

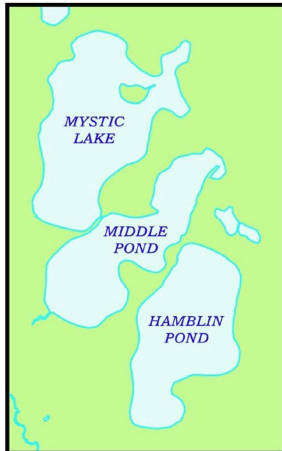
# THE IPA NEWSLETTER

Mystic Lake, Middle Pond, and Hamblin Pond in Marstons Mills, MA

Winter 2025

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## SUCCESSFUL MYSTIC LAKE ALUM TREATMENT

The long awaited second alum treatment of Mystic Lake was finally completed during the first week of December 2024. The first treatment in 2010 had failed to adequately suppress the phosphorus in the lake, which was fueling the growth of too much algae. The 2010 treatment had constraints placed on the recommended dosage levels by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP).



Photo by Tom Odjakjian

The 2024 treatment was contracted by the Town of Barnstable to SOLitude Lake Management of Shrewsbury, the same company that had done the first treatment in 2010. The liquefied alum (aluminum sulfate buffered with sodium aluminate to prevent changes in pH) was administered from a large pontoon boat equipped with five large tanks to hold the alum. The alum, at a concentration of 50 g/m<sup>2</sup>, was injected just below the surface over about half of the lake's area (77 acres) where the water depth was 7 meters (23 feet) and deeper. By comparison, the first treatment of the lake in 2010 was done at a concentration of 25–50 g/m<sup>2</sup> over areas that were 9 meters (30 feet) and deeper and which totaled only 58 acres. The recommended alum concentration for the 2010 treatment had been as high as 70 g/m<sup>2</sup> in some areas of the lake, but had been restricted by the NHESP to less than 50 g/m<sup>2</sup>.



Photo by Steve Heaslip, *Cape Cod Times*

CAPE COD TIMES

ENVIRONMENT

**Mystic Lake: Can alum treatment restore water quality in Barnstable's 2nd largest lake?**

 Heather McCarron  
Cape Cod Times

Published 5:01 a.m. ET Dec. 10, 2024

MARSTONS MILLS — During the first few days of December, observers looking out at Mystic Lake may have noticed an unusual sight: bands of milky clouds fanning out from beneath a pontoon-style boat as it moved slowly back and forth across the water.

The treatment operation was given great media coverage by the *Cape Cod Times*. A major article authored by reporter Heather McCarron was featured on the front page of the December 10, 2024 issue

(<https://www.capecodtimes.com/story/news/environment/2024/12/10/barnstable-ma-mystic-lake-water-quality-marstons-mills-cape-cod-cyanobacteria/76793168007/>).

We are all hopeful that this treatment will be more successful than the first one in 2010. An adequate treatment should be effective for 15–20 years.

Town of Barnstable Water Resources staff will test the lake monthly for the next year beginning in April. This testing, to be done at three selected locations in the lake, will include Secchi disk measurements to determine water clarity, surface-to-bottom temperature and dissolved oxygen, and water samples from various depths for analysis of phosphorus and nitrogen. IPA volunteers will also begin routine bi-weekly testing of all three Indian Ponds beginning in April and continuing into October. Results from all of this testing will help ascertain whether the treatment has been effective in improving the water quality of Mystic Lake. However, continued monitoring over the long-term will be necessary to gauge the overall effectiveness of the treatment.

Emory D. Anderson

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The IPA is a 501(c)(3) organization and a registered public charity. All dues and contributions are tax deductible. This newsletter, with a circulation of over 800, is a forum for the exchange of ideas on matters concerning the IPA mission, and the views expressed by authors of articles do not necessarily represent official IPA policy.

## MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT



Most people I talk with who live anywhere near the three Indian Ponds remark about how beautiful they are and how happy they are to be close enough to enjoy them. Many people swim, kayak, canoe, fish, or just sit and watch the wildlife in and around the ponds. One would like to think that these natural bodies just exist without any effort by anyone. Unfortunately, if it were just left to Mother Nature and the resulting effects of development both residential and commercial, the ponds would die a slow death. Outdated septic systems leach into the ponds, and beautiful green lawns need regular doses of fertilizers that also find their way into the ponds. The dairy farm that used Mystic Lake for its cows to discharge their waste and used lots of fertilizer for crops which eventually seeped into the lake continues to be the source of too much phosphorus at the bottom of the lake.

If you value our ponds, help us keep them as clean and beautiful as they were in the beginning. If you are new to the area, join the Indian Ponds Association. If you are already a member, consider joining our Board of Directors. No specific expertise is required, only a willingness to jump in and take on a task that interests you. Past Directors have shared that they always learn something new. You don't have to be a scientist or have specific skills, although we love Directors who possess a particular skill that may be missing on the Board. Our meetings are on Zoom, so you don't have to leave your home to attend a meeting. And we do, sometimes, have fun. We recently had a Holiday Bash in January that brought together past and present Board members and community friends. It was a very nice way to meet some new people.

Our IPA newsletter was first created by Geri Anderson in spring 2001 with three editions that year and four editions in each year thereafter. Do you wonder why we call our large bodies of waters "ponds" instead of "lakes"? An early edition of the IPA newsletter gives you the history behind the name that dates back to 1641 (fall 2003 issue). Curious about how the local Cape Cod airfield in Marstons Mills was saved in 2003 with the help of the IPA (same fall 2003 issue)? Currently, each newsletter is available on our website. However, we are attempting to categorize various subjects to search more easily for topics in order to determine which newsletter has that information (see article below). In the meantime, scroll through some of the early editions to learn some interesting history of our great organization. Thank you for your continued support of the Indian Ponds Association.

Barry Schwartz

## HOW TO NAVIGATE THE IPA WEBSITE

A plethora of information on the IPA and our three ponds can be found at [www.indianponds.org](http://www.indianponds.org). If you've subscribed to our emails (sign-up on the footer of every page), you will receive advance notice of the color edition of the quarterly newsletter, but there is so much more. The "About Us" section contains a list of major IPA milestones dating back to its formation in 1958 as well as our Bylaws, policies, and Articles of Organization. The "Issues and Concerns" section contains links to a myriad of reports and surveys about mussels, *Hydrilla*, water quality, etc. Under "Membership", you'll find a wealth of information about living on/near the Indian Ponds and the work the IPA is doing, along with a digital color copy of the 2015 Resident's Guide (volunteers are needed to help update this Guide!). Under "Resources and Media", you'll find an index of last year's newsletters along with their primary articles and a archive of all the newsletters dating back to the first edition in 2001.

The entire site is SEO (Search Engine Optimized) with a search bar at the top of every page that will bring up every blog and article on the site. The "Newsletter Archive" has its own search bar at the top of the index. Give it a try!

Wendy Bierwirth

## RECOLLECTIONS OF CAMP ALPINE INTERVIEW WITH JOANNE BUDD CUNNINGHAM

Joanne Budd Cunningham is the daughter of Mark and Lillian Budd who operated Camp Alpine off of Route 149 on the east side of Middle Pond in Marstons Mills for many years. Joanne provided numerous recollections of the camp and Marstons Mills from the viewpoint of a person who spent many summers in the Mills.

Mark first met Lillian when he was playing the violin in Boston at the Gardner Museum; Lillian was his piano accompanist. Mark and Lillian, who lived in Newton, MA during the off-season, had worked at a camp in Maine in the 1930s, followed by operating a day camp in Nantasket Beach. In 1938, they wanted to start an overnight camp, and the property between Middle Pond and Route 149 became available because of a mortgage foreclosure. The price for that significant acreage was about \$7000. At that time, there was a barn and an old farmhouse on the property, and the remainder of the land was overgrown with thick brush and poison ivy. The kindly bank representative



Waterfront at Camp Alpine in 1940. Photo courtesy of Marstons Mills Historical Society

who confirmed the sale may have taken pity on this nice young couple and arranged for tractors and a crew of men from Otis to clear the land for a ball field and a campfire circle. Numerous Indian arrowheads were found on the property when this clearing took place. The camp began in 1939 only as a boys' camp, although girls were added in later years. Milton Gage, a local carpenter, built a different cabin every year for several years until the camp was complete. Mark once told Joanne a story about the area, and she imagined that the site had been a stopping point on the Underground Railroad.

The camp, like many other camps, had its share of interesting incidents. One of those, recalled by the interviewer, was the afternoon in the summer of 1960 when a woman parachuted from a plane that had taken off from the Mars-

tons Mills airfield. Her parachute failed to open, and she plummeted into the adjoining Mystic Lake; miraculously she survived. The camp was all abuzz about the incident for the rest of the day; the survivor passed away in about 2006. The camp also had its usual share of pranks found in overnight camps; examples include the morning that all the camp's dining room silverware somehow mysteriously ended up in a rowboat on the pond, and another night when the camp director climbed into bed and was startled to hear the quacking of ducks!



Camp Alpine staff with Director Mark Budd in 1948. Photo courtesy of Marstons Mills Historical Society

Another happy recollection of camp days was early evening trips for ice cream with the campers to the Four Seas ice cream shop in Centerville.

On the east side of Route 149, opposite the driveway that is Alpine Way, was a house in which Lillian Budd's mother lived during the summers when Joanne was a small child. In the 1940s, the house had no running water. Joanne recalls her grandmother drawing water from the pump in the back yard, heating it on the stove, and filling a large metal wash tub in the kitchen so that Joanne could be bathed. At the age of 5, Joanne and her grandmother moved down to the main campus, and Joanne became a camper until she finally was too old for that and transitioned into being a camp counselor. A handyman was in charge of the camp grounds during the summers.

After the camp was closed in 1975, the Budds continued to summer there. Ken and Ainsley Snell, who live on Main Street next to the Marstons Mills Library, were good friends. Ken refinished antique furniture and became the camp property caretaker while Ainsley did some cleaning at the camp after 1970. The Budds took down some of the camp buildings in later summers in order to save on taxes.



Sailboats at the waterfront of Camp Alpine in 1960. Photo courtesy of Marstons Mills Historical Society

Joanne recalls some of the well-known Marstons Mills local figures. She remembers going to what is now called the Cash Market at the junction of River Road and Route 149, where “Jonesey” faithfully served all the customers. She also recalls Al Fuller and his wife, who graciously gave their young daughter Jessica rides on his tractor. Joanne also remembers with delight how Al would chew on a blade of dried tall grass. Their house still stands at the corner of Route 149 and Alpine Way. They were friendly neighbors to the Budds, and Lillian’s mother was also friends with “Old Man Fuller” (the father of Al), who could be seen regularly milking cows and operating his tractor. Crawford Hollidge’s house backed up to the camp’s ball field; he owned department stores in Hyannis and Boston. Mark and Crawford did target practice with handguns on Crawford’s property. The cranberry bog just to the south of the camp on Route 149 belonged to John

Shields. Art Thifault is fondly remembered as the faithful postman who, every day, delivered mail and picked up letters from campers written to home, collected by Art from a round drum-shaped mail box; his wife Gertrude did some cleaning at the camp. The Budds also met Art in the winter in Sarasota, Florida where they were vacationing and going to watch winter Major League baseball training.

An amusing incident happened one summer after the camp season was over while the Budds were still living at the camp. It was a very hot and humid day, and Mark was working hard on some landscaping work down near the pond. He was so hot that he wanted to cool off in the lake, but he had left his bathing suit at the house. So, he simply stripped off his clothes and went into the pond, luxuriating in the cool water. However, apparently someone in the house owned by the Burgess family on the hillside on the opposite side of the pond had seen him. A few moments later, a police motorboat came along the shore from the south and told a very embarrassed Mark that he had been reported for nude bathing!

Mark passed away in 1990 at the age of 85, and Lillian passed away in 2006 at the age of 99. They are fondly remembered for their contributions to life in the Mills for many years.

*Editor’s note: this article is based on an interview by David S. Martin of the Marstons Mills Historical Society on March 30, 2012 which he subsequently revised on June 13, 2012. Some names and places in the article have changed in the past 13 years.*

## THE MYSTERIOUS FISHER CAT



Most of us have chosen to live here and thus share these rolling wooded hills and ponds with the local wildlife. I love all of these creatures, even the coyotes. But what’s the story on **fisher cats**? I’ve never seen a live one, but I’ve heard the stories. Perhaps one night you heard an un-

earthly scream emanating from deep within the woods. Or maybe a neighbor has shared a frightening story of an uber-viscous tree dweller taking her cat one night. What exactly are these night hunters, and are they dangerous?

Fishers, mislabeled “fisher cats”, are possibly the most misunderstood, maligned, and rarely seen species on Cape Cod. Fishers don’t normally eat fish, nor are they cats. Although their short snouts and long whiskers do give fishers a cat-like countenance, they are the second largest member of the weasel family (Mustelid). The name “fisher cat” probably originated among early European settlers who noted its resemblance to the polecat (“fitché” or “fichet”), native to Europe. In his 1794 publication *The Natural & Civil History of Vermont*, Samuel Williams described the fisher as a fierce and ravenous animal of great activity and strength. He said it could not “be tamed or made to associate with our common cat”.

Fishers exhibit gender dimorphism, with males usually weighing 8–16 pounds and the smaller females weighing

only 4–6 pounds. They are relatively small at 2–3 feet, with long bushy tails responsible for one-third of this length. Dark brown in color, their luxuriant winter coat can make a fisher look larger in January than in July. Their pelts were valued by early trappers, and this contributed to reduced populations. The home range of a female fisher is typically about 5 square miles. Male fishers roam farther afoot, as far as 32 square miles.

The ideal environment for fishers is densely wooded and uneven terrain. Retractable claws on their short stout legs make fishers quick and agile tree climbers. They are capable of jumping considerable distances between trees, and remarkable rotatable ankle joints in their hind paws permits climbing downward head-first.

Fishers make a number of sounds, but overall tend to be quiet creatures. Most vocalizations are limited to low growls and chuckle-like grunts. They hunt using scent and stealth; success requires silence. Following a kill, they are unlikely to announce it to larger predators in the area. While capable of making a screaming sound, it's a rare occurrence happening only under extreme stress. The unearthly screaming often attributed to fishers is probably that of a red fox.

Opportunistic predators with a wide diet, fishers eat rabbits, squirrels, birds, fruit, reptiles, carrion, and (uniquely) porcupines. Small pets (puppies and cats) are definitely at risk from a fisher, but most cases of pet predation are from larger carnivores, such as coyotes. Evidence suggests that cats are seldom eaten by fishers. Studies of fisher gastrointestinal tracts and scat in New Hampshire and Massachusetts found cat remains in only 2% of the collected samples. To protect pet cats from not only fishers, but many dangers, they should be kept indoors. The best way to keep fishers off your property is to remove anything that will attract the prey they seek. This includes bird feeders, bird food on the ground, and unsecured garbage.



Fishers live solitary lives except when mating. Active both day and night throughout the year, they hunt and will defend their home areas against other fishers of the same gender. Female fishers spend the vast majority of their lives in some stage of pregnancy. This is the result of a reproductive system employing “delayed implantation”. Typically, development of a fertilized egg does not proceed until implantation—after almost a whole year! Post-implantation gestation is approximately 30–60 days, while the pre-implantation period averages 352 days. Then, in as little as one month after giving birth, an adult female will periodically leave her newborn kits in search of a new mate. This breeding behavior usually occurs from late March through April. One female will likely find many suitors.

Early settlements, unregulated trapping, and deforestation initially adversely affected fisher populations. Later, in the late 1800s, many farms were abandoned and the land reforested. In the 1950s, realizing the unique value of fishers—the only animals that successfully prey upon porcupines—the logging industry began reintroducing them into northern New England to control the porcupines that were decimating seedlings planted to re-establish forests. Today, fisher populations are again being threatened by climate changes that reduce unfragmented forests and by diseases such as rabies.

The shy nature of fishers contributes to their mystique, and observing one in the wild is rarely experienced. But, seen or not, they are our neighbors. And I'll keep looking.

*Scott Borden*

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## LASTING TRIBUTE TO THE IPA BIRDMAN

The spring 2024 issue of this newsletter included an article “Tribute to the IPA Birdman” by this writer. The article paid tribute to the late Dave Reid who had penned a total of 62 articles, mostly about birds, but also three about mammals (chipmunks, squirrels, foxes, and coyotes), for nearly every issue of the IPA newsletter over an 18-year period (2007–2024). Dave passed away in May 2024. At the time of his funeral, I promised his widow Claire that I would compile his articles into a book and present it to her. The project was completed in late June 2024 and she was given a printed copy.

Recently, when discussing the IPA newsletter with others, the comment was made that many readers miss seeing and reading Dave's bird articles. I mentioned the availability of my collection of his articles and suggested that it should be made available on the IPA website. Accordingly, I am happy to report that the compilation has now been placed on the website and can be easily accessed at and downloaded from <https://www.indianponds.org/dave-reid-tribute>.

Happy reading for those who still enjoy stories about birds.

*Emory D. Anderson*

## TIME TO PAY DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The Indian Ponds Association is an all-volunteer, tax-deductible 501(3)(c) organization. Our volunteers maintain our website and Facebook page, create, and publish our quarterly newsletter, monitor the temperature, clarity, and oxygen concentration in all three ponds on a bi-weekly basis from May through October, and advocate for the three ponds, as needed, at meetings of the Town Council, Conservation Commission, and the Marstons Mills Village Association, just to name a few of the tasks accomplished. Despite all of our volunteers, we cannot provide these services without your financial support.

Our **Annual Calendar Year Dues** are used to pay for the cost of publishing the quarterly newsletter and filing fees required of non-profit organizations in Massachusetts.

The **Scholarship Fund** supports the two scholarships that we award to assist students seeking to further their education in environmental sciences.

Our **Pond Restoration Fund** provides us with the ability to proactively respond to threats to the health of our three ponds. In the past, we have funded pond studies when there was not the political support to have the Town of Barnstable pay for these studies. This was the case in 2020 when the IPA funded a study of Mystic Lake which provided the scientific basis and justification for the recently completed second alum treatment of the lake.

Please contribute as generously as you can to support all the efforts provided by our volunteers to keep these three ponds as healthy as possible. We have provided two ways for you to pay your tax-deductible dues and contribution. Self-addressed payment envelopes are included in this newsletter so you can simply mail a check made out to the IPA using the envelope or go to our website ([www.indianponds.org](http://www.indianponds.org)) and make a payment through PayPal. Either way, your support is appreciated. Thank you!

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## IS BIRD FLU A PROBLEM FOR CAPE COD

Avian influenza (historically known as fowl plague) is caused by bird-adapted strains of the influenza type A virus. The disease was first identified in 1878 in Italy when it was distinguished from other diseases that caused high mortality rates in birds. In 1955 it was established that the fowl plague virus was closely related to human influenza. In 1972, it became evident that many subtypes of avian flu were endemic in wild bird populations.

Between 1959 and 1995, there were 15 recorded outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry, with losses varying from a few birds on a single farm to many millions. Between 1996 and 2008, HPAI outbreaks in poultry have been recorded at least 11 times and four of these outbreaks have resulted in the death or culling of millions of birds. Since then, several virus strains (both LPAI and HPAI) have become endemic among wild birds with increasingly frequent outbreaks among domestic poultry, especially of the H5 and H7 subtypes. As of January 2025, over 20 million chickens in the United States have died from bird flu since 2022 which has contributed to rising egg prices.

Highly pathogenic avian influenza is now believed to be widespread in Massachusetts, with incidents having been first observed here since early 2022. The first case is suspected to have caused the death of more than 60 Canada geese, swans, and other birds in Plymouth. It is a flu virus which primarily spreads among wild and domestic birds. Infected birds can shed the virus in their saliva, nasal secretions, and feces, contaminating the environment and

increasing risks to other animals and humans through prolonged, unprotected contact. Since 2022, it has been detected in both wild and domestic bird populations across Massachusetts, including Barnstable County.

The main threat of avian influenza to humans has not been wild birds, but rather domestic poultry and dairy farms infected with the virus. Waterfowl—including ducks and geese, which typically carry the virus—and the raptors and scavengers that feed on them are the most commonly sickened birds.

Here on the Cape and particularly in the Indian Ponds area, the concern is whether the bald eagles might be endangered by the avian influenza. As an apex predator and efficient scavenger, a bald eagle could become infected through consumption of infected waterfowl. This and reports of raptor mortality in Europe, Asia, and Africa indicate a clear threat to raptor health from the influenza. Although there have been no documented deaths of bald eagles on the Cape, reports indicate that hundreds or possibly thousands have perished throughout the United States. Unfortunately, mortality data are very incomplete or unreported.

Some experts have suggested removing residential bird feeders to avoid further spread of the virus, but others haven't recommended that because bird flu isn't common among the songbirds that frequent backyards.

Health officials say that bird flu doesn't represent a significant health risk to people, even though one human case of the disease was confirmed in Colorado. Officials say people are unlikely to catch the virus unless they have prolonged direct exposure to infected birds.

Although humans are rarely infected with bird flu, Lea Hamner, Contract Epidemiologist for Barnstable County

says, "It's important that residents know to avoid contact with sick or dead birds. Anyone who believes they may have been exposed to an infected bird should monitor themselves closely for symptoms of avian bird flu for 10 days; if symptoms develop, a doctor should be notified of the exposure and perform an evaluation for potential avian influenza".

*Emory D. Anderson*

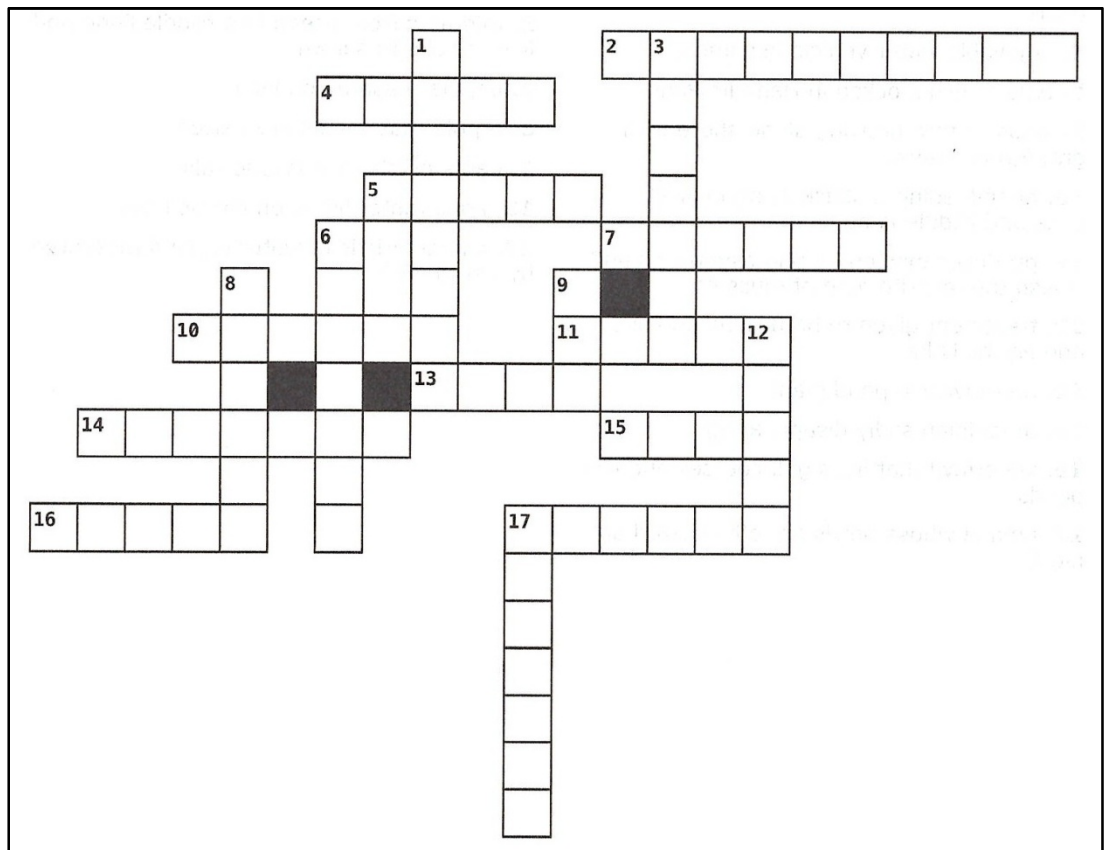
### INDIAN PONDS CROSSWORD PUZZLE

**Across**

- 2. Chemical element promoting growth of algae
- 4. Enjoyable water vehicle in summer
- 5. Type of fish stocked in Hamblin Pond
- 7. Invasive tree growing along shore with gray/green leaves
- 10. Filter-feeding mollusk living in Mystic Lake and Middle Pond
- 11. Produces oxygen by photosynthesis and is also the favorite food of mussels
- 13. Treatment given to both Hamblin Pond and Mystic Lake
- 14. Non-invasive pond plant
- 15. Amphibian sadly disappearing
- 16. Waterfowl that likes golf courses and ponds
- 17. Animal whose howls are often heard at night

**Down**

- 1. Invasive plant species in Mystic Lake
- 3. Migrates from ocean into Middle Pond and Mystic Lake to spawn
- 6. Popular pastime on lake
- 8. Reptile that comes in all sizes
- 9. Name of island in Mystic Lake
- 12. Apex raptor living on Mystic Lake.
- 17. Characteristic of water in pond measured by Secchi disk



Puzzle answers

Down	Across
1. Hydrilla	2. Phosphorus
3. Herring	4. Kayak
6. Fishing	5. Trout
7. Willow	8. Turtle
9. Ram	10. Mussel
11. Algae	12. Eagle
13. Alum	14. Cattail
17. Clarity	15. Frog
	16. Goose
	17. Coyote

Editor's note: This crossword puzzle is a new idea for the newsletter suggested by Vice President Scott Borden. The actual puzzle was created by Debrorah Sweeney using words and clues suggested by the editor.

**TO VIEW THIS NEWSLETTER IN FULL COLOR,  
 GO TO THE IPA WEBSITE: [www.indianponds.org](http://www.indianponds.org)**

*"To preserve and protect the natural environment and ecological systems of the Indian Ponds and surrounding parcels of land and watershed and to participate in studies and work with other agencies, individuals, and groups to educate the public, serve the community, and promote and preserve the Indian Ponds and surrounding areas." IPA Mission Statement*

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