

Attracting loons and their tunes to Bass Lake

UTOPIA, Ontario, March 9, 2010 – For years, residents of Bass Lake have been wanting loons to take up residence on their lake. With spring migration about to begin, it is the ideal time to prepare nesting habitat to attract the birds.

On Monday, members of the Bass Lake Ratepayers Association (BLRA) teamed up with staff from the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and Ralph Hough, Deputy Mayor of Oro-Medonte and NVCA board member, to install a loon platform.

The floating platform, which is framed by cedar logs and underlined with wire mesh, is filled with vegetation including grass, plant seeds and cattails, to mimic loon nesting habitat.

“Loons prefer to nest in sheltered coves and bays or along flat shorelines. Due to the shape of Bass Lake, this sort of habitat is in short supply,” says David Featherstone, NVCA Manager of Watershed Monitoring.

“We’re hoping that by strategically placing the platform on the most natural and sheltered area of the lake, that we can enhance the habitat to encourage loons to stay.”

Loons have previously been sighted on Bass Lake, but they do not currently nest there. They likely nest on Lake Simcoe and travel to Bass Lake to feed.

Erin Evans is a long-time resident of Bass Lake and remembers hearing the loons on the lake as a kid.

Evans and her former co-chair of the BLRA’s stewardship committee, Janet Milligan, first pitched the idea of the “loon lodge” to the general committee three years ago. It was important to them to preserve and enhance the lake for future generations to enjoy and learn from.

“I grew up on this lake hearing the loons. We want today’s youth to be able to hear the loons too,” says Evans.

The loon platform is just one of the stewardship initiatives the BLRA is undertaking on the Lake. The 2008 Bass Lake sub-watershed report card, produced by the NVCA, BLRA and Township of Oro-Medonte, recommends many projects lake residents could do to



The group lays vegetation in the platform to create nesting habitat for loons. From left to right: David Featherstone, NVCA; Ralph Hough, Oro-Medonte Deputy Mayor; Ian Ockenden, NVCA; Connie Simo and Erin Evans, BLRA members.

Member Municipalities

Adjala-Tosorontio

Amaranth

Barrie

The Blue Mountains

Bradford-West Gwillimbury

Clearview

Collingwood

Essa

Grey Highlands

Innisfil

Melancthon

Mono

Mulmur

New Tecumseth

Oro-Medonte

Shelburne

Springwater

Wasaga Beach

Watershed Counties

Dufferin

Grey

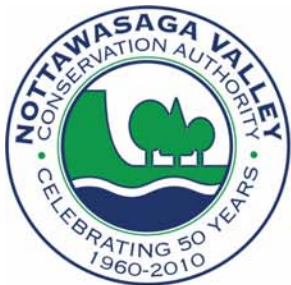
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make their shoreline more natural, including creating a vegetation buffer at least three metres wide and properly maintaining their septic systems.

While there is no guarantee that loons will find and use the platform, the structure will provide habitat for other lake species, including turtles who can bask on it and fish who can seek cover underneath it.

“When you have loons (and other wildlife) on the lake, it really makes you feel like you have a healthy environment that you are living in,” says Connie Simo, BLRA President. “We want to encourage that.”

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About the NVCA

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority is a public agency dedicated to the preservation of a healthy environment through specialized programs to protect, conserve and enhance our water, wetlands, forests and lands.

For more information about the loon platform please contact:

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