



2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Mirror Lake is surrounded by one of the most developed watersheds in the Adirondack Park, and the Mirror Lake Watershed Association (MLWA) is the only organization devoted solely to its health. Beyond enjoying Mirror Lake for recreational purposes, the lake's water quality is directly related to tourism spending and, consequently, our community's economic well-being.

Over the years, Main Street, Lake Placid, with its numerous hotels, restaurants, shops, and residences, grew up along the shore of the lake. A road with an impervious surface surrounds the lake alongside a popular walkway enjoyed day and night by residents, tourists, and their dogs. Winter brings skaters, skiers, toboggan-sliding, ice hockey tournaments, and dogsleds onto the snow-covered surface of the lake. All summer, it is used for boating, fishing, and swimming, including thousands of Ironman participants who train and race here.

We should never take Mirror Lake's health for granted but realize our good fortune that the lake has fared so well despite all the threats and pressures it endures. Everyone who appreciates and benefits from this asset should do their part to protect it: use as little road salt as possible, forgo fertilizers, clean watercraft hulls between visits, and don't use tackle with lead or leave fishing line behind. It is important to keep the shoreline free of dog waste and litter and to educate our visitors about ways to protect waterfowl by not feeding them human food, which many do not realize is harmful to the birds. Meanwhile, their waste creates a health concern for those enjoying the shoreline.

The MLWA is a small, all-volunteer group of dedicated individuals who cannot do this job alone. As the years go by, the threats become greater and more expensive to manage thanks to many factors, including



climate change and a constantly increasing number of visitors to the area. **As our tourism numbers grow, our responsibility to Mirror Lake and its watershed must, too.** The local government has done a commendable job addressing road salt usage and stormwater runoff, but more help involving human power and financial commitment is needed.

Photo Credit: Whit Bissell

The threat we may always live with is that of invasive species. Once introduced, they can be costly to control and impossible to eradicate. Some lakes, even in our protected Adirondack Park, are no longer safe for swimming, and their fish are unsafe for eating. To mitigate the odds of this happening here, we can inspect watercraft entering the lake and educate the public. However, this is expensive, and **the MLWA needs a greater financial commitment from the Village, Town, ORDA, ROOST, and the entire business community.** Let's keep Mirror Lake the gem it is today!

Many thanks for your support,
The MLWA Board

MLWA Board Officers: Marcy Fagan, *Chair*; Bill Billerman, *Vice Chair*; Denise Bujold, *Secretary*; Mark Wilcox, *Treasurer*

Board Members: Sandy E. Bissell, Steve Detwiler, Nev Dunn, Trish Friedlander, Noel Gaige, Georgia Jones, Elizabeth McGraw

Advisory Board: Sean Ayers, John Eldridge, Larry Master

A Hearty Welcome & A Fond Farewell We are thrilled to **welcome Trish Friedlander and Noel Gaige** to the Board. Trish is a speech therapist and resident of Lake Placid who has been enjoying Mirror Lake all her life. She has been responsible for our Instagram presence since October 2023 and has already contributed much time and many great ideas since joining us in June. Noel is a recently retired dentist, new to the area, and a Mirror Lake homeowner who brings a wealth of experience from previous years in his practice and on his local school board. Welcome, Trish and Noel.

Nev Dunn is retiring after serving on the MLWA Board for seven years. He has taken it upon himself to control Mirror Lake's invasive plants by locating the yellow iris for the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program and keeping the purple loosestrife in check. He has spent countless hours picking up dog waste and litter while following all matters of concern to the lake. He has researched the science behind the lake's ecology, compiled annual reports, and managed the website he inherited. **We will greatly miss his thoughtful perspective on all things Mirror Lake.**



Lake Steward Program 2024 was the fourth summer the MLWA contracted with the Adirondack Watershed Institute to have a steward stationed at the Mirror Lake boat launch near the beach, but only the second summer we were able to raise funds for coverage from 9-5, seven days a week. **Over 80% of our budget goes to the Lake Steward Program.**

Fortunately, no invasive species have been found on boat bottoms to date. However, the presence of a steward and the information they share with the public is critical in educating residents and visitors about the importance of the Clean, Drain, Dry protocol and the threat of invasive species. In 2023, stewards inspected 2,256 boats entering the lake from mid-June until Labor Day. Numbers for 2024 will be available in December or January. It is important to be proactive about invasive species -- and this fact cannot be overstated -- **Invasive species are at best difficult to control, more often difficult and expensive to control, and usually impossible to eradicate.** Prevention is key.

Nev Dunn's War on Purple Loosestrife Six years ago, I took over the removal of purple loosestrife from the shores of Mirror Lake. **Some years, I have pulled up to 350 plants.** Initially, I tried to remove the entire root system, but that can be extremely difficult because the roots of mature plants create a dense web of 30-50 shoots. New plants grow from seeds but can also develop from fragments of stems and roots. So, mostly, I have abandoned that plan of attack.

The purple loosestrife usually lives within 12 inches of the water level, making it easy to find in shallow water and on the shoreline. However, some grow three or four feet above the water level. They don't like to compete with dense brush for solar exposure, which is why we don't often find them on the southeast shore of Mirror Lake.

The plant appears in about 16 locations around the lake each year. Often, it will not sprout during the second year but reappear in the third. The seeds are known to remain viable for years, making this a never-ending job. Every summer, I pick the blossoms before they mature and spread. Inevitably, I'll miss some, or the birds spread them so they pop up in new places after being eradicated from other areas. Warmer-than-normal lake temperatures this year (It got into the lower 80s!) caused them to bloom unusually early, in mid-summer.

The first image shows the seed pods left after the purple flowers drop off. Each pod holds hundreds of seeds, while a single plant may produce over two million seeds. **Note the ribbed stem. This is a great way to identify the plant.** The second image shows the plant in bloom along with mature seed pods. It is understandable why uninformed landowners don't want to pull the pretty, purple loosestrife. However, **controlling its spread is important because it crowds out native plants and alters the wetlands that are critical to the natural habitat of our native fish and plants.** The plant was brought to this continent from Eurasia in the mid-1800s, maybe accidentally, maybe as an ornamental, or maybe for (unsupported) medicinal purposes. After six years of trying to eradicate the purple loosestrife from Mirror Lake, I have not learned its secrets. This year I removed about 200 plants; most years, the number was closer to 250. We have controlled it but may never win the battle. Keeping it in check is an important part of the MLWA's work.



Lake Placid Community Day

Once again, MLWA was proud to participate in Lake Placid Community Day. For 2024, we added a “spin-the-trivia-wheel” where attendees spun the wheel, answered questions, learned important information regarding our watershed, and won prizes. We love sharing information about protecting the health of Mirror Lake and helping to stop the spread of invasive species. Our table was popular with people of all ages. *Trish Friedlander quizzing Eloise Ruttan at Community Day (L)*



What is CSLAP? The Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) is a volunteer lake monitoring program run by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the NYS Federation of Lake Associations, Inc. **Over 400 volunteers participate in the program each year on approximately 185 lakes throughout NY**, and the Mirror Lake Watershed Association has been participating in CSLAP for more than ten years.

All sampling volunteers are trained to adhere to procedures outlined in the CSLAP Sampling Protocol. Monthly water quality samples and data are collected from Mirror Lake between June and September using equipment provided by CSLAP. On Mirror Lake, this is typically done by a trained team of two people using a canoe. Water samples are sent to a certified laboratory for analysis, and the results are compiled and stored electronically along with other lake measurements.

Marcy Fagan, Chair, Water Sampling

The Annual Dive The Annual Clean-Up Dive was held in August this year. Jim Grant donned his diving equipment and collected debris from the lake bottom while MLWA board members and a few other willing volunteers in their canoes and kayaks collected his findings: bottles, cans, fishing lines, t-shirts, (even a drone). We concentrate on the more heavily used south end of the lake where there tends to be the most visible debris. Thank you, Jim, for doing this once again!



Chris & Noel Gaige gather debris Jim Grant pulls out of the lake(L); Jim Grant & Bill Billerman w/drone & trash(R)

Strategic Plan Thanks to the direction of board member Elizabeth McGraw, the MLWA is the proud owner of its first strategic plan. Between January and March of 2024, we revisited and revised our mission statement, vision, and goals. We also created a master calendar and an online space for storing shared MLWA documents. It was a good way to help us get a more organized approach to the growing number of tasks we have assumed.

Mission Statement

To protect, educate, and advocate for Mirror Lake and its surrounding watershed by monitoring and improving water quality, preserving and enhancing its ecological health and natural beauty, and raising and encouraging public awareness about the importance of mitigating threats to the watershed.



As part of Adirondack Water Week in early August, the MLWA celebrated with a well-attended gathering at the Northwood Hub. (Thank you to Northwood School! It's a beautiful space.)

Open House To highlight the importance of keeping Mirror Lake free of invasive species, we invited Dr. Brendan Wiltse, chief scientist and Executive Director of the Adirondack Watershed Institute (AWI), to explain the risks created by invasive species and what we all can do to prevent them. The community was treated to tasty food and drinks, along with a measure of thought-provoking natural science. We are fortunate to have Dr. Wiltse and AWI monitoring the health of Mirror Lake.

Also, this year we:

- **Produced a flyer and educational signs** explaining why we **Do Not Feed The Ducks or Other Waterfowl...** because it's bad for birds and humans alike. Birds attracted to handouts overpopulate and pollute the area and spread disease. Meanwhile, birds fed human food can develop deformities like "angel wing" (pictured at right) that leave them unable to fly. This duck was trapped by ice in Mirror Lake last winter, unable to migrate. Fortunately, it was rescued, but we would rather avoid this sad outcome.
- **Began work on a new Mirror Lake Action Plan.**
- **Salvaged the Informational Kiosk** blown down in a windstorm in its former location in Jewtraw Park. It will be resurrected with



better visibility at the start of the Rail Trail at the old train station.

- **Continued our participation in the Adirondack Loon-Friendly Lake Program.**
- **Sponsored and attended the Regional Salt Summit** held in Lake Placid this year. Coordinated by the Lake George Association yearly, it is designed to educate local governments and highway departments about innovations for snow removal and brine application. We were excited to learn about **new technologies available to highway departments for reducing the use of road salt.** This is critical for Mirror Lake.

Win This Gorgeous Photo of Mirror Lake Generously Donated by Tom Broderick!

20" x 26", Mounted & Framed
 The raffle drawing is on December 9, 2024, and all proceeds go to protecting the lake.

Tickets: \$5 for one, or \$25 for six. Send a check to the address in the box below with "raffle" in the memo.



Donations

We always appreciate the generous donations from community members and businesses. **Due to climate change and the ever-present threat of invasive species, protecting Mirror Lake has become a costly but critical responsibility.** This responsibility is compounded by the lake's economic value to the community. We have been fortunate to be awarded a substantial grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program, making it possible to increase our educational outreach via the Adirondack Watershed Institute's lake steward program, while donations give us a much-needed feeling of support and play a key role in preserving the lake. Thank you so very much. This year, we want to give a **special shout-out to The Devlin Inn & Suites, which has honored our hard work with a generous monthly donation for the coming year!**

FISCAL YEAR 7/1/23-6/30/24

TOTAL EXPENSES = \$31,255			TOTAL INCOME = \$27,605	
Water Quality	\$26,895 - 86%		Donations	\$9,105
Administration	953 - 3%		Grants &	18,500
Education & Outreach	3,407 - 11%		Municipal Funding	

Mirror Lake Watershed Association

DONATIONS: The MLWA is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization operated on a purely volunteer basis. We welcome donations of any size and invite you to become involved.

Address: PO Box 1300, Lake Placid, NY 12946 **Email:** mirrorlk@gmail.com

Website: www.mirrorlake.net **Instagram:** [@mirrorlakewatershedassociation](https://www.instagram.com/mirrorlakewatershedassociation)

Monthly Meetings: 2nd Monday of the Month, 5 PM, Peacock Park Beach House. **All Welcome!**