



ON THE POND

SPRING 2015

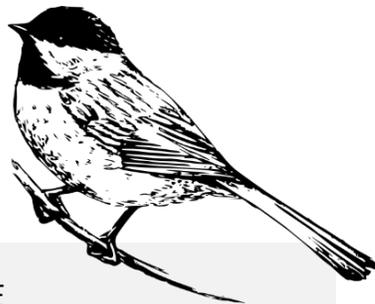
President's Message

Spring has arrived and many of our members are returning to camp for the summer months. Likewise, we've seen a return of song birds and migratory waterfowl from the warmer climates where they spend the cold winter months. If you've ever wondered how non-migratory birds survive the brutal northern winters, be sure to check out the guest column authored by Association member and avid "birder" Bruce Bolnick.

While this issue of "On the Pond" is significantly shorter than previous editions, the Summer issue (scheduled for delivery in late June) will be chock-full of information regarding 4th of July events and other upcoming Camp Association activities.

See you on the pond!

Jackie Pratt
NPCOA President
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Birding on Neal Pond

By Bruce Bolnick, Boys Camp Rd.

After such a bitter cold winter, it's interesting to think about how our woodland neighbors manage to survive. Consider the problem faced by the adorable Black-capped Chickadee. Birds are warm-blooded, so they need to find and metabolize enough food to generate body heat. The chickadee's normal body temperature is around 108°F. Also, the chickadee is very small. You would need 40 of them to get one full pound of birds. This matters because heat loss is a function of surface area relative to volume; the smaller the body, the harder it is to conserve body heat. Yet in winter conditions, the chickadee faces an acute shortage of tasty insects or plant seeds, short days for foraging, and, of course, intense cold that requires greater energy intake. So how do they survive up here in the north country?

I found part of the answer from Bernd Heinrich's *Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival*, and other information from browsing the Internet for "chickadees in winter" and "winter ornithology." Chickadees spend all the winter's day foraging for food to build up body fat to draw down at night when they roost in small tree cavities or dense vegetation to provide protection from the elements.

They store caches of food for emergency use; despite having a brain no bigger than a pea, they remember the locations. Of course, they fluff their feathers to create insulation so effective that heat loss occurs mainly through the eyes and the beak, both of which they tuck into their feathers at night to conserve heat. Heat loss through the exposed legs is not a big deal because the legs consist of bones, tendons and skin; the energy-consuming leg muscles are housed in body. Hence, legs require

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very little blood flow, and the leg temperature can be maintained near freezing, minimizing heat loss.

To limit overnight energy consumption, chickadees induce hypothermia, or torpor. On cold nights, their metabolism slows down to reduce body temperature to about 88°F. Scientists who have analyzed this mechanism find that the birds calibrate the hypothermia—and thus the rate of overnight energy consumption—to a level that optimizes the chance of survival. Chickadees still lose a great deal of body heat during a long winter night. Careful studies found that they can burn 10 percent of their body weight on a cold night, leaving virtually no energy in reserve to greet the morning.

In short, chickadees perform a minor miracle every long, cold night, so that we can enjoy their cute antics throughout the year. 🐦

Nesting Loon Signs

By Eric Hanson, Vermont Loon Conservation Project (VLCP) Coordinator

Nesting Loon signs have been placed on Neal Pond. These buoys are used in areas where repeated human disturbance is likely to occur. The signs inform boaters that they are close to a loon nest site and that intrusion could contribute to nest failure.

Buoys are ideally placed 30 to 100 meters away from the nest site. However, for many lakes, sign placement is determined by lake configuration and location of the nest. For example, if the nest is on an island near the mainland, signs are placed as close as 10 meters away to provide a channel for boaters to move through, so please proceed with caution.

These signs are placed prior to nesting in early May for pairs that consistently use a traditional nest site. If the loons do not nest, the signs are removed by early July.

New Nest Warning Signs

VLCP's campaign to replace the old metal signs continues this year. We've received a grant from the Canaday Founday to help replace about half the signs over the next two years in addition to what we replaced last year through a VT Watershed Grant and from individual donors.

If you would like to contribute to this effort, please go to the online fundraising site called "Crowdrise," where you can pick Neal Pond and make a donation (<http://www.crowdrise.com/vtecostudies>). Scroll down and hit "more fundraisers" to see the entire list of 52 lakes. 🐦

Ice Out Contest Winner

According to the Mitchell's webcam video, official ice out happened on April 30th. Bill & Lorain Giles had the closest guess with May 1st. Congratulations to the Giles on winning free dues for 2015!

Based on the positive response, we will hold a contest next year as well, so start studying up on ice out trends in the Northeast Kingdom! 🐦

New Website

I am currently working on a new and improved website and hope to have something launched in time for the Summer newsletter. If anyone has any photos of the pond that we can use on the new site, please email them to me at jpratt@nealpondvt.org with permission to use them online. 🐦

Reminders/Notes

- July 4th event details will be provided online and in the Summer edition of "On the Pond"
- Submissions for the 2015 Photo Contest can be sent to jpratt@nealpondvt.org
- The 2015 Neal Pond Camp Owners Association meeting is scheduled for July 11th and will be held at the Monahan's camp on Lake Rd.
- Orders for Neal Pond T-Shirts and other gear can be placed online at www.NealPondVT.org
- Calendars and bumper stickers will be available for purchase along with flares and membership dues prior to July 4th. If you're interested, drop me an email so we can reserve yours ahead of time.
- Want to learn more about birding around Neal Pond? Email Bruce Bolnick at bbolnick@gmail.com to set up a hands-on lesson. 🐦