA Past President Dave Ecker. On the other hand the extended Heuck family recently celebrated the birth of the 6th generation of that family. With the changing of the seasons come ever new changes and challenges for our community.

At the August Annual Meeting LCIA welcomed two new board members, James Maison and Susan Van Zee. We also have a new treasurer to try to replace long-time money man, John Hotchkiss. Teresa Woodruff already is doing a great job. Anyone wishing to volunteer for a leadership position with LCIA should contact one of the officers or board members.

Although the summer was fleeting away, much still happened after the Annual Meeting. The final Board Meeting

was held before Labor Day. Issues such as invasive species [cormorants, Asian carp, and phragmites] and the Cedarville harbor project were discussed. It appears the harbor project will progress. LCIA donated \$10,000 to support the early stages of the project. The project is funded largely by the Michigan Waterways Program, with money coming through the Michigan State Waterways Fund from state marine fuel tax and water craft registrations. By law, administration of the Waterways Program is through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and overseen by the Department's Parks and Recreation Division. There are consequences to accepting the project, including fees for docking, similar to the Hessel Harbor, and construction of a harbor building. For more information, go to the Michigan DNR website, "Waterways Program Grant." Thanks also to all of you who made personal donations to fulfill the private donation portion of the overall funding.

Congratulations are in order to the LCI committee, that organized and ran the 2017 Ensign class National Championship regatta. It was a great spectacle, even though the final day was washed out. And... a LCYC boat won!

As winter approaches, remember that your LCIA dues

support two important functions: removal and safe storage of LCIA's navigational buoys; and the off-season property inspections. Your property is visited every two weeks by one of our intrepid men, whether braving the elements or enjoying a nice day out of doors. Of course, this assumes ice conditions permit access to the islands. You should feel reassured that LCIA's inspectors know your property and what to look for. Many of them have worked for LCIA for years, even passing positions down in the family. Sometimes a little nepotism is a good thing.

For much more LCIA news and views, visit and follow the LCIA Facebook page YEAR-ROUND. Thanks to Al McCord and Anne McKee for bringing LCIA into the modern world, maintaining both the website and FB page. Al notes that LCIA's Facebook presence started in 2015; the page now has 887 "likes". The page routinely receives over 1,000 views each week. The FB page and website feature general LCIA information, comments from the peanut gallery, photos, and articles discussing issues of local interest such as the controversial and potentially disastrous Enbridge Line 5 pipeline.

Enjoy the off-season months. And remember: only 17 weeks until Memorial Day.

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

DAVE ROBERTSON

SECRETARY/ TREASURER

TERESA WOODRUFF

FIRST

VICE PRESIDENT

ALLEN HOWELL

SECOND

VICE PRESIDENT

MIKE PATRICK

ADMINISTRATION

BOARD SECRETARY

ESTHER ENGLE

MANAGER

MARK ENGLE

DIRECTORS

BARBARA AUGENBLICK

JOHN BENTLEY

VIRGINIA CALVEN

ROSEMARY CONROY

STEVE HONNILA

JAMES KEIGHLEY

GRETCHEN MAHONEY

JAMES MAISON

ROBERT SMITH

SUSAN VAN ZEE

Manager's Report

Mark Engle

Weather & Water Update

Autumn colors reached their peak during the third week of October which is later than normal. Temperatures were above average for all of September and far into October. September was the nicest month of the summer with many warm, sunny days and enough rain to keep a garden growing, plus non-stop lawn mowing. Instead of pulling boats out, many folks took advantage of the great, warm weather for a cruise around the islands and maybe even one last swim in the lake! We may have had a light frost or two but not a hard frost until the morning of October 26.

According to the Army Corp of Engineers, Lake Huron has dropped 2 inches since mid-September, but is still 7 inches higher than one year ago. The outflow from Lake Superior into the St. Mary's River has been above normal for the month of October adding water to all the Great Lakes. Lake Huron is currently 33 inches above the all time lowest recorded depth and 25 inches lower than the highest recorded level for the month of October.

LCIA Property Inspections

LCIA Inspectors began bi-monthly inspections on September 15. Inspectors reported that many seasonal residents are still in the Les Cheneaux, taking advantage of good weather, relaxing, or working on projects. If there are any changes at a residence, please let us know, i.e., adding or changing caretakers or change of contact information, etc.

LCIA Aids to Navigation

LCIA buoys will soon be removed for winter storage. It's always a reminder of the importance of the navigational aids when they are gone and I find myself guessing as to the location of a rock or shoal. Be extra cautious when navigating late in the fall season after LCIA and Coast Guard buoys have been picked up. The water in the LCI's looks smooth on the surface during high water periods... many hazards are now hidden.

Fish & Game Report

Duck and goose hunting are in full swing and a fair amount of shooting can be heard early mornings and evening especially. Large flocks of Redhead ducks have become common as they migrate; using the islands as a stopover sanctuary. Redheads were once a rare and endangered species; they are a beautiful bird and fun to watch.

The Ruffed Grouse population appears to be strong in the Cedarville/Hessel area. Take a walk almost anywhere and you may be startled by the fast, flying bird. If you have never seen a grouse 'dancing,' you are missing an interesting scene.

Fishing activity in the Les Cheneaux has been steady throughout the spring, summer and fall. Perch fishing has been sporadic.

There has been good fishing and then there are rumors of good fishing, usually in secretive locations! By the time you get to the location, there is a rumor about another secretive location! Northern Pike fishing has been excellent. I landed a keeper pike this summer that had 14 gobies in the stomach.

Double Crested Cormorant Control Update

There are many of us throughout Michigan and in the LCI in particular who are trying to convince the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to re-issue a permit to control the Double Crested Cormorant (DCCO) population. On May 26, 2016 a federal judge ruled to vacate the public resource depredation order (PRDO) effectively ending DCCO control in the U.S. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division, conducted DCCO nest counts in LCI this past spring/summer calculating a 41% increase in 2017. The latest claim by USFW is that not enough scientific research has been done to produce evidence that cormorants have a detrimental effect on "free swimming" fish populations. In reality, the Les Cheneaux Islands have been the site of the most comprehensive research effort regarding the cormorant/fish relationship in the world!

Below, for your information, is a summary of the DCCO population in LCI:

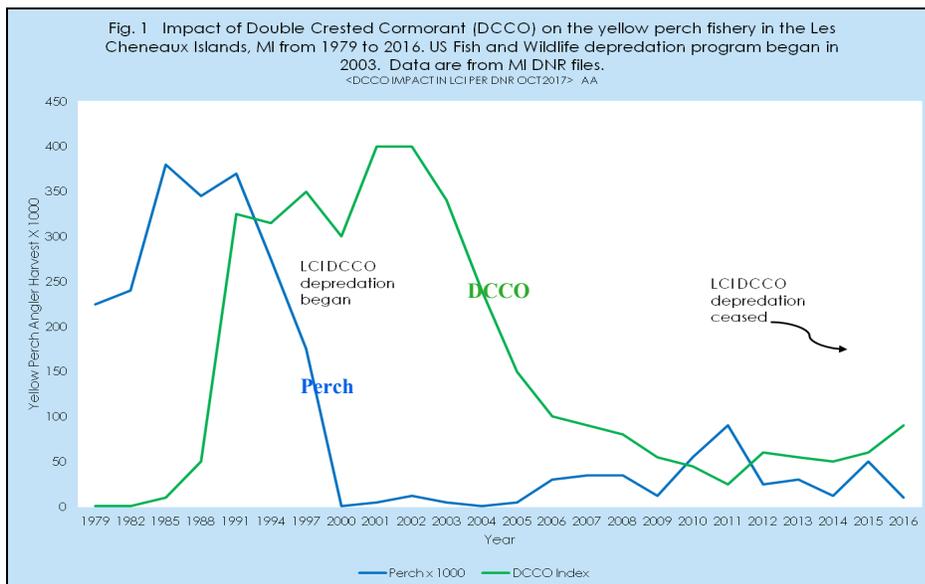
Background for DCCO Chronology in the Les Cheneaux Islands

From approx. 1940 thru 1960, DCCO populations were very low due to egg shell thinning caused by DDT. That appears to be the main reason they ended up under the protection of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

- ◆ Pre-1980s – cormorants existed in small numbers and were rarely seen.
- ◆ Mid-1980s to mid-1990s – cormorants in large numbers became much more obvious while feeding in the bays and channels of the Les Cheneaux Islands. Our world famous yellow perch fishery was severely impacted particularly in the spring when migrating cormorants arrived in northern Lake Huron and decimated spawning perch.
- ◆ By 1996, the annual DNR assessment efforts began to show serious declines of all species of fish and the economic impact on the resort/tourism was obvious.
- ◆ By 2002, there was great public outcry. At well attended public meetings it became clear that help was needed, and all agencies and FWS began cormorant control in 2004. The control measures were conducted by the USDA APHIS (Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service) Wildlife Services. When cormorant control began, at least 10,000 birds occupied our area; primarily on Goose Island where the birds thrived on alewife in open water and local, native fish in the pro-

tected waters of the Les Cheneaux Islands.

- ◆ The nest count in 2004 was 4,556. After 2004, it was determined that spraying vegetable oil on cormorant eggs was an effective, humane solution to the overpopulation and fish predation problem that existed.
- ◆ From 2004 to 2016 USDA Wildlife Services using egg oiling as the primary method of control, reduced cormorant numbers. The 2015 nest count totaled 791 which is much more realistic and compares closely to the number of birds that historically nest and feed in our area.
- ◆ As cormorant numbers declined, DNR assessment numbers show a large increase in area fish populations. The rebounding fishery has been the major factor in the economic comeback in the Les Cheneaux Islands, as vacationers and small boat fishermen enjoy the pristine waterway that once again has fish in it.
- ◆ On May 26, 2106 a federal court decision resulted in the immediate termination of the Public Resource Depredation Order (PRDO, 50 C. F. R. 21.48, enacted 2003).
- ◆ September 2017: In the second nesting season since the federal court's decision to end DCCO control, MDNR nest counts in the LCI show increases of 29% (2016) and 41% (2017).



Our group of local concerned residents has been advised to put pressure on our state and federal representatives in an effort to re-instate a public resource depredation order in the Les Cheneaux Islands. At this point U.S. Congressman, Jack Bergman, U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow and U.S. Congressman, Paul Mitchell have been somewhat responsive to our letters, emails and calls. Below find contact information for individuals we feel may be of help to save our native fish.

To determine which Congressperson represents an area go to <http://www.house.gov/> and enter the zip code at the top right for the area.

US Senator Debbie Stabenow
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2204
Phone: (202) 224-4822
<http://www.stabenow.senate.gov/>

US Senator Gary Peters
Hart Senate Office Building
Suite 724
Washington, DC 20510
(202) 224-6221
<https://www.peters.senate.gov/>

US Congressman Jack Bergman
1st Congressional District
414 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-4735
<https://https://bergman.house.gov/>

US Congressman Paul Mitchell
10th Congressional District
211 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515.

Lee Chatfield, State Representative,
107th District
<http://www.leechatfield.com/>
leechatfield@house.mi.gov

Michigan Attorney General
Bill Schuette
G. Mennen Williams Building
525 W. Ottawa St.
P.O. Box 30212
Lansing, MI 48909
Phone: 517-373-1110
miag@michigan.gov

S. Peter Manning, Division Chief
Environment, Natural Resources &
Agriculture Division
c/o Michigan Attorney General's
Office
miag@michigan.gov

Rachael Pierce
Migratory Bird Biologist
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Migratory Birds
2651 Coolidge Rd, Suite 101
East Lansing, MI 48823
Office: (517) 351-5219
Fax: (517) 351-1443
Rachael_Pierce@fws.gov

Tom Cooper, Chief
Division of Migratory Birds
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
612-713-5338
tom_cooper@fws.gov

From the Treasurers Desk:

I am pleased to report that the financial position of the LCIA remains strong due to the commitment of our 440 members to our current dues structure. With your dues, LCI continues to support property inspections, purchase and place buoys which aid in navigation throughout the Les Cheneaux Islands, invest in water quality metrics and sponsor youth/adult boating safety certification classes. LCIA dues also provided support to the Cedarville Harbor project.

During the Antique Boat Show, I was pleased to meet a large number of existing members and curious attendees. The latter group of individuals often noted that they did not join LCIA because they are mainlanders and didn't need inspections. Please get the word out that LCIA supports all of the projects above and even if inspection of your home is not a primary need, the placement of the buoys and our commitment to water quality and safety are good reasons to pool our resources.

The finances of the LCIA are strong because our membership is strong - please be our ambassadors to the entire community so our impact can continue to grow. Additionally, if you would like to make a larger gift to LCIA in support of our mission, I am happy to talk with you about the stewardship of your donation. Please let me know if you have thoughts about stewardship or financial planning for LCIA.

Respectfully submitted,
Teresa Woodruff
Treasurer (2017-present)

**LCIA Board of Directors
Meeting Dates for 2018**

Weds., May 30, 9:00 a.m.

Friday, July 6, 9:00 a.m.

Friday, August 31, 9:00 a.m.

Cedar Cove Assisted Living

Annual Meeting

Thursday, August 9, 4:00 p.m.

Commons Room

Les Cheneaux Community

School

Annual Dinner

Thursday, August 9, 5:30 p.m.

Community Center

Youth Boating Certification & Water Safety Committee

Dave Robertson, Chair

Another safe boating season is coming to a close in Les Cheneaux. The area still saw a lot of water traffic around Columbus Day week, as the warm weather kept many cottages open. The hurricanes also delayed the fall migration of many snowbirds.

2017 featured continuation of historically high water, after the years of low water levels. Plus milfoil infestation that plagued our channels in recent summers was greatly reduced [but not gone]. The generally good conditions resulted in lots of traffic in the channels and bays. As the Viking crew has removed the LCIA buoys, and the Coast Guard pulls the channel-navigational cans, all late- and early-season boaters must take extra care to avoid the shallows, rocks, and other hazards, when buoys are not in place to mark dangerous areas. Long-time residents may tend to cut corners on occasion, believing they know the waters and what lurks below the surface. Beware: rocks and shoals never go away and will become problems, when water levels recede again.

Milfoil infestation also causes a hazard for those who seek to enjoy the frozen waterways during winter, whether on snowmobiles, trucks, cars, and even snowshoes and skis. Patches of milfoil tend to retard ice formation. Combined with warmer climate conditions, some LCI channels may not support normal winter uses, especially in those areas with prolific milfoil growth. Trucks and snowmobiles go thru the ice every winter. Due to spotty ice conditions and weed conditions, caution is required year round.

The principal activity of this Committee continues to be facilitation of the water safety class, taught by Deputy Tom Sherlund. Two sessions are held each summer, Independence Day week and Boat Show week. In summer 2017, 47 students took the class, ranging in age from 9 to 65+.

NEW MICHIGAN LAWS MANDATE BOATER EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION!! Boater education now is required for all persons born after December 31, 1978, who are at least 14 years of age, and who wish to operate a boat or personal watercraft (PWC-jet ski) in Michigan waters. You must carry a certificate card when boating. Deputy Sherlund is certified to teach this course and to issue the certification card. He will not be favorably disposed if you lack the proper certification card! And especially if your boat is not lit at dusk and lacks sufficient PFDs. Those are his pet peeves.

The LCIA sponsored class dates for 2018 are July 10 & 11, and August 7 & 8.

The Committee welcomes any new members, who wish to help our cause. Please contact Esther or me.

Enjoy the winter and spring. Before long, it will be time to head north for summer 2018. Happy trails and boating.