

WLHCA Healthy Shoreline Workshop July 14th

By Peggy Stewart, President WLHCA

WLHCA members enjoyed a very interesting and informative workshop on Healthy Shorelines, sponsored by WLHCA and a grant from Federation of Cottagers of Ontario (FOCA). We were pleased to have such a great turnout. Forty-five participants, in addition to the executive, gave up a summer morning at the cottage to hear Leora Berman describe how to create shoreline gardens that will help to protect water in Wollaston Lake while providing a natural area for cottagers to enjoy at their shoreline. Later in the morning, Fred McConnell outlined the problems with the growth of Eurasian Milfoil around the shores of Wollaston Lake and outlined steps that we can use to remove the milfoil and slow its spread. We were pleased to have Reeve Graham Blair attend as a representative of Wollaston Township Council.

Leora Berman from The Land Between presented an entertaining and very informative account of the unique ecotone in which we find Wollaston Lake. It is an area between the Canadian Shield to the north and the limestone based St Lawrence Lowlands that are south of us from Kingston north and west to the great lakes. She described the Land Between as an area of immense diversity with a wealth of varieties of plants, animals, and rocks, in some cases not found anywhere else in Ontario. Leora captured everyone's attention as she described a wide variety of plants and animals, many that were familiar to the audience that are found predominantly in "The Land Between". Shorelines are smaller ecotones, and act as transition areas between Wollaston Lake shoreline and uplands. Natural shorelines provide habitat for a wide range of species from fish to zooplankton and is supported with a rich and healthy food chain. A healthy shoreline helps to filter water running off the land and prevents natural erosion. Leora demonstrated that shorelines are made up of three key areas, the Littoral area, right at the shoreline and into the water, the Riparian zone or the place between the damp area near the water and the next area. Each area has different moisture levels and soil composition making each one suitable for different plants.

As Leora described the wildlife in our area in Ontario, it was apparent that she had a soft spot for amphibians and reptiles. She explained how 7 of the eight species of turtles found in the area are at risk. An associated group, The Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre has worked diligently with The Land Between to reduce the number of turtles killed crossing Ontario roads as they follow paths using by turtles for hundreds of years to get to spots they have used for making nests to lay their eggs. An injured turtle was rescued by Leora on her way to the presentation and a representative came to Coe Hill from the Turtle Hospital in Peterborough to pick it up. Read about initiatives to protect turtles at <https://www.thelandbetween.ca>. In addition to explaining that stories about

people being bitten by snapping turtles is a myth and that turtles actually contribute a great deal to the environment by cleaning the bottom of the lakes, Leora told stories about a wide range of snakes and salamanders that inhabit the land between.

Another very important part of the morning was a presentation by Fred McConnell, Lake Steward for WLHCA. Fred outlined actions to cope with the invasive species, Eurasian Milfoil that has spread rapidly in Wollaston Lake in the past few years and what we can do to remove Milfoil from Wollaston Lake.

WLHCA, through the work of Steve Neville and Richard Clark, secured funding from FOCA for an Invasive Plant study in August 2017. FOCA hired Robert Canning M.Sc. Environmental and Life Sciences, Trent University to study and Report on the milfoil in Wollaston Lake, Eurasian Milfoil is an invasive aquatic plant species native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. It was introduced into North America in the 19th century and has become the most widely distributed plant species in North America.

Fred showed slides and described the Eurasian Milfoil and showed maps of the areas on Wollaston Lake where the milfoil was identified when Robert Canning surveyed Wollaston Lake last August. Mr. Canning had found Eurasian Milfoil in 73% of the 51 sites on the lake that were sampled.

The next two slides shows a photo of milfoil and background information

Eurasian Milfoil – What is it?

Eurasian water-milfoil prefers shallow water one to three metres deep, but can root in up to 10 metres of water. A fast-growing perennial, it forms dense underwater mats that shade other aquatic plants. When large stands begin to die off in the fall, the decaying plants can reduce oxygen levels in the water.

The plant can interbreed with native milfoils, creating a more aggressive form of the invasive species. Because tiny plant pieces can develop into new plants, Eurasian water-milfoil is easily spread when water currents, boat propellers, trailers or fishing gear carry plant fragments to new areas.

Range

Eurasian water-milfoil was first discovered in Canada in Lake Erie in 1961. Since then it has spread to all the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, many inland lakes throughout southern and central Ontario, and much of the United States.

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Eurasian Milfoil – What is it?

Impacts of Eurasian Water-Milfoil

- The plant reduces biodiversity by competing aggressively with native plants.
- Reduced oxygen levels in the water caused by decomposing plants can kill fish.
- Thick mats of Eurasian water-milfoil can hinder recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing.
- Dense stands can create stagnant water, which is ideal habitat for mosquitoes.



Leaves have 12 or more thread-like segments. Photo: OFAH

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Fred presented two slides from the FOCA study that shows the areas in Wollaston Lake where Milfoil was found.

Where is it in Wollaston Lake?



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Where is it in Wollaston Lake?



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Fred showed one of the long handled rakes specially designed to rake milfoil from the lake. He explained that property owners can remove the milfoil in the area directly in front of their own property. They can sign up to use the rakes purchased with the FOCA grant. He explained how milfoil can be removed at the roots with long handled rakes that can reach milfoil and pull it out at the roots. He cautioned to be careful not to break off pieces of the plant or let the parts float away. He showed how you can make a boom from pool noodles by threading rope through the centre and tying the noodles together. He had attached badminton net along the noodle with weights at the bottom to hold it down in the water to capture the floating milfoil. The milfoil must be gathered up and removed from the water and disposed of in a dry area away from the lake where there isn't any chance of it blowing back in.

Fred encouraged the audience to sign up to use the rakes and to join teams that will go out to larger patches of milfoil to remove it. He noted that another lake that was fighting Milfoil was Big Cedar. They were working with Trent University using a form of weevils to kill the infestations. This has been very costly and it seems that the source of the weevil is difficult to obtain.

Leora returned to wrap up the Shoreline Garden Design part of her program. It was important to note that each shoreline is suited to a different mix of natural plants depending on the amount of light and shade, how damp the soil is, and what the composition of the soil is. She handed out guides for getting started with the shoreline gardens. The easiest way to get started may be roping off an area at the shoreline that you keep natural and see what natural plants start to return to the particular habitat at your shoreline. A collection of plants that would be suitable at the shoreline were donated by Fred McConnell and his wife, to get the audience started on their shoreline planting. The plants were ordered at Earle's Landscaping who were able to find a supplier and ordered them in especially for the workshop. Many from the audience found it helpful to talk with Leora regarding special circumstances that they find at their shoreline. The Land Between will also come to your shoreline to talk about individual concerns about erosion control for a fee. More information about Shoreline Gardens and a wide range of conservation initiative can be found at <https://www.thelandbetween.ca>

Thank you to those members who attended the workshop for demonstrating your commitment to Wollaston Lake by attending and wanting to learn more about Milfoil. We hope to hear back from members that attended the workshop and reports of changes that you made on your shoreline. As well, contact Fred at wlhca.news@gmail.com to borrow the milfoil removal rakes. If you are able to remove any milfoil from the shoreline, we would like to hear how that went as well.