



*Les Cheneaux Islands Association*  
*Winter Newsletter*  
*January 31, 2021*

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**President's Letter**

**Mike Patrick**

**Winter Greetings from LCI**

I don't have too much to inform you about, it's been a pretty quiet winter in Les Cheneaux so far.

The Covid-19 vaccinations are going well and 60% of Mackinac County residents should be vaccinated by spring if the vaccine shipments are not delayed.

As of February 1st, bars and restaurants will be allowed to re-open to 25% capacity. This will be a big boost to the Les Cheneaux economy.

Lots of work and planning is going on by community volunteers and the Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce for the 60th Annual Les Cheneaux Islands Snowsfest. Activities begin on Thursday, February 11 and continue through Sunday, February 15. You can find the schedule of events on the Chamber's Facebook page. Should be fun!! Organizers urge mask wearing and social distancing be carried out at all times.

There's still not very much snow in the area but snowmobile trails are open. At this time, ice is only covering 15% of the surface of the Great Lakes. With the late freeze-up, local ice conditions remain questionable, and caution is the word.

If you are planning a trip to Les Cheneaux to enjoy winter and Snowsfest, travel safe, and have a great time. If not, we'll see you in the spring!

**LCIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING DATES FOR 2021**

**(All LCIA members are welcome to attend.)**

**FRIDAY, MAY 14, 9:00 A.M. (THIS WILL BE A ZOOM MEETING)**

**FRIDAY, JULY 9, 9:00 A.M. (LOCATION/ZOOM, TO BE DETERMINED)**

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 9:00 A.M. (LOCATION/ZOOM, TO BE DETERMINED)**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 4:00 P.M.**

**COMMONS ROOM, LES CHENEUX COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

**ANNUAL DINNER**

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 12, 5:30 P.M., CLARK TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY CENTER**

## *Manager's Report*

*Mark Engle*

### **Winter Weather Update:**

Winter in the Les Cheneaux Islands has been relatively mild thus far. We have had a few small snow storms that were followed by warm periods, so snow accumulation has not been significant.

Ice has been slow to form around the islands making travel dangerous or impossible. A recent cold snap has aided freeze-up but conditions are not normal unless this is the 'new normal.' If you plan to visit the area this winter, don't take for granted that traveling on the ice is totally safe.

The Lake Huron area is currently at 37% of the average January precipitation total. Lake Huron is 2-4 inches lower than a month ago, but still well above the long term average. The Lake Superior outflow into the St. Mary's River is above average for the month of January.

### **Property Inspections:**

LCIA inspectors have been making their rounds where travel is possible. Island access was not possible in December and January due to lack of ice, but fortunately we have not had any major storms that typically cause problems.

Today, January 30, the inspector for Big and Little LaSalle Islands plans to make his inspections by snowmobile. He reports there are a few island and mainland owners who have put bubblers in the water at their docks to keep ice from forming and prevent ice damage to docks. One of these is along the northeast shore of Big LaSalle Island on Cedarville Bay. This is dangerous for snowmobilers who are riding along the shoreline assuming the ice is safest close to shore. Snowmobilers need to stay alert for this situation.

Inspections continue to reveal the ongoing danger of dead and dying spruce and balsam trees caused by spruce budworm. Many large spruce trees have been dead for several years but are still standing until a wind storm or decay takes them down. Property owners need to be aware of the situation especially around buildings and electrical service lines.

### **Fish & Game:**

The deer in our yard are still able to scratch through light snow cover to get to the grass. The ground has not frozen in many places so the green vegetation is a bo-

nus for the deer who normally would be looking elsewhere for food. The lack of deep snow has helped the deer maintain their mobility.

The 2020 hunting season was below average according to most hunters I spoke to. Many hunters blame wolves for lower deer numbers; some point to seeing far less young deer in the past few years.

Fox sightings are quite common in our neighborhood. It seems as though the population has increased in the last few years. As winter goes on, the smaller predators (fox & coyote) expand their travel and become more daring in the search for food.

Ice fishing got off to a slow start because you can't ice fish if "there ain't no ice!" It's late January and fishermen are just able to get to the favorite spots. Some good perch were reported (on thin ice) on Hessel Bay and around Little Joe's Island.

The DNR fish biologist who heads the annual LCI fishery assessment reported good numbers of pike and bass. He also stated that perch, though not as abundant as they were during the years of permitted cormorant management (2004 thru 2016), still exist in good numbers. The US Fish & Wildlife Service has issued a new rule which addresses the need for cormorant management for the protection of "free swimming fish" and newly stocked fish. Since 2016, cormorant management permits were mainly only granted to aqua culture farms.

The LCI fishery has been impacted by the appearance of several species of invasive fish through the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Welland Canal, and the chain of Great Lakes. Our local predator fish, pike, bass, musky, lake trout and even perch to some extent, do feed on many invasives. I caught a northern pike last summer with 14 gobies in its stomach. We need to do what we can to stabilize these native populations so they can help control invasives.

### **National Geographic Article**

The feature article in the December 2020 issue of National Geographic is "Saving the Great Lakes." If you have not read it, you should; it is very informative. We all need to be aware of the reality of the condition of the great waterway we live on!!

## *Environmental Committee Report for Winter 2021*

*Bob Smith, Chair*



Those of you fortunate enough to spend extra time here last fall can echo to others that we had a terrific season that lasted many weeks longer than the previous year. More time on the water was a luxury!



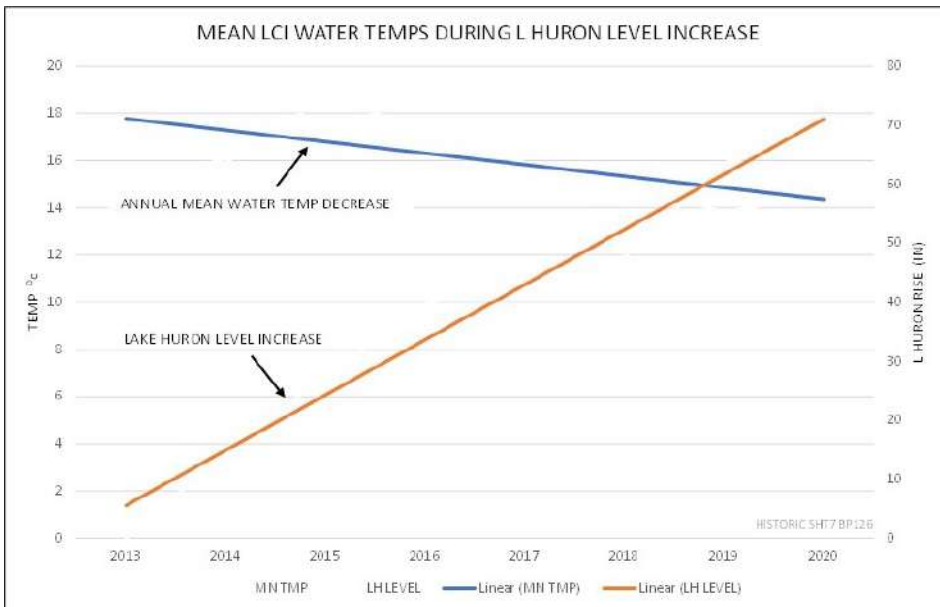
In addition to our extended boating and fishing season, the Lake Huron level was down about a foot in late Oct when this shot was taken. Green algae on the rock shows the high-water mark during the summer.



This aquatic plant was common on many shorelines last season. It is called Water Smartweed and is similar to Floating-leaf Pondweed. It is more prevalent some years than others. It is not considered an invasive plant, rather it fills an ecological niche that recently became available. You may also see it growing on shore in a larger, hairy and darker green form. If it becomes nuisance you can rake it away.



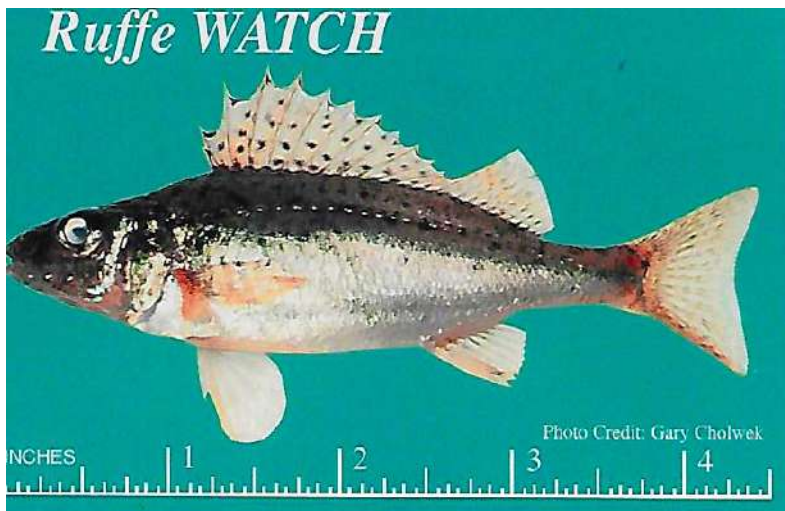
Included with more time on the water last fall, was an extended period for weeds to flourish. This Eurasian watermilfoil was clearly neglected by the property owner during the summer. Waterfront owners are encouraged to manage invasive weeds in their riparian areas. As long-time residents know very well, when the water recedes the weeds will become more dense. None of us want to experience a repeat of the 2010-2012 milfoil carpets. Low water will be coming and so will excessive weed growth.



It looks as if Lake Huron (LH) has peaked after an increase of over 67 inches from Jul of 2013 through Jul of 2020.

One result of that amount of LH water coming into our channels has been a measurable drop in seasonal water temperatures of almost 10° F (5°C).

Effects on our aquatic ecosystems resulting from higher, cooler water will be reported by March on the Watershed Council website.



#### ALERT:

Meet the Eurasian Ruffe (pronounced "ruff"). According to the US Fish & Wildlife Service, this invader competes with native fish for food and habitat. They can be caught on hook & line and are sometimes thought to be a weird perch. In fact, they are devastating to perch populations. They were introduced via ballast water in Duluth in the 1980s and have now made their way to the St Mary's River and to Thunder Bay in the Alpena area. For more information contact the USFWS in Alpena (989)356-5102. Also, should you catch one, freeze it and contact the USFWS in Alpena.



Last October, remote sensing probes were installed in Pearson and Scotty's Creeks in a collaborative program involving Cedarville High School, the Intermediate School District and LSSU. Sensors report every 15 min and the data can be accessed via cell phone 24/7. Data recorded by the probes will be used to compare water characteristics of the two creeks over time. The creeks differ in that Scotty's drains from a pristine upland area vs Pearson that is fed by an upland area as well, but which also flows through pastureland and experiences bi-annual lagoon discharges from the Clark Twp Wastewater Treatment Plant.



Clark Twp and the Watershed Council (LCWC) are collaborating to establish a public water point and an ADA-compliant kayak dock at Cedarville Harbor. The water point will take advantage of a flowing well that is used by the harbor house. The kayak dock will be connected to the main dock. The Community Foundation (LCCF) has made a major donation but funds are still needed for purchase and installation which will total close to \$40,000. A similar ADA dock is planned for Hessel Harbor following the pending upgrade.



This photo shows the causative fungal organism of Blastomycosis (Blasto). Blasto infections of dogs continue to occur in northern Wis & the EUP. Awareness of symptoms and early treatment are key for animal recovery and survival. Animal owners, veterinarians & physicians are becoming more aware of Blasto infections and, as a result, many more dogs survive than in previous years. Humans can rarely become infected, especially if immunocompromised. Again, awareness and good communication with your vet is key! For more information see the LCWC and LCCF websites.