

### 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:

River Buffers p4

Muskrats! P5

Calendar p6

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# Inland Sea Chronicle



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[www.LNWC.org](http://www.LNWC.org)

## Conservation Goals Achieved!

By **Julie Higgle**, Charter Member

**E**nergetic" is a great word to describe conservation work performed by the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists so far this year in and around the Lake Norman region. Although "busy," "helpful" and "vitaly involved" also work! Feast your eyes on this list of activities:

The Mooresville Public Golf Course Pollinator/Butterfly Garden Project is a collaborative effort between Eagle Scout applicant **Will Wiebking**, the Golf Course, the Mooresville Environmental Protection Commission and LNWC. The garden will be complete by July.

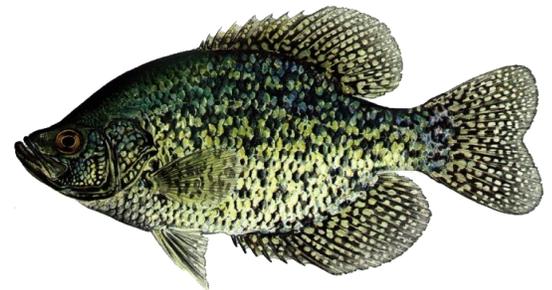
A Butterfly Garden installed at Mooresville's Rocky River Elementary School was a cooperative effort between the school, the town Environmental Commission and LNWC.

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Fishes of Lake Norman – Black Crappie

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

**T**he black crappie is a common, warm water sport fish native to North Carolina streams and reservoirs, including Lake Norman. Black crappie have been widely stocked in waters throughout the state. The black crappie is a member of the sunfish family Centrarchidae, which includes bream and black bass species. It is one of two species in the Pomoxis genus, the other being the white crappie which it closely resembles. Both crappie species inhabit Lake Norman and are popular sport and food fish. Of the two species, black crappie is by far the most predominant in Lake Norman. There are several common names for this species which include crappie, speckled perch, speck, calico bass, and papermouth (the latter name because of thin membranes between the jaws).



The identifying characteristics of black crappie are a deep compressed body, greenish to black pigmentation with many spots, elongated dorsal and anal fins

*(continued on page 3)*

## LNWC Achieves Major Goals! (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  
Mooresville, NC  
28117

Bat boxes are currently being installed on five islands in Lake Norman.

The Buttonbush planted last fall to control shoreline erosion around Lake Norman islands are now fully leafed out and not only controlling erosion, but also providing habitat to young fish, as well as Wood Duck young.

Osprey and Great Blue Heron field trips took place on March 25<sup>th</sup> and April 8<sup>th</sup>, where a total of some 60 people from around the area enjoyed scientific outings on pontoon boats. These outings were narrated by our science advisor **Gene Vaughan**.

A cooperative effort between LNWC and the Town of Cornelius to develop Robbins Park into a nature preserve continues under the experienced tutelage of volunteer **Sid Smith**. LNWC's **Ken Conrad**, with Sid and Gene, also led the Fishing Tournament at one of the Robbins Park ponds at the town's annual Earth Day celebration this spring. Many young anglers got to experience their first "catch"!

LNWC's Island Habitat Program had an annual Island Adopter Meeting this spring where adopters got updates and fresh supplies to help with their duties. Questions were answered, T-shirts handed out, and island signs and waste disposal bags distributed. We are SO pleased that this program, under the leadership of Gene Vaughan and **John Crutchfield**, fulfilled our goal of getting every adoptable island an enthusiastic volun-



*Children at Rocky River Elementary School in Mooresville learn about the importance of pollinators from LNWC's Gene Vaughan.*

teer helper/helpers.

Also this spring, LNWC hosted a quarterly board meeting of the NC Wildlife Federation (of which we are a chapter) at Lake Norman State Park. Despite rainy weather, board members from across North Carolina got to explore the park, enjoy educational updates and meet LNWC BOD members. By the way, our own President **Billy Wilson** is on the state board!

Finally, plans are well underway for our annual Lake Norman Wildlife Shrimp & Oyster Fest at LangTree Lake Norman in Mooresville, just off I-77. This year our very popular Fest will take place Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> and celebrate **LNWC's 10th anniversary**. A crew of enthusiastic volunteers is being assembled right now. Keep an eye out for reservation information in your email box, on Facebook and our website. Tickets go really fast!

## Black Crappie (cont.)



*Crappie caught on a small rubber jig.*

and a large mouth with the lower jaw extending beyond the eye. Black crappie can be differentiated from white crappie by counting the dorsal spines. Black crappie have seven to eight dorsal spines, while white crappie have only five to six. Additionally, white crappie have vertical pigmented bars typically not as dark as black crappie, although pigmentation can be influenced by turbidity and other environmental factors.

Black crappie prefer clear and vegetated

aquatic habitats in North Carolina lakes and rivers and can be found from mountains to coast. They do not like extremely turbid waters. The black crappie is a schooling fish which inhabits the open waters of Lake Norman and typically congregates around structures such as bridge pilings, docks, stumps, downed trees, and rocky points. Anglers have learned that discarded Christmas trees and artificial reef building materials also provide good habitat attractors for black crappie.

Black crappie have reached a maximum length of 19 inches but are more commonly found around 8-10 inches, weighing from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  pound. The fish has a maximum life span of about 9 years in North Carolina waters, but most fish live to 3-4 years in Lake Norman. The state record for black crappie is 4 lbs., 15 oz. and was caught with a minnow from Asheboro City Lake #4 during April 1980.

Black crappie reach sexual maturity between 2-3 years old and are very prolific spawners. Females can release between 3,000 and 15,000 eggs per spawn with the maximum number of eggs produced known to exceed 150,000. Their abundant spawning can result in overpopulation and stunting of the species, especially in smaller impoundments. Spawning occurs from March through May when water temperatures range from 60-68 °F. Circular nests are constructed around vegetation in calm, shallow water,

usually at a 3-8 foot depth. Males guard the nests until the eggs hatch and the young leave the nest in 3-5 days.

Young black crappie feed on zooplankton (small animals like water fleas and midge larvae) and other aquatic insects. Larger juvenile and adult fish feed almost exclusively on fish and prefer shad, but will eat aquatic insects too, depending upon the abundance of prey.

The black crappie is a good sport fish on light tackle and is usually caught on live minnows, small jigs, and spinners. Their thin mouth makes them susceptible to hooks pulling out while being caught. Their schooling tendency makes them one of the easiest fish to locate and catch. Black crappie can be caught in shallow water during the springtime while they are spawning. During the summer, fall, and winter months, black crappie schools are usually suspended over structures in deeper, well-oxygenated waters and can be easily marked with a depth finder. They are most active and feeding during evening as well as early morning hours.

Organized crappie tournaments are held frequently on Lake Norman for both black and white crappie. There is an 8 inch minimum size limit (both black and white crappie) and a creel size of 20 fish. Crappie are a good food fish with delicate flavored flesh and can be broiled, baked or fried depending upon your preference. It is interesting to note that about 1/3 of all sport fish caught in the Southeastern US are crappie!!

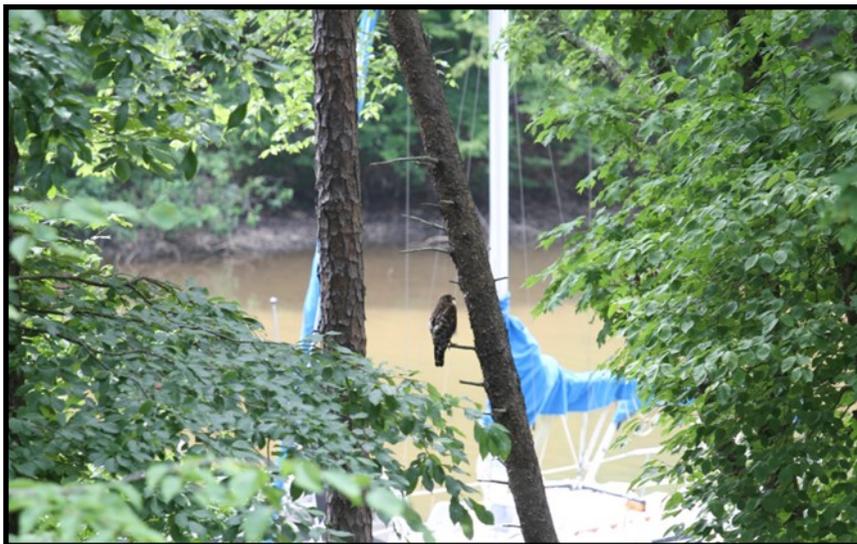


## NC SB 434 & HB 56: Why We Care & Why We Need to Act

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, the N.C. Senate passed a bill that would eliminate the 50-foot riparian buffer that protects the Catawba River, and its lakes, from pollution and stream bank erosion.

Science has well documented that the conservation of riparian buffers is by far the most cost effective way to reduce pollution and improve water quality in our rivers and streams. They also help stabilize stream banks and shorelines, enhance flood control, and provide habitat for many fish and wild-life.

The riparian buffers on the Catawba River serve all of these important functions:



For a river system like the Catawba, reservoirs have created hundreds of miles of additional shoreline, much of which is developed. That development increases both the need for, and benefits of, buffer conservation to filter pollutants and protect the ecological health and quality of the river system and lakes.

Many of the lakes along the Catawba are popular for boaters and other recreational users, and home to many lakefront property owners.

### What is a RIPARIAN BUFFER?

A vegetated area (a **buffer** strip) near a stream or river, usually forested, which helps shade and partially protect the body of water from the impact of adjacent land uses. It plays a key role in increasing water quality in associate streams, rivers and lakes, thus providing environmental benefits.

The Catawba is also a significant source of drinking water for communities in the watershed. By helping reduce water pollution at the source, riparian buffer conservation helps spare taxpayers downstream the financial burdens of expensive drinking water and wastewater treatment plant upgrades.

Senate Bill 434 has yet to be considered by the House of Representatives. However, much of the language from SB 434 has been inserted into House Bill 56, a separate bill with its own regulatory reforms that has already been passed by the House and sent to the Sen-

ate. HB 56 does not contain language repealing buffers passed by municipalities, but it does include a caveat that would loosen the current restrictions on "walking trails" within the buffers. HB 56 also includes many other non-buffer environmental roll-back SB 434 provisions, like the repeal of the plastic bag ban on the Outer Banks.

Help us take a stand as we work together to protect the Catawba River and the State of North Carolina. Please contact your state senators and representatives, and let them know that SB 434 would be detrimental to the environment and the changes in HB 56 are not good enough.

--Billy Wilson, President

# Muskrat Mayhem

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

**Y**ou've likely seen muskrats in and around Lake Norman, as well as in wetlands, ponds, lakes and rivers. They feed on a wide variety of foods including several types of aquatic plants, frogs, small fish, Asiatic clams (first introduced into the US in 1938 and now found in 46 of the 50 states) and the hard black rubber coverings on your boat's depth finder transducer cable and battery cables!!!! Maybe it is a vitamin deficiency. Maybe it is an animal substitute for a human teething ring, or a heretofore unknown substitute for rodent kale. However I'm fairly certain no one knows for sure!



To my knowledge, no one knows for sure why muskrats have such a craving for the black rubber covering on electrical cables and depth finder transducers. I always wonder why muskrats don't get a severe electric shock when they gnaw through the cable covering and come in contact with exposed copper wiring. I've recently learned that running your battery cables through a piece of clear plastic tubing will prevent muskrats from getting to them.

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Please let me know if you have any questions about escaping this scourge of the muskrat or if you have discovered another methodology to keep them from eating your boat's cabling!

Bon appétit!

*Gene can be reached at [vgvgonefishin@gmail.com](mailto:vgvgonefishin@gmail.com)*

I don't need to describe the situation to any of you who don't own a boat or who only put your boat in the water periodically. But for those of you who do moor your boat at a dock or pier, here is the scenario to beware of: You hear that spotted bass are schooling just above the Highway 150 Bridge. You get up at zero dark-thirty, load your fishing tackle in the boat, unhook the bow line, and turn the ignition key. But nothing happens! You shine your flashlight into the battery compartment, and your heart and your bank account sink proportionally. Below is the picture that meets your eyes.



After inspecting the battery cables you wonder what happened to the rubber covering. Shining your light around the pontoons for any clues, you come across what looks like the remnants of a small-scale Oysterfest. Here's a picture of the aftermath of muskrat dining.



Backing your boat into the mechanic's shop you might be thinking the guy has ESP. He already has several new cables in hand as you're pulling in. He consoles you about the destruction done by this marine mammal and says he has many, many customers who suffer the same malady.

## Meditation Benches Placed at PawPaw Grove

Boy Scout **Jacob Murdock** was honored May 18 with an Eagle Scout award ceremony held around the outdoor fire pits of Huntersville's LDS Church. Jacob was recognized for his contribution of two beautiful meditation benches he constructed as a project. The 4-foot long wood benches were placed in the Paw Paw Grove area of Robbins Park.



Jacob worked with the Cornelius Parks and Recreation Department, in conjunction with LNWC's Sid Smith, to first clear scrub privet, an invasive plant species, from the area to make it suitable to place his benches. Thereafter mulch was spread to carpet the ground and create a true sanctuary everyone can enjoy for years to come.

The celebration of Jacob's accomplishment was an event reminiscent of a Norman Rockwell painting, according to Sid. Smiles and teary eyes were abundant from all the proud families attending this great achievement reached by all their new Eagle Scouts. Festivities were capped off with vanilla ice cream and root beer floats. Job well done, gentlemen!

# LNWC Calendar!

June 24, 6-10 p.m. **Symphony in the Park**, Bailey Road Park, Cornelius

**No Library Programs during June, July and August**

Sept. 14, 7 p.m. **Library Program** featuring Professor Mark Stanback "Cavity-nesting Birds"

Sept. 16 **Wildlife Oyster & Shrimp Fest** at LangTree Lake Norman

Oct. 12, 7 p.m. **Library Program** featuring biologist James Tomberlin "Coyotes"

**Mark Your Calendar for Library Programs:** Nov. 9, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, March 8, April 12 and May 10

## Thank You to Our Major Sponsors!



## Chapter Leaders

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

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**Eric Peterson**  
**Jim Ray**  
**Kristen Stark**  
**Don Higgin**  
**Gene Vaughan**  
**Volkmar Dirksen**  
**John Crutchfield**  
**Ken Conrad**



We welcome photos and article ideas for our newsletter.  
Contact Julie Higgin at [jchiggin@yahoo.com](mailto:jchiggin@yahoo.com),  
or Tom Kilroe at [tjohn117@aol.com](mailto:tjohn117@aol.com)