



From the Highland Lake Watershed Association - A Nonprofit Organization Dedicated to the Preservation and Protection of Highland Lake and Its Watershed

Winter

2023-24

Welcome to 2024!

We would like to thank all of you for being members this year. We have reached three hundred members! The Highland Lake Watershed Association is strong thanks to our members' participation in our mission to protect our water quality.

The Board of Directors has been working hard this past fall as we enter the quiet of winter. Our major work continues to be with Northeast Aquatic Research (NEAR). We have received the results of the annual plant survey conducted in September. Please see the article on page 5 regarding the current survey and the history of the invasive milfoil plant. We are projecting we will conduct a treatment plan this summer which will target these invasive plants once approvals are obtained.

We have also been working with NEAR on the samples of water quality nutrients from this summer and fall. Our water sampling committee spent considerable time taking extra samples after major rain events (it was the third most rainy year on record!) and observed algae outbreaks in some areas. The year-end report for this is due soon, and this will enable the water quality committee and NEAR to analyze more of the effects of the seemingly never-ending rains and the nutrients washed into the lake.

On both of these fronts, the HLWA board will be talking with both DEEP officials and the Town Department of Public Works over the winter. We are seeking ways to partner with both to protect the lake by coming up with drainage solutions to slow water and its debris from entering the lake and from invasive plants (most importantly hydrilla, which is currently found in the Connecticut River and some lakes near us and is transported to other waters by boats).

As homeowners you can help on both of these fronts as every little bit helps. Please check your trailers and boat wells if you go between our lake and others. Also, please consider cleaning catch areas on the road near your house (which we know many of you already do - thank you!) and consider creating gentle swales or terracing on slopes to slow water with debris into the lake.

We are patiently awaiting the results of our grant application to the State of Connecticut for Laurel Ridge for the long-term preservation of Highland Lake. Please see the update on page 4. There is also an extensive article about the Laurel Ridge project in the summer newsletter on hlwa.org in case you would like to review it as well.

While we do the important work with water quality, we are also planning social events for the lake community. We will be bringing back our winter social, continuing with our Little Red Barn June social, the boat parade, annual meeting, etc. If you are interested in helping with organizing an event, please contact us. We are also seeking those of you who enjoy writing who may be interested in submitting an article for our newsletters. We have enjoyed historical articles, recipes, lake events, etc., from members over the years.

We hope you have a great winter season and enjoy the beauty of our lake that comes with the season.

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Homegrown National Park

by Jen Perga

A few months ago, I received an invitation in my inbox to attend a Zoom lecture by Doug Tallamy. The invite came twice from two different conservation organizations. I was intrigued. And sure enough, about 570 people tuned in to the presentation online - in addition to the full house at the Cary Institute in Millbrook, New York.

"Homegrown National Park" is one of Mr. Tallamy's key initiatives. What the heck is that? His goal is we each take one half of our lawn area in the US and grow native plants to benefit insects, birds, butterflies and other animals. Mr. Tallamy estimates this would yield 20 million acres of biodiverse habitat - land with trees and shrubs that would filter our water, clean our air, and store carbon. Our national parks currently total 85 million acres. If we all heeded Mr. Tallamy's idea, we could increase natural areas in the US by 20 to 25%!

Are insects really that important? Apparently, insects are "the little things that run the world." By pollinating plants and providing birds with critical protein, insects drive all food webs on Earth. Mr. Tallamy states humans will be in peril if we don't take care of our insects and other pollinators. Two of his recent books include **Bringing Nature Home** and **Nature's Best Hope**.

Many people at Highland Lake have already started to plant native flowers, shrubs, and trees. I have interviewed one of them, Frank Pizzo, and would like to share his story with you.

Frank and his wife Linda summer at 223 Perch Rock Trail. Linda comes from a long line of Winsted families, the Ramsays and Hurlbutts. Frank is from New York. In Linda's words, "Frank is late to the game in terms of discovering 'the magic of the lake,' but that has not diminished his enthusiasm for the lake, surrounding countryside and local community." In fact, it seems to have renewed his interest in nature and passion for gardening. As a kid growing up next door to his grandparents in Queens, Frank recounts how he was always mesmerized by his grandfather's fruit trees and extensive gardens. "He was an organic gardener long before it became a 'thing,' using natural fertilizers and preaching the importance of attracting bees and other pollinators, coaxing worms to settle in and rotating plantings. Most importantly, I'm sure, was my help as an enthusiastic weeder. I loved experiencing the miracle of the evolution of a seed into vegetables, fruit and flowers over the course of the growing seasons. I learned early on in life the importance of naturally grown plants, fruit and flowers."

When I visited Linda and Frank in late October, their gardens still had flowers and they were harvesting late tomatoes, eggplant, carrots, salads, radishes, herbs and flowers. Despite the cool weather, there were bees buzzing around late-blooming flowers and birds feeding on the seeds of dried sunflowers.

Jen: What inspired you to plant this garden?

Frank: We acquired additional property at 221 Perch Rock Trail and, instead of raising a dandelion patch, I thought we could



make it visually appealing and supportive to bees and birds as they make their way through Connecticut. We are also very familiar with Doug Tallamy's work and humbled by how important it is to provide a supportive environment for our native ecosystem.

Jen: I noticed you built wooden boxes to surround your flowers and vegetables.

Frank: I like raised beds; they are more accessible and there's no need for grass around them. I can cover the entire area with mulch. I covered the grass with tarps and the grass naturally decomposed. I avoid tilling due to the complex fungal connections in the soil, as well as not wanting to disturb the insects below ground. Most of the area here has a thin layer of topsoil on ledge. If I tilled, I would risk losing topsoil which would run into the lake.

Jen: What type of seeds do you use for your vegetables?

Frank: I really like Johnny Seeds from Maine; they promote seeds and plants native to the Northeast and seem to be the go-to source for quality organic seeds (Johnnyseeds.com). Fedco Seeds also has a strong reputation.

Jen: I notice you're planting fruit trees too.

Frank: My grandfather had apricot and white fig trees in his backyard in Queens. I still remember the pure wonder I felt when eating fruit directly from a tree.

So, in my grandfather's memory, I have planted cherry trees and an apricot tree on our property at the lake and hope my grandchildren will be able to experience the same joy and awe that my grandfather exposed me to. We are also hoping to plant native hardwood trees both for their natural beauty but also to help support birds, insects and other small animals.

Jen: I notice you didn't cut back most of your flowers and shrubs. In my case, it's because I'm always behind on my chores. What about you?



Frank: I leave flowers and seeding plants as a food source for birds that migrate through Winsted or winter over at the lake too.

I am a strong believer in "No Mow May" (delaying mowing) to allow insects and migrating birds to have a food source as spring unfolds.

Frank and I walk across the street to the family waterfront area. It's full of shrubs and tall sunflowers; lime hydrangea, blue hydrangea, a lilac tree, white dogwood, arctic fire dogwoods, and lots of different perennials, including rhubarb. Again, Frank leaves the pruning of dead flowers and stalks until early spring. Both migrating and overwintering birds have seeds available. According to Penn State Extension, many overwintering insects (butterflies, moths, bees and fireflies) hide in leaf litter and stalks. Next time you see my untidy winter garden with leaves and overgrown plant stalks, remember, I'm trying to help the insects.



For more information go to: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>



Creating a Legacy: Laurel Ridge

by Beth Papermaster

It is a hot, beautiful summer day. You are floating on the water with the blue sky above and the cool, clean waters of Highland Lake below. Looking eastward you take in the majestic forest. This forest is not merely for show. These trees work to help protect the health of Highland Lake by filtering water before it flows into the lake. We have the opportunity to preserve this crucial line of defense and thereby protect the lake for generations to come.

The Winsted community has the incredible opportunity to take action to protect and preserve Highland Lake forever by purchasing Laurel Ridge, 508 acres of forested land on the east side of the lake. Through a partnership of forward-thinking individuals, the Highland Lake Watershed Association (HLWA) and the Winchester Land Trust (WLT) submitted an application for a CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) grant. Now, the waiting begins! Hopefully, in spring 2024 WLT/HLWA will receive the grant. If we receive that grant, we will then apply for a Federal Highlands Conservation grant. If we receive the maximum amount these grants award, an additional \$340,000 will need to be raised. This is a long and difficult process, but hopefully everything will come together and Laurel Ridge will be open to the public in the summer of 2025.

To date, more than 50 people walked parts of this spectacular property with WLT/HLWA (picture on page 12). More walking tours will be scheduled for the spring. Seeing this property first-hand is just breathtaking. Laurel Ridge will offer our community incredible opportunities for hiking, walking, cross-country skiing, snow-shoeing and more. And it will forever serve as a protective barrier for Highland Lake.

If you would like to learn more on how you can help Create a Legacy, please contact bethpapermaster@gmail.com.

Tiffany Trees

by Sue Peacock

*Tiffany trees - shimmering sterling,
not to be tarnished as your worldly counterpart,
what master silversmith
fashioned your exquisite branches
in his workshop of darkness and ice?
How gently sun unveils you to loyal silver investors,
melt away to memory,
most precious commodity,
your fragile beauty rests in my mind's treasury.*



*Not receiving regular
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there may be a good
chance our contact
information for you is
incorrect. We are
working hard to update
all emails and phone
numbers to keep all
members in the know!*

Historical Invasive Milfoil Plant Growth at Highland Lake

The Highland Lake Watershed Association (HLWA) has been working with George Knocklein and Northeast Aquatic Research (NEAR) for more than two decades to track and control two types of invasive milfoil plant growth that exist in our lake - Eurasian milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and variable leaf milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*). (Invasive plants are classified as nonnative.)

Each year, HLWA partners with the Town of Winchester, NEAR, and the State of Connecticut to map and analyze invasive plant growth and to create a treatment plan when necessary for these invasive plants at Highland Lake. (Town of Winchester Operating General Funds are provided for treatment.)

We will be working with both NEAR and the Town of Winchester this winter to develop a plan for milfoil invasive plant treatment in the summer of 2024 based on the findings from the 2023 post-summer plant survey.



Excerpts regarding milfoil from the NEAR Highland Lake 2023 Aquatic Plant Monitoring Report

Historical Timeline: Aquatic plant surveys for invasive milfoil began in 2009. Pre- and post-treatment surveys were conducted during some of the years up until 2018. Beginning in 2019, NEAR has conducted both pre- and post-management surveys annually.

Maps created by NEAR show the distribution and density of Eurasian milfoil fluctuated considerably between 2009 and 2021, with large stands developing in the north, centered around the boat ramp and along the southeastern shore. Treatments to control Eurasian milfoil generally have had very good results. In July 2015, the lake had large stands of Eurasian milfoil that were largely controlled by the following year. Plants grew back in June 2017 but very few plants could be found in June 2018 or during two surveys in 2019. A few isolated milfoil plants were found in June 2020, which we immediately requested diver-assisted suction harvesting (DASH) to remove. Unfortunately, the divers didn't get to the site until early September 2020, by which time the milfoil had spread to other areas of the lake.

The June 2021 survey confirmed the Eurasian milfoil distribution from the fall September 2020 survey. Following a large herbicide treatment in July 2021, the August 2021 survey showed all the Eurasian milfoil was gone. No Eurasian milfoil was found in 2022, and only a few plants in Sucker Brook Cove were found in 2023.

The distribution of variable-leaf milfoil has remained limited to the tiny cove near Sucker Brook inlet. During our September 2023 post-management survey of the area, we found both milfoils scattered around the Sucker Brook Cove. Plans will be developed for June 2024 to treat these areas.

The complete report can be found at [hlwa.org](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CAES/OAIS/Publications/Plant-Identification/B1056.pdf) - Lake Info - Highland Lake Info - Highland Lake 2023 Aquatic Plant Monitoring Report.

Connecticut's Invasive Aquatic Plant, Clam, and Mussel Identification Guide: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/CAES/OAIS/Publications/Plant-Identification/B1056.pdf>



Ice Safety

How Can You Tell if Ice Is Safe?

Ice is never 100 percent safe. You cannot judge the strength of ice just by its appearance, age, thickness, or the temperature. Other factors, including water depth, size of the water body, water chemistry, currents, and local weather conditions, all impact ice strength.

General Ice Thickness Guidelines.

These guidelines are for new, clear (blue) ice on lakes and ponds.

White ice or "snow ice" is only about half as strong as new clear ice.



Under 4" - STAY OFF

4" -- Ice fishing or other activities on foot

5" - 7" -- Snowmobile or ATV

Note: It is illegal to drive a car or truck on the ice in Connecticut.

Checking Ice Thickness. Ice thickness can vary over a single body of water; it may be a foot thick in one location and only an inch or two a few feet away.

Use an ice chisel, auger, or cordless drill to make a hole in the ice. Bring a tape measure to measure the thickness of the ice at regular intervals.

Do not judge ice thickness by how easily a chisel or drill breaks the surface. It happens so quickly that it is easy to overestimate the thickness.

For further details, check out the Connecticut DEEP website <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Outdoor-Recreation/Ice-Safety>.

Evening on Highland Lake

Lake residents and friends gathered together for this 16th annual event held on August 19 at the home of Stu and Karen Jones. We had a fantastic turnout and many thanks to all who attended!



Fall Lake Cleanup

We had approximately 30 people come out and participate in the Fall cleanup. We collected a truck full of trash and had about a 25% increase in new participants.



SAVE THE DATES

MAY
4



SEPTEMBER
29

TWICE ANNUAL LAKE CLEANUP

Meet at Resha Beach 9:00 a.m.

Annual Membership Application

The Highland Lake Watershed Association is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of Highland Lake and its watershed. Your membership (and additional donation) supports the important work of protecting our beautiful lake.

Annual Membership Dues:

\$ 50

Jan 1 – Dec 31

Additional Donations:

☐ \$25

☐ \$100

☐ \$150

☐ \$200

\$ _____ **Surprise us!**

\$ _____ Total enclosed

☐ My employer will match my gift

(Dues and donations to HLWA qualify for IRS consideration as a contribution to a charitable organization and may be tax deductible)

Please make checks payable to: Highland Lake Watershed Association (HLWA) or

Venmo us: @HighlandLakeWatershedAssociation

Mail application to: HLWA, P.O. Box 1022, Winsted, CT 06098-1022

Membership Information

Name(s): _____

Lake Address:

☐ Mailing address has changed

Mailing Address: _____

Do you want the summer newsletter mailed to your lake address? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Preferred Phone: (____) _____

Email: _____

Volunteers are the backbone of HLWA. We need you!

Yes I want to volunteer. ☐ Please have someone contact me (check all that apply)

☐ Become an HLWA Director

☐ Welcome new residents

☐ Cleanup campaigns

☐ Steward HLWA-owned land

☐ Write a newsletter article

☐ Plan social activities

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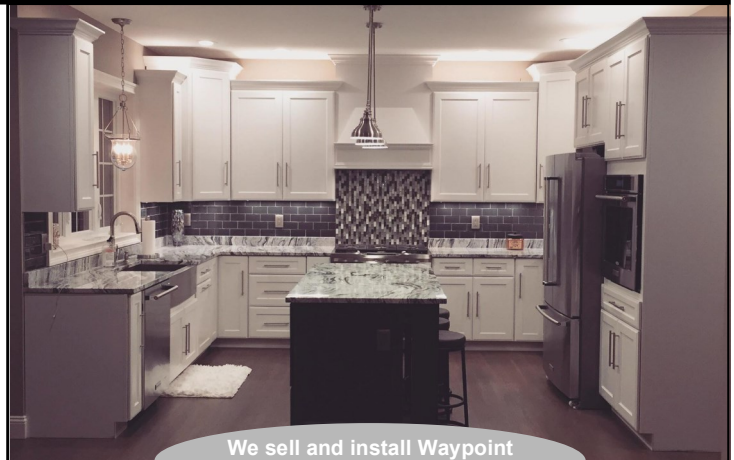
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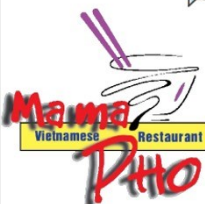
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