



Inland Sea Chronicle



Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists Newsletter

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Our Mission:

The Mission of the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists is to protect and enhance the natural resources and wildlife habitats of the Greater Lake Norman area for all to enjoy.

NEW Website

Our webmaster, **Jim Ray**, has been working hard this year to build us a new website. Take a look!

www.LNWC.org

Drought! Dry Conditions

Impact Our Lake Life

By Gene Vaughn

The Spring and Summer of 2015 have largely been devoid of meaningful rainfall events around Lake Norman, which can have demonstrative impacts on the wildlife that frequent this area. From Jan thru July 2015 our total precipitation in Mooresville has been just 16 inches, and compared to our average annual precipitation of 43 inches it is easy to see why meteorologists and climatologists have designated this as a drought.



Opossums and other wildlife may get in closer contact to people during droughts.

The following are just a few impacts of the low rainfall and drought conditions on local flora and fauna:

- Drought conditions can push some animals out of their regular habitats due to a lack of food and water. In particular this year you may have noticed black snakes where you have not seen them before as they search out water as well as their prey (mice, rodents, etc.) who also are looking for water. It is not that there are more snakes or mice, it is because of the dry conditions they are now more concentrated.
- When water is scarce some animals start creeping into communities and bring diseases with them. Foxes, bats, skunks, and raccoons; all potential carriers of rabies, are then put into closer contact with humans than they might under non-drought conditions.



Copperhead

Continued on p3

FUN-Raising! Going All Out for Wildlife

This fall, Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists will hold its annual fundraising event, the **Lake Norman Wildlife Oyster & Shrimp Fest**, in October instead of September. The event, whose major sponsors again this year are Randy Marion and most of the marinas around the lake, is scheduled for 5-10 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10, at LangTree Lake Norman, 401 Langtree Road in Mooresville. A large tent will be set up near the lakefront for feasting on fresh oysters, shrimp and barbeque from Big Daddy's of Lake Norman. Guests can enjoy dance music from HeadFun, Rusty Barkley and the Part Time Blues Band; a variety of beverages including local craft beer from D9 Brewing; AND fun auction items including a ROLLING STONES AUTOGRAPHED GUITAR.



Admission to this event is \$50 for adults, and free for children 12 and younger. Visit www.eventbrite.com for tickets.

See p2 for more FUN-Raisers!

Spotlight on LKN Wildlife: HOUSE CATS!

Outside Dangers For Indoor Cats

By **Kayla Chappell**



During the warm-weather months, wildlife activity is at an all-time high. For those of us who have indoor cats, window watching becomes a favorite pastime for them. This might have some of us thinking, why not let Mr. Purr outside to explore and enjoy what nature has to offer? Most of us don't realize the dangers that can come with that little bit of freedom.

Cats are natural predators, so many outdoor or indoor/outdoor cats end up catching little birds, rodents, etc. The cats often bring these prizes home as presents for their owners. Owners have the joy of having to clean up the "gifts", while their beloved cats have been exposed to nasty diseases and parasites from the catches, such as rabies. While cats are predators by nature, they could end up becoming prey for larger animals outside, such as coyotes, wolves, bears, depending on where cat owners live.

Members of the Audubon Society and other conservation organizations often complain about the effects outdoor cats have on the native bird populations. Some can petition to community leaders to find ways to remove the cats in the area to let the bird populations thrive again. These removal methods often involve relocations, collections for animal shelters, or unfortunately, euthanasia. It is possible that our beloved house cats can be caught in the crossfire if others see them as being part of the dwindling native bird population problem.

Going back to diseases, there are three big infectious diseases to worry about when letting your indoor cat enjoy the outdoors. These are Feline Leukemia, Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, and Feline Panleukopenia Virus (Feline Distemper). These are all transmitted through bodily fluids, so if your cat comes into contact with feral cats they can contract these diseases through fighting, scratching, hissing, sneezing, or engaging in intercourse.

All three of these infections have the potential to be prevented with regular vaccinations at your veterinary office. If you plan to allow your cat the freedom of exploring the outdoors, veterinarians strongly recommend getting your cat vaccinated and keeping up with those vaccines regularly.

There are a myriad of other perils than can befall house cats outside, such as being hit by cars, getting stuck in drainage systems/sewers, being stolen, tormented by neighborhood kids, eaten by coyotes, cut by fences, etc. Keeping all of this in mind, be careful with the decision to let your indoor cats outside. It is definitely a possibility to allow your cat to enjoy nature (especially through the window!), just keep a watch on them and make sure they are safe.

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Meet Our Volunteers!

- ◆ Sept. 10—Our first Library Program of the Year! Topic: Wildlife Rescue! 7 p.m.
- ◆ Sept. 18—Blues & Burritos, Main Street, Mooresville 6 p.m.
- ◆ Sept. 19—Tawba Walk, Catawba Avenue, Cornelius 2-8 p.m.
- ◆ Sept. 22—Kilted Buffalo Conservation Fundraiser, LangTree 6 p.m.
- ◆ Oct. 17—Laketoberfest, Bailey Road Park, Cornelius 4-9 p.m.

We Have New Habitat Stewards!

Tree huggers, nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts gathered for a three-day Habitat Steward Training class recently at LangTree Clubhouse in Mooresville.

LNWC was the host organization for the event. Habitat Steward Training is a program developed by National Wildlife Federation to promote environmental awareness and stewardship.

Participants were exposed to a wide variety of topics, such as native and invasive plants, the roles of wetlands, snakes in our environment, pollinators and butterflies, methods of composting for waste reduction, and much more. In addition to meeting speakers who are considered to be experts in their field, students received a wealth of resources such as field guides and handouts to use as references.

Habitat Steward Host **Debbie Foster**, a member of North Carolina Wildlife Federation, remarked, "One Habitat Steward is the equivalent of 10 lay people in terms of knowledge, expertise, and value to the environment." For this training, LNWC added eight new Habitat Stewards to our ranks and CROWN (Charlotte, Reconnecting Ourselves with Nature) added two.

Our new stewards are: **Kristen Meng, Patrick Stark, Carol Hegedus, Keith Hegedus, Karen Hager, Don Higgle, Emily Green, Zac Rodriguez, Leslie Strawn and Volkmar Dirksen.**

If you are interested in Habitat Steward Training, please contact Debbie at fostdebbie@gmail.com to be put on a waiting list.

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LNWC President Billy Wilson (left) and Debbie Foster (right) welcome new Habitat Steward Zachary Rodriguez.

Drought! (cont. from p1)

- Some small mammals like opossums and raccoons may search out easier food sources such as gardens, pet bowls, and back yard reflection pools containing koi and goldfish where food is more readily available than in their drought-impacted habitats.
- We have been fortunate compared to the western United States, but wildfires ignited by lightning strikes in drought-impacted forests/grasslands can cause the displacement of animals like bear (mostly in the mountains), deer, coyotes, foxes into our communities.
- Hopefully this year's drought in NC will not be extended like the one in 1999-2002, when prolonged water shortages reduced insect numbers, berry production, and mast (acorn) formation forcing large mammals like deer and bear into negative contact with humans and their landscaping endeavors.
- If you have done any recent construction, yard renovation, or earth moving under and around the trees in your yard, you would be well served by watering these trees periodically. Trees are robust vegetative forms that are quite tolerant of low rainfall, but if the roots under the drip line of your trees have been exposed, damaged, or the dirt has been compacted by heavy equipment, you should definitely water these areas. How many times have you heard people lament the fact that a large oak in their yard has mysteriously died and they have no idea why? Upon further reflection however, many times they can trace the causative agent to construction damage to the tree's roots 3-4 years earlier.



King Snake

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Where Do LNWC Funds Go?

Ever wonder what LNWC is doing with money gathered by our fund-raising events? Then you need to take a look at beautiful **Robbins Park** in the Town of Cornelius. For about three years, LNWC and the town have been working in partnership to develop that park into a wildlife-friendly environment benefiting the health, education and recreation needs of area residents.

We call that a Certified Wildlife Habitat!

“Things are getting ready to heat up at Robbins Park,” said LNWC’s **Sid Smith**, a Cornelius resident who’s been working on the park project since its beginning. “I have talked to an Eagle Scout about building a bench around a cluster of trees that we will call the Learning Tree. He should have the plans to me soon. I have also been contacted by another Eagle Scout to provide some help with the Pollinator Garden getting it ready for next spring,” he added.



LNWC volunteer Eric Peterson attaches a Fishing Line Bin beside a park pond.

Also this summer, the interpretive pond sign that LNWC is purchasing was approved by the town’s PARC officials and the layout has been sent to the sign manufacturer. Sid predicts the sign delivery date will be early October. LNWC volunteers **Don West** and **Billy Wilson**, and PARC employee **Troy Fitzsimmons** have been involved in the review-and-approval process. LNWC has also discussed contributing toward a pergola for the Pollinator Garden. That plan might be “in limbo,” Sid said, so it’s on the back-burner.

Two NC Wildlife Federation Fishing Line Recovery Bins have also been installed by our volunteers at Robbins Park, one at each of the two newly reconstructed turtle-and-fish ponds. The town outfitted each pond with sturdy fishing and observation platforms. Now, with the addition of the bins, anglers have a safe place to discard fishing line for safe recycling.

Sid has also started placing identity labels to park trees, courtesy of LNWC, and has a few other yet-to-be-announced additions in mind. Would you like to help in the park? Send an email to info@LNWC.org

Thank You to Our Major Sponsors!



Chapter Leaders

Billy Wilson, President
Sid Smith, Vice President
Don West, Treasurer
Julie Higgin, Secretary

Directors at-large:
Eric Peterson
Jim Ray
Kristen Meng
Don Higgin
Ken Teeter

LNWC’s Board of Directors meets at 6 p.m. on the first Monday of the month at Keller Williams Realty, 118 Morlake Dr., Mooresville. Join us!

We welcome photos and article ideas for our newsletter. Contact Julie Higgin, editor, at jchiggin@yahoo.com