

LNWC Mission Statement

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.

Inside this issue:

Big Challenge! 2

Island News 4

Snake 5
In the Grass!

Our Kingfishers 5

LNWC 6
Calendar



Inland Sea Chronicle



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A Call to Action for Wildlife

By **Billy Wilson**, President

In early April, I personally witnessed the unauthorized destruction of a considerably large area of buttonbushes, and other shoreline and aquatic vegetation, near my home which is situated in a cove of McCrary Creek.

Len K. Bealer, owner of Kenneth Bealer Homes—a developer that has been conducting business on Lake

Norman for more than two decades—claimed to have a permit to remove the vegetation. As an experienced conservationist familiar with shoreline management rules and regulations, I was certain that Bealer did not possess a permit. However, even after identifying myself as President of LNWC, a North Carolina Wildlife Federation board member AND a Lake Norman Marine Commissioner for Iredell County, Bealer continued to claim that he had permission to remove the vegetation.

(Continued on page 2)

Fishes of Lake Norman – Redbreast Sunfish

By **John Crutchfield**, Director at-large

The *Lepomis* sunfishes, also called “bream,” are common warm-water fishes that are native to the Catawba-Wataeree River system, including Lake Norman. They are a popular sportfish especially when caught on ultra-light tackle. *Lepomis* sunfishes are members of the sunfish family, Centrarchidae, which include black basses, such as largemouth bass and spotted bass, rock basses, and crappies. This family is the second largest freshwater sportfish family in North American waters ranking behind the catfish family. The Latin name *Lepomis* means “scale shoulder or cover” which refers to the scaled gill cover or operculum. Of the 12 species of bream occurring in North America, six are inhabitants of Lake Norman and we’ll focus on one of them here, Redbreast Sunfish.



The Redbreast Sunfish’s scientific name is *Lepomis auritus* with *auritus* meaning “eared”, which refers to its long earflap. The identifying characteristics of Redbreast Sunfish are the long entirely dark earflap, a dorsal fin with 9-11 spines followed by 11 to 12 rays, and a very colorful chest ranging in color from a bright yellow to deep red. They also will have lines and spots of blue on the

(continued on page 3)

Call to Action for Wildlife! (cont.)

**Working Together
for
Wildlife
Conservation
on
Lake Norman**

**We're on the web!
LNWC.org**



DID YOU KNOW?

As a chapter of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, LNWC is a non-profit organization that depends on donations. Our Tax ID is 20-8576936. Please send donations to:
P.O. Box 4296
Mooreville, NC
28117

He made the same claim to two Iredell County Sheriff's Deputies who happened to be on-scene responding to an unrelated call. Furthermore, he threatened to sue me personally for hindering his business operations.

This story has been published by local media outlets and is ongoing. Duke Energy has determined that Bealer acted in violation of the Shoreline Management Plan and has started the formal process to remediate the situation.

Incidents such as these are very serious violations of rules and regulations that have been established to protect the natural resources of Lake Norman. Yet, even as an experienced conservationist familiar with these environmental rules and regulations, I have faced extraordinary and disturbing challenges in my efforts to halt and rectify violations that I have personally witnessed.

I took an oath to uphold the mission and values of the NCWF and will remain dedicated to the protection, conservation and restoration of North Carolina wildlife and habitat. Thousands of Lake Norman-area residents also support NCWF's mission, even without taking the oath. They spend time, money and other resources planting shoreline vegetation, building nesting platforms and participating in many other conservation initiatives.

We will no longer tolerate violators of our protected wildlife areas or the agencies who refuse to hold these violators accountable. We expect all entities with authority to act on these types of violations to respond by: 1) Holding the violators accountable; 2) Restoring the lost wildlife habitats; and 3) Taking measures to ensure that the situations like the McCrary Creek incident do not happen in the future.

--Billy can be reached at Billy.Wilson@LNWC.org



Billy surveys the damage done to his neighborhood shoreline by a developer, leaving only a lonely wood duck nesting box that will probably be avoided by the ducks because they prefer vegetative cover for safety. —Photo used with permission from the Charlotte Observer.

THE BIG IDEA CHALLENGE!

We are looking for great wildlife conservation ideas that LNWC might implement. Just submit any ideas that you have, no later than September 1, 2016, and if LNWC chooses to adopt that idea, we will place it on our 2017 project schedule and present you with a check for \$300 at our 2016 Oyster Fest in October! Send your Big Idea to info@LNWC.org



Redbreast Sunfish (cont.)

sides of their heads. Males are usually much more colorful than females. Redbreast Sunfish reach maturity by two years of age. They are spring and summer spawners and usually begin building their nests when the water temperature reaches 68 degrees Fahrenheit. They spawn in nests created by the male using their tails to form a depression in sand or gravel. Several fish will build nests in close proximity to each other forming beds.

Redbreast will sometimes use abandoned nests of other sunfishes. The eggs are adhesive and stick on the bottom of the nest. Females will lay between 1,000 and 10,000 eggs in a nest depending on her size. The male then fertilizes the eggs, drives off the female, and fans the eggs with his tail to ensure they have plenty on oxygen to develop. He guards them against predators until they hatch and for a short time afterward. Redbreast Sunfish are prey for such predators as largemouth bass, spotted bass, and striped bass.

Redbreast Sunfish grow slower than their other bream cousins. They will reach 6 inches in two to three years and regularly attain 8 inches in length. They generally live to about four to five years. The largest one collected by Duke Energy biologists from Lake Norman was 8 inches. The North Carolina state record for Redbreast Sunfish is 1 3/4 pounds and was caught in Big Swamp in Bladen County, NC.

Redbreast Sunfish prefer shallow, clear, and warm water habitats with aquatic vegetation. They thrive in streams, rivers, and still waters such as ponds, lakes, marshes, and stream backwaters and are widespread throughout the state from the mountains to the coastal plains. They also like woody debris and rocky areas that provide protection from predators. The species does not tolerate excessive siltation, because the silt can smother and kill developing eggs and fry in the nest.

Redbreast Sunfish have one of the most varied diets of all bream. They primarily eat bottom dwelling aquatic insects, but will eat terrestrial insects, such as mayflies and dragonflies that fall in the water, small clams, crawfish, snails, freshwater shrimp, and small fish.



Information collected by Duke Energy biologists indicates that Lake Norman has an abundant Redbreast Sunfish population. It ranks second behind bluegill in overall abundance of the bream species. The lake has a wide variety of suitable habitats for the species to breed and thrive. Fishermen using live crickets and worms during early spring should do quite well in catching Redbreast Sunfish. Artificial lures, such as beetle spins or flies work well with the rising water temperatures. In Lake Norman, there is no size limit or number of Redbreast Sunfish that can be kept by anglers. The best time to fish for redbreast is at sunrise or sunset, but they will bite throughout the day. Unlike other bream they also bite readily at night. Redbreast Sunfish put up a good fight when hooked and make a tasty meal.

Tag Reminder!

The NC Division of Marine Fisheries is collecting tag data from **Striped Hybrid Bass** caught on Lake Norman. Those who return red tags to the division with the catch information will receive a \$100 reward. Those returning yellow tags will receive a hat, \$5 or other reward. All tag returns are also entered into a division end-of-year drawing!

ADOPT AN ISLAND Program Grows and Thrives!

LNWC has re-invigorated an initiative called **Adopt an Island** where local youth groups, citizens, civic organizations and corporations pick up litter from islands they have 'adopted', install nesting boxes for bird species in peril, and help with vegetative plantings around selected sites to provide food for wildlife as well as control erosion. Over the past 6 months, because of the desire of many people and organizations, *all of the 65 adoptable islands on Lake Norman have been adopted!!!* This is testimony indeed to the environmental dedication of so many people on and around the lake to keep it clean and promote wildlife habitat.

Ever give any thought to the islands when you are boating, swimming, fishing or picnicking on Lake Norman? These islands are the tops of the very highest hills along the Catawba River in Lincoln, Catawba, Iredell and Mecklenburg counties. When Lake Norman (the largest man-made lake in NC) reached its full level in 1963, this full-pool footprint (760 feet above mean sea level) encompassed 32,510 acres with 521 miles of shoreline and created 96 islands.

As you may know, the islands in Lake Norman, with the exception of the 10 or so that are privately owned, can be used by the public with the following restrictions; no fires, no permanent structures built on the islands, no overnight camping, and no removal of vegetation.

Most of the people who use the islands are re-

LNWC provided much-appreciated support to the **Cornelius Park Department's 20th Anniversary Celebration** held May 14 at Robbins Park. **Don West** manned our booth and discussed our organization's activities. **Eric Peterson**, with the help of Mooresville High School students, cleaned up downed limbs and invasive bamboo. **Gene Vaughan** set up and supervised the fishing tournament. (Gene was the keystone to the entire effort, from planning to execution) and **Sid Smith** led nature walks. One of our Boy Scout volunteers, **William Miltich**, gave a briefing along with a nice descriptive graphic of his Eagle Scout project—building a Learning Tree Bench to be used for outdoor education. The weather was good and we all had great comments from the participants and attendees! The photo to the right shows the newest interpretive sign (donated by LNWC) after it was installed at Robbins Park.

spectful and as they are leaving the island(s) take their trash with them. On the opposite end of the spectrum, unfortunately, some people leave litter on the island, start campfires that spread and burn the trees/brush on the island, construct duck blinds, and even leave such items as washers/dryers, vehicle tires, and outdoor grills on the islands.

Thank you to all of our Island Adopters, and to responsible members of the public, for helping us protect our islands for wildlife! If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact the co-coordinators of the Lake Norman Adopt an Island program; Gene Vaughan (gvgonefishin@gmail.com) or John Crutchfield (John.Crutchfield@Duke-Energy.com)



Webmaster Jim Ray explains to Island Adopters how to add their data to LNWC's website at the spring Kickoff Meeting .



We hear from a Member About — Snakes!

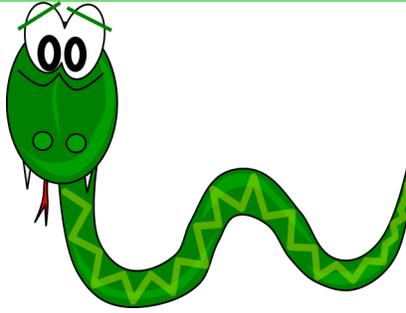
By **William W. Burrows**

Since I moved to Lake Norman, I discovered one thing we rarely saw up north in New York — Snakes! I will come right out and say it...I have a deathly fear of snakes. I know it is irrational, but I can't shake it.

I have been in a cage with a tiger in Asia. I have had lion cubs running around me, touching my legs. I can't say I was afraid of any of that. I looked at, and responded to, these four-legged animals with clear logic and calm...and nothing bad happened. Snakes, on the other hand, are entirely different.

One early morning, I was riding my tractor in the backyard, looking down into the high grass. I let out a soft yelling sound to myself, "OOOHHOOH." I had spotted a 3-foot-long Copperhead hidden in the grass. I focused my mind. I was determined not to be frightened. I turned the tractor away and shut it off. I quietly walked over to the shed and removed my weapon of choice—a long-handled shovel with a good, sharp end.

I walked quietly and approached the tail-end of the serpent. Luckily, he hadn't moved. I raised the shovel



and jabbed it downward with all my might! I cut the snake in half. I took two more healthy swings to make sure. I cut it up into pieces. Relieved now, I knew I had no more fear of snakes. I was going to tell my wife what a great thing I had done!

I slid my shovel underneath the snake pieces. I was beaming with delight now, ready to throw it out onto a clear area on the lawn and let the raptors fly down and have a good meal. Then, I examined the contents of my shovel. It was only a 6-inch piece of clothesline cut into four pieces!

Since then, I have learned to face my fear. Thanks to Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists, I attended a presentation by Davidson College's Department of Herpetology at Mooresville Public Library. They brought live snakes to demonstrate their nature. Most, I found, are harmless to humans and very useful for the environment. Some, like the Copperhead, which are rarely seen, are best left alone.

The next time LNWC presents their annual snake program with Davidson College, I'll be sure to attend!

Mr. Burrows lives in Denver.

The Belted Kingfisher

By **Gene Vaughan**, Director at-large

How often have you been canoeing or quietly boating on Lake Norman, in particular in its quiet backwaters, when you hear a bird with a piercing, rattling call that seems to be scolding you? The powder-blue bird flies by you, continuing to loudly announce its noteworthiness with its call, and then you notice its stocky body, short legs, large-head with a punk-rock style shaggy crest, and a pointed bill that serves it well when it dives into the water and brings up a minnow or even a tadpole or a crayfish. Say hello to the Belted Kingfisher, a year-round resident of Lake Norman!

The male and the female Belted Kingfisher, the only kingfisher species in and around Lake Norman as well as North Carolina, is easily identified by the bands on its underside. Males have a single

blue breast band while the females have two bands; a rusty band in addition to a blue band. Kingfishers commonly nest in holes, dug in vertical earthen banks above streams and ponds, leading to long, horizontal tunnels with nest chambers.

The eggs (usually 5-7) are laid in each tunnel and are well protected from predators by the inaccessibility and remoteness of the nest.

Did you know kingfishers swallow their prey whole and then the bones and scales of their prey are coughed up as pellets, like owls? And remember the children's song, *Kookaburra Sits in the Old Gum Tree*? If you didn't already know, a kookaburra is an Australian kingfisher.



Female Belted Kingfisher

LNWC Calendar!

June 2, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. **LKN Chamber Business Expo** Davidson College Belk Arena (LNWC booth)

June 4, 8:30-11:30 a.m. **NCWF Wild on the Water Paddle Event** Latta Plantation, Huntersville

No Library Programs during June, July and August

Sept. 8, 7 p.m. **Library Program** featuring Tom Carroll, nature photographer

Mark Your Calendar for Library Programs: Oct. 13, Nov. 10, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 9, April 13 and May 11

Oct. 8 (Tentative Date) **Wildlife Oyster & Shrimp Fest** at LangTree Lake Norman

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

Directors at-large:
Eric Peterson

Jim Ray
Kristen Meng
Don Higgin
Gene Vaughan
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**We welcome photos and article ideas for our newsletter.
Contact Julie Higgin, editor, at jchiggin@yahoo.com**