

## Will The Call Of The Loon Disappear?

This past September the Canadian Audubon Society released a study predicting that our children and grandchildren may not hear the call of the loon around our lakes.

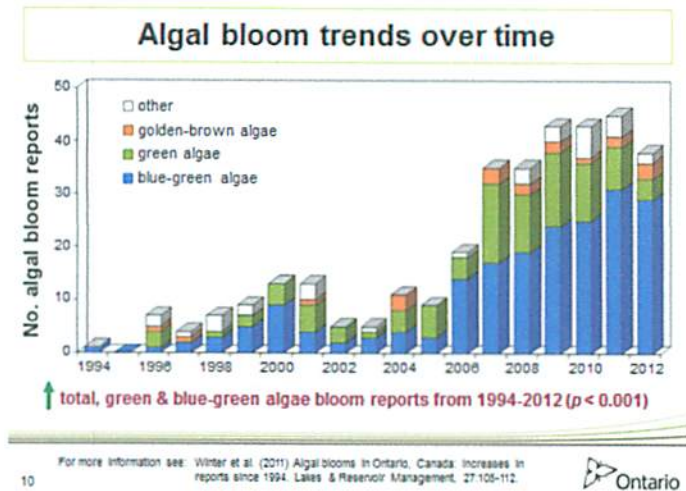
As lakefront owners talk, people with long experience on the lakes tell stories of

- how many more frogs, fish, crayfish etc. there used to be
- how the lake water was so much clearer and
- how algae and weed growth are increasing

Many wonder if the things they take for granted are threatened.

Let's explore one issue – Algae and Blue Green Algae Blooms in order to help us understand how things have changed.

Here is a chart from the MOE showing the rapid increase in Algal Blooms.



We used to think that protecting our lakes from algae and most importantly blue/green algal blooms was simple. If we kept our phosphorous levels below a certain range then we were safe. But over the last few years algae blooms have occurred more and more frequently in lakes that previously were thought to have safe levels of phosphorous. The best lake health scientists are starting to understand that our lakes are being affected by what's called – Multiple Stressors. What are those stressors and how do they relate to increasing danger of algal blooms?

Decrease in Calcium levels – is leading to fewer Daphnia and less healthy Daphnia in our lakes. These tiny creatures are known as the living lawn mower for their ability to eat algae and thus keep algae levels under control.

Increased invasive species – Example – in Lake Nipissing which used to have the 5<sup>th</sup> largest fresh water fish population in Canada, the invasion of spiny water fleas has had very serious effects. As these fleas die they use up incredible quantities of oxygen in the lake water. As the oxygen levels drop, the phosphorous that has built up in the sediment on the bottom of the lake (from our septic systems) is released into the water column - increasing algae growth. The fishery in Lake Nipissing is now virtually destroyed.

Increasing Lake Temperatures – due to Climate Change our lakes are 1-2 degrees warmer than they were a decade ago – warmer water holds less oxygen and increases algae growth.

Scientists are looking at many more possible stressors and state that they do not have all the answers they would like to have – more research is needed. *(One scary piece of info is that the Dorset Environmental Science Centre is one of the key places where this research takes place – yet their staff has been cut by almost 2/3 in the last decade)*

So will we continue to hear the call of the loon? – Perhaps it's up to us. For what you can you do to protect your lake please read the companion article to this one – entitled **Practical Lake Protector Tips**

Author Paul MacInnes, Chair of the C.H.A., is a Passionate Lake Protector



## Practical *Lake Protector* Tips

We all care about the health of our lakes but who is looking after lake health? Governments of all stripes are cutting back on the people and programs that used to protect our lakes and give us up to date data on lake health indicators. Lake associations can help fill this void but only if all of us step up individually and become *Lake Protectors*. What can we do to make a difference? The C.H.A. has some of the most knowledgeable lake health scientists in Canada as scientific advisors and we asked them that the question. Based on their advice here are the most powerful steps you can take to protect your lake.

1. **Keep your septic system healthy** – septics are the # 1 contributor of phosphorous to our lakes in Haliburton County – the more phosphorous the greater the chance of an algae blooms –
  - a. take 20 minutes and watch “Poop Talk “ at <https://vimeo.com/channels/lakeprotectors/63522168> and then take action by
  - b. Keeping anything that can kill bacteria out of your septic system
  - c. Minimize and spreading out water use
  - d. Have your system inspected by an inspector who will take the lid off and do a proper physical inspection
  - e. Have your tank pumped every 3-5 years
2. **Renaturalize your shoreline – natural shorelines deliver incredible benefits**
  - a. Filtering out pollutants such as phosphorous before it gets into the lake
  - b. Providing habitat for all sorts of life that supports healthy loons, frogs, fish etc. Remember 80-90% of all life in your lake depends on natural shorelines
  - c. Learn about the importance of Natural Shorelines by watching the *Ribbon of Life* at <https://vimeo.com/channels/lakeprotectors/90929405>

*Keep in mind even a small area with native plants will help. If you have grass to the lake – simply stop cutting all or part of it and nature will re naturalize the area over time.*

3. **Vote for people who care about and will act to protect our lakes - Municipally, Provincially and Federally.** The last few years have seen major cutbacks at organizations that are responsible for lake health such as The MNR, Ministry of Environment, Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and many more. The C.H.A. has the opportunity to work with many of these organizations and know that the people left are passionate about their jobs and work very hard. They need our support. Let the politicians know that the health of your lake is very important to you.
4. **Support your lake association** – the volunteers who hold positions with our local lake associations are fabulous people who give up much of their personal time to be Lake Protectors. They need your support.
  - a. Volunteer for as little as 1-2 hours a year and help out.
  - b. Stop them on the street or at your AGM and say – thank you – trust me it will mean a lot

If each of us becomes a *Lake Protector* our children will be able to enjoy some of our favourite things

- The call of the loon
- Frogs by the shore
- Swimming in a clear, clean lake

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