

Echo Lake's Invasive Plant Patrol Team



by Lea Stabinski

Here on Echo Lake, we are fortunate to have a flexible and deeply committed crew of Invasive Plant Patrollers. We are doubly fortunate in that, to date, *our team has found NO invasive plant species in Echo Lake or upstream Taylor Pond.*

The Echo Lake Team

Several people from Echo Lake took the Introductory Invasive Plant Patrol workshop and/or the IPP Survey Methods field course offered by the Maine Volunteer Lake Monitor Program (VLMP) in July. All together we had twenty-two trained Invasive Plant Patrollers participating in the 2011 Echo Lake invasive plant survey. By mid-September the team had collectively logged in 230 hours of work, slightly more than five-and-a-half weeks of labor! That is up from 140 hours of volunteer work reported in 2010.

This may sound like quite a force of volunteers, and it is! However, the reality is that we still need to at least double the number of volunteers participating in the effort in order to have reasonable survey assignments (not more than 2-3 hours work each). We are grateful that several volunteers have been willing and able to survey larger areas and fill in the gaps, but we should not expect these same few individuals to do more than their fair share indefinitely. If we want this effort to be sustainable in the long run, we need to get more trained eyes out there on the water. *Many eyes make light work!*

Native Plant Inventories

In going over and summarizing the data from the surveys, I found that more team members are using the inventory sheets on the back of the survey field sheets to identifying the native plants found during the course of their surveys, and the number of plants being listed is also growing. This represents an increased interest and knowledge of our lake's native plants, a pleasing trend for me! Both Echo Lake and upstream Taylor Pond contain populations of native non-invasive milfoils. Farwell's milfoil, low water milfoil and alternate-flowered milfoil can all be found in our local waters. Knowing this really keeps us Plant Patrollers on our toes!

Expanding the Scope of our Surveys

The Echo Lake boat launch area is a prime spot for invasive plants to be introduced and to take hold. In 2011 we increased the number of surveys covering this vulnerable area; completing monthly Level 1 surveys in June, July, August, and September.

We are also pleased to report that we have a new IPP Team Leader on Taylor Pond. Hannah Faulkner attended both of the VLMP training courses this summer, and has generously agreed to help coordinate the IPP team effort on Taylor Pond. We are very grateful to Hannah for stepping up to this responsibility.

One goal for the coming season is to conduct a plant surveys on Hopkin's Stream (which flows from Lake Minnehonk to the north end of Taylor Pond), and Fayette Mill Pond on Route 17. Neither Hopkins Stream nor the Fayette Mill Pond has ever been surveyed for the presence of invasive aquatic plants.

Education and Outreach

We did branch out a bit this year and offered to work with the public camps on Echo Lake to provide training to campers, counselors and small groups of adults. Alecia Tenney, an experienced Plant Patroller and local resident, was instrumental in helping to set up, design and execute the program that was based on the VLMP IPP Plant Paddle model. Five 12-year-old boys from Camp Winnebago and two camp councilors participated in the event, with five Echo Lake Plant Patrollers and Tom Marshall from 30-Mile River Watershed serving as guides and paddlers.



Lea Stabinski teaching campers at Camp Winnebago how to tell "friend" from "foe" as part of the Echo Lake Plant Paddle

After an hour long session on the shore; we struck off for two plant rich coves across the lake. Plant samples were carefully collected, brought to shore, sorted into bins by “plant type,” and then identified. Both coves presented us with native milfoils so we had excellent material for discussion.

Subsequently two of the participating campers conducted a plant survey of the Winnebago waterfront with the camp’s nature counselor. This was a first for Echo Lake. A camp doing its’ own surveillance! Plans are underway to bring the IPP Plant Paddle to the other camps on the lake in coming years.

IPP Leadership Meeting

VLMP Invasive Species Coordinator, Roberta Hill, came to Echo Lake on June 28, to discuss the IPP Sustainability Initiative and ways in which trained invasive plant patrollers can play important leadership roles in their communities. After shuttling participants out to our camp on Echo Island, we had the meeting around our large kitchen table, with a sheet on the wall for a projector screen. Eight IPP Lake Team Leaders from the following lakes attended: Androscoggin, Lovejoy Pond, Echo Lake, Lake Minnehonk, Parker Pond, David Pond, and Flying Pond. Also attending were our IPP Regional Leaders, Lidie Robbins and Tom Marshall from 30-Mile River Watershed.

In closing, I would simply like to say that we are doing a great job, and we need to continue to train and expand our educated and able-bodied invasive aquatic plant surveyors in order to protect not only Echo Lake, but neighboring water bodies as well. I am truly grateful to all our local IPP volunteers; their passion is inspirational.

For more information, or to learn how you can get involved in the Echo Lake Plant Patrol, please contact Lea Stabinski at spiritlea@comcast.net.