



## Welcome to our May 2020 Newsletter

Just got word from Anna DeSellas at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation & Parks (MECP) that the **Lake Partners Program (LPP) has been put on hold and will probably be cancelled** for this year due to Covid -19. All volunteers involved with LPP should just keep this year's sample kit to use next year. If things change, we will let you know.

We are delighted that Doris Villemaire the author of "Flora, Fauna & Feathers" has agreed to let us reprint some of her articles on wildlife and the environment that were originally published in the Almaquin News. **Her article on "Northern Flickers" is included in this issue**

For those interested, we have included an update on the **Kearney Graphite Mine** on page 3.



Clam Lake, Kearney. May 9,2020 "Winter doesn't want to leave"



### **Northern Flicker**

I have been trying for years to get a decent photo of the handsome camera-shy Northern Flicker. This bird is an extraordinary woodpecker in that it eats almost exclusively on the ground. When it flies, you will see a flash of yellow in the wings – and a bright white flash on the rump. Their main colour is brown with black bars; whereas most woodpeckers are black and white. Wild fruits, berries seeds and nuts are their secondary food source. Unlike other woodpeckers, this bird spends most of its time on the ground, feeding on ants and other insects in meadows fields and lawns. This is the only woodpecker that migrates south. To clean themselves from mites, flickers will squish captured ants and preen with the remains. Ants produce formic acid, which kills small parasites on the flickers skin and feathers.

To find Northern Flickers, try walking through open woods or forest edges, but scan the ground. They are extremely shy and skittish. You may flush a flicker from a feeding spot up into a nearby tree. Look for the obvious white rump patch in flight. Also, be sure to listen for their loud, ringing call and their piercing yelp. Have your camera ready!

“We won’t have a society if we destroy the environment.” Margaret Mead

Photo and research by Doris Villemaire

[donspond@gmail.com](mailto:donspond@gmail.com)

**We have some recent additional information on the OGL (Ontario Graphite Ltd.)** situation. First, some background information for those who may not be aware of the graphite mine and OGL. The Kearney Graphite Mine is located in the NE corner of the Municipality of Kearney about 20 km from the downtown area and is accessed via Forestry Tower Road. In June 1994 the site had been put into a Temporary Suspension State when operations at the mill facilities ceased. In 2011 the site's status was changed to a Production State by OGL. Due to financial constraints the mine did not actually go into production and has remained in a "care & maintenance" state awaiting additional funding. OGL's repeated difficulty in meeting the required limits in its Environmental Compliance Agreement (ECA) led MECP to issue a Director's Order (DO) and eventually fines, which OGL appealed. In October 2019 a settlement was reached whereby the historical DO's were rescinded and replaced by a new DO outlining new actions to be taken. Originally, the drainage from the Tailings (mill waste) area was collected in an area called the "Polishing Pond", where lime was manually added to neutralize the acidic waste water and precipitate metals. Under the new DO, OGL was to install an automated liming and monitoring system to treat the contents of the polishing pond so that the effluent parameters were always within limits. OGL was also supposed to increase the depth of the polishing pond so that it could handle spring runoff and summer storm water without overflowing. The automated system was installed last fall and appears to have worked as planned, but dredging of the polishing pond was delayed until June because of an early freeze up

In January 2020, KWEF got word that OLG had filed for creditor protection and the firm Deloitte was appointed to handle the case. Part of their task was to try to find other investors or a buyer for the property. On Apr 22nd it was determined that there were no serious interested buyers or investors so the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines (ENDM) stepped forward in a "caretaker role" to forestall any environmental issues. ENDM will ensure that the automated liming system remains in operation and that the dredging operation will go forward and be completed this spring. OGL still owns the mine site, leases etc but they are insolvent. If a buyer or new investors can't be found, it is our understanding that the resolution becomes "messy" and may take 2-3 years. ENDM emphasized that in the short to mid-term they were there to prevent any environmental damage but couldn't continue indefinitely and at some point they may have to consider closure. As they go forward, ENDM said they will keep us informed on any changes to the status of the mine and KWEF can contact them at any time if we have any questions. We will continue to monitor the situation and try to keep everyone informed of any changes in the mine's status. Contact us if you have questions.

With the upcoming long weekend, we hope that everyone continues to practice "social distancing" and obeys all the rules currently mandated to fight Covid-19. We have been fortunate in Almaquin so far - so please don't do anything that could cause a major spike in infections that would overload our local hospitals. Take care and be safe.