



Friends of Green River Reservoir

Fall 2021
Newsletter

In This Issue

2

**Common Loon Update
for 2021**

by Ron Kelley

3

**FGRR Annual
Nature Program**

4

This Summer at GRRSP

5

**The Playful North
American River Otter**

by Ron Kelley

6

**Green River Reservoir –
A 2021 Paddlers' Memoir**

Jim and Doreen Noyes

7

**Update on the GRRSP
ADA Accessible Plans**

By Milford Cushman

8

FGRR Board News

Green River Dam Relicensing

A Statement from the FGRR Board on the current situation

In recent years, the fate of the Green River Reservoir Dam has appeared uncertain. The federal Clean Water Act requires Vermont's Agency of Natural Resources to adopt and implement regulations that are designed to protect and improve habitat for fish and other organisms. These regulations are approved by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and enforced by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) for all dams statewide at the time of their relicensing by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Compliance with these regulations compels Morrisville Water & Light to install updates to the Green River Reservoir Dam and to change how they regulate water flows.

Morrisville Water & Light claims that these changes would make generating hydroelectricity economically unfeasible and has fought the changes in court. In Morrisville's 2020 Annual Report, General Manager Penny Jones states, "The conditions being imposed by the VT ANR will compromise the Green River Reservoir dam's ability to operate safely and our ability to generate renewable power and revenue from the facility. MW&L cannot and will not operate the Green River Dam at a loss for the next 30 years."

The Board of the Friends of Green River Reservoir is concerned about Morrisville Water & Light's lack of transparency and documentation throughout this process. They have not presented any financial analysis to the public that backs up their claim that these changes would make them operate at a loss. In 2019, the FGRR offered to help fund an economic study of the dam and the projected additional cost of operation with the new conditions, but MWL has not acted on our offer and no independent study has yet been conducted. We strongly believe that without a credible, independent financial analysis available to their electric ratepayers and to the public, there is no way to determine the accuracy of Morrisville Water & Light's dire financial forecast.

Penny Jones has stated that Morrisville Water & Light "will continue to work with lawyers to determine a path forward." During this dam relicensing process, Morrisville Water & Light has spent a multiyear total of \$1,158,788 of ratepayer money on lawyer's fees and other expenses as part of their effort to oppose these changes. Much of that money could have instead been invested in the dam itself to make the necessary updates that would bring it into compliance with current clean water regulations.

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Green River Dam Relicensing

Continued from page 1

While these multitude of legal issues remain unresolved, we do not anticipate any changes to the operation of the dam in the immediate future. Morrisville Water & Light is required to provide FERC with an Independent Dam Safety Study by May of 2022, a request that has been outstanding for several years. We look forward to the study's publication, and hope that ushers in a new era of cooperation with stakeholders and transparency to ratepayers as we all work together to protect Green River Reservoir. Our goal is a shared understanding of where we are.

Friends of Green River Reservoir, Inc.

— FALL 2021 —

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Common Loon Update for 2021

BY RON KELLEY

For the first time since 2008, there were no surviving chicks produced by the four GRR loon pairs this year. The Access Bay loons nested on their usual tiny island in early June and incubated two eggs. But with the early summer drought, water levels kept dropping all month; the climb back up to the nest became too much for them and they abandoned the eggs. The Southwest pair began building a nest at the end of that cove but soon abandoned it. By then, their usual island nest site was too high above water to access and they failed to nest. The Merganser Inlet pair attempted to nest twice but were unsuccessful. The Northwest pair began building a nest on the SW side of Loon Island but ended up nesting on the SE side. They did not produce any surviving chicks but egg fragments were found, indi-

cating that at least one egg must have hatched. The Zack Woods loons nested and had two eggs but they abandoned the nest shortly before the eggs should have hatched.

On Loon Watch Day, July 17, FGRR board members counted only 9 adult loons compared to 17 in 2020 – but a one-day count in one year does not necessarily indicate a downward trend. Some loons may have been visiting other nearby waters on that day; a group of 13 loons was observed on the reservoir a few days later.

The Statewide Loon Watch is a survey conducted by Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. Statewide, loon numbers continue to increase, with VCE's preliminary report showing a banner year with 109 nests and 125 chicks produced.



RON KELLEY



FGRR ANNUAL NATURE PROGRAM

The Wonderful World of Crows & Ravens

Talk by *Bird Diva* Bridget Butler

PRESENTATION BY ZOOM

Friday, November 12, 2021 • 7:00 PM

Register by emailing us at webmaster@fgrrvt.org

Registration link will be sent the week before the program.

Crows and their kin are a raucously entertaining group! From jays to ravens to magpies to crows, there's a lot to wonder about when it comes to these marvelously intelligent birds. Join Bird Diva Bridget Butler as she shares the natural history of these birds known as corvids. Find out how smart corvids really are, the difference between crows and ravens, and their complex social structures. And, learn how you can contribute to our understanding of the large winter roosts of crows through the Crows In Vermont project.





2021 SEASON REVIEW

This Summer at GRRSP

BY ROSS BRYANT, PARK MANAGER; ETHAN PAGE, ASSISTANT PARK MANAGER;
AND THE STAFF

Our goal is to “Provide an exceptional experience for our guests and staff and to remember there is always one more thing we can do to achieve this.”

It has been another busy and fun filled season at Green River Reservoir State Park. This has been my 9th season at the park and the 6th year as Park Manager. The staff and I consider it a privilege to be able to work here in this wonderful setting. We are proud of our park and the guests who enjoy being here as much as we do.

We have checked over 1,200 camp sites this summer, which involves around 1,400 miles of paddling. We have also checked Zack woods and its five camp sites and day use areas daily. Our guests leave almost no trash

behind for us to clean up and for this we say “*Thank you.*”

Our projects this summer included finding, de-barking, staining and erecting a new flagpole and replacing approximately 18 planks and adding Staymat or crushed stone with fines that packs to a hard surface to the ADA trail. Our staff also picks up roadside trash from the park entrance to Zack woods.

The Park had a record year with approximately 19, 000 visitors including campers and day users. This year, unlike last year, we saw the return of many of our regular campers from VA, MD, NC, PA and MA. We do miss our Canadian campers and hope they can return next year. I have enjoyed seeing people I met nine years ago

when they were teenagers camping with their parents continuing the family camping tradition and returning with children of their own.

A large variety of wildlife was spotted by guest and staff this season including moose, deer, otters, bears, raccoons, eagles, hawks, snapping turtles, painted turtles, coyotes, and the people’s favorite, the ever-present loons.

The staff would like to thank the Friends of Green River Reservoir for all their support and especially this year for the tandem kayak they gifted us. It has been a big help when we have tools to take to work on projects at the sites. The staff gives thanks to the support we receive from our guests and from the Vermont Department of Parks staff.





The Playful North American River Otter

BY RON KELLEY

I have always been fascinated by otters, ever since seeing them in videos or at the zoo during my youth. They tend to be most active from dusk through dawn but with a little luck, it is not too unusual to see them during the day. I tend to encounter river otters while paddling on Green River Reservoir about once or twice a year and it always gives me a thrill. Hikers also have the possibility of seeing otters, as the numerous beaver ponds in the park provide excellent otter habitat. They are very curious animals and once my presence has been detected, they tend to repeatedly poke their heads above the water to check me out. This is probably to determine if I am any kind of a threat.

This member of the weasel family will travel great distances over land and in water in search of prey. They mainly feed on fish and shellfish but can also eat frogs, amphibians, snakes, turtles, birds and small animals. They are able to close their ears and nostrils when underwater and use their long whiskers to help locate food. But they can stay underwater only as long as they can hold their breath. Otters are powerful swimmers who can swim as fast as eight miles per hour. Compare that to Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, who tops out at five miles per hour.

River otters in Vermont breed in March or April but the kits (1-5 per litter) are not born until the following year. They open their eyes after 20 days and are able to leave the den in three to four months, maturing in six months.

When cross-country skiing on the Catamount Trail east of Green River Reservoir, I frequently see otter slides in the snow that are going up and down the hills bordering the reservoir. This always conjures up images of them having as much enjoyment as a young child on a sled. The snow slides average about a foot in width and if fresh, sections that are relatively flat may reveal their paw prints (visible in my picture) where they press down on the snow to help propel themselves along. Though not as exciting as seeing the otters, these snow slides are a positive reminder that local populations are doing well while exploring for food and having fun at the same time.

LEFT: Curious Otter

TOP RIGHT: Pair of resting Otters

BOTTOM RIGHT: Otter snow slide





Green River Reservoir

– A 2021 Paddlers' Memoir –

JIM AND DOREEN NOYES

Jim and Doreen Noyes are FGRR charter members who have paddled the Reservoir for 40 years, in all seasons. Here are a few of the memories they recently shared with us.

Last year during COVID, GRR was our salvation; we canoed from early in the spring into mid-November for a total of 64 paddles. These 2021 notes start the day after we were asked to consider a submission and end in time to get them edited for the Fall FGRR newsletter – but we'll continue to paddle on for as long as weather permits. Our paddling is not driven by a desire to witness the fabulous wildlife of GRR (over the years we've seen a LOT!), but more often to find peace, beauty and tranquility at a time where it is getting harder and harder to find solace from some of the harsher realities of the 21st century – and there is no finer respite than Green River Reservoir.

Sunday, August 15. Paddle 38.

After the early August heat wave, it was much cooler this morning. We went early (9:00) before traffic piled in for the afternoon. Early is good for a lot of reasons, one of them being there is usually a parking space in the lower lot – which there was today.

Monday, August 16. Paddle 39.

One of those perfect late-summer days. A 10:00 AM paddle, with a loon zooming by under the water beneath our canoe – an amazing sight! Most boaters depart the landing and immediately head north. We do the opposite. We've found the southern bays and arms are often quieter and less busy. Unless our goal is to seek out the wildlife unique to the ecosystems of the

north end of GRR, we're happy with the beautiful tranquility closer at hand.

Monday, August 16. Paddle 40. The end of the perfect late-summer day. A 6:00 PM paddle when we just floated in the middle of the reservoir and took in the lovely sunset. Every morning and evening paddle under clear skies remind me of David Crosby's lyrics: The sun's rays are "flung like jewels" across the gentle reservoir waves.

Sunday, August 22. Paddle 41.

It's been a few days of not enough time or too hot or very overcast or too windy. Today, to beat the heat we were out on the water before 8:00 AM, rising with the fog. It was spectacular, and we owned the water and the loons. Early morning is always peaceful. If Mother Nature is our God, GRR is our church. We are off the water by 10:00, when the sun is starting to become uncomfortably hot and the weekend day-users are starting to pour in.

Monday, August 23. Paddle 42.

A repeat of yesterday, but fewer boaters. One of the things we have learned is that many sites that have been reserved are not always occupied. Campers apparently often either leave early or arrive late or rent an extra night so they don't have to leave at 11:00 AM in the middle of a last nice day. That means we often find a favorite picnic or swimming spot available. We live less than 15 minutes away, which makes it a no-brainer to come often and discover what unexpected pleasures we can find. We are NEVER disappointed!

Tuesday, August 24. Paddle 43.

A lovely (I probably use that word often) evening paddle tonight, serenaded

by 5 loons under a striking sunset. The sun sets over McKinstry Hill a little earlier than the rest of Hyde Park, so it is pretty much gone now well before 8:00. The balmy summer evenings bring out the random swimmers and boaters looking for respite after a hot August day.

Tuesday, August 31. Paddle 44.

A beautiful evening end-of-summer paddle after several days of blistering hot and humid conditions. The greens are not as green and the setting sun creates glistening silver waves.

Saturday, September 4. Paddle 45.

When September arrived, summer turned off like a light switch! This evening's paddle was a gamble – the middle of Labor Day weekend. We usually avoid high-traffic times, but we hadn't been paddling for a few days and it was a classic early fall evening. Our timing was perfect; easy parking, easy in, easy out, little activity, calm water, and a stupendous sunset. Sun is down by 7:30 now.

Monday, September 6, Labor Day.

Paddles 46 and 47. GRR was eerily quiet on this glorious Monday morning. Apparently, most campers had already left, taking home their holiday memories, but it was a wonderfully peaceful morning. It was just as nice at the end of the day – except for that brief hail storm that suddenly blew in – so we returned to close out another unusually quiet and calm holiday. The loons seemed to be in hiding on both ends of the day. (We deem a paddle without seeing and hearing loons "incomplete.") We look forward to more paddles and fewer people in the next few weeks!

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Update on the GRRSP ADA Accessible Plans

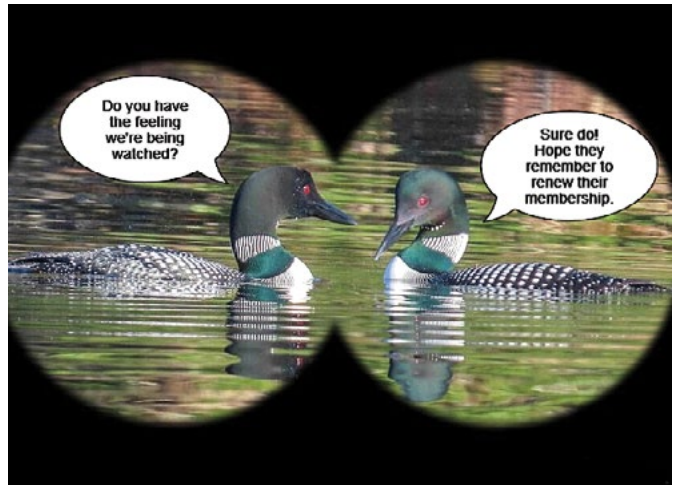
BY MILFORD CUSHMAN

Planning for an ADA accessible trail and boardwalk and two accessible campsites

After six years of planning and permitting, the GRRSP accessible trail and boardwalk was constructed during the 2007 operating season. Next to instituting of the Green River Reservoir Viewshed Overlay District, we consider the ADA accessible trail and boardwalk a most important project, by providing accessibility to the waters of the reservoir by a greater number of persons. Since 2007, the deep winter freeze and thaw cycle have caused the boardwalk to shift out of compliance with ergonomic standards for safe use for persons with disabilities.

This October, Board members Tom Kastner and Milford Cushman will be meeting with John Medose, Northeast Parks Facility Manager, Vermont State Parks, to perform an engineering survey of the length of the trail and boardwalk in order to inform the re-design, permitting and making of plans for re-construction of the non-compliant sections. At the same time, we will also be performing engineering surveys of campsites #4 and #21 in order to design and permit plans to develop them into accessible sites.

Over the winter, plans, permitting and funding will be advanced for these projects. We will provide an update in our Spring 2022 newsletter.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

*Memberships run for one year
from the month that you join.*

Volunteers send electronic reminders on the month of your renewal date, followed by a snail mail notice if you do not renew in response to the email reminder. Renewing online immediately saves time, energy, and stamps – we thank those that renew on the first notice. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about your membership status.

Thank you for your continued support!

**Sheila Goss, Board member,
Chair Membership Committee**

Continued from previous page.

Tuesday, September 7. Paddle 48. A perfect early fall day for an evening picnic. When we arrived, it was the craziest loading and unloading we've ever witnessed. There were – inexplicably – 12 or 14 vehicles all trying to pack-up and exit or enter and unpack at the same time. We navigated down to the water and, with most everyone on the way out, had a spectacularly sunny and tranquil ride with lots of loons to accompany us. Now that the season is winding down for most, we are looking forward to more days like this... without the congestion.

Monday, September 13. Paddle 49.

What a delightful early Fall morning. Early in the morning means GRR is all our own.

Monday, September 13. Paddle 50.

We are going to be gone for a few days and it was a glorious evening, so we ended the day the way we started it. But that sun goes down SO much earlier now! The water is always silvery under the setting sun. The leaves are a little less green and a little color is starting to appear on the shore. Soon we'll be looking for red leaves floating in the water, which remains as crystal clear as the water out of our home faucet. Each

warm fall day will tempt us for that one last dip.

Thursday, September 16. Paddle 51.

Oh, what a beautiful morning. Last we transitioned from kayaking to canoeing, but still use our kayaking paddles and technique... we get a lot of confused stares, but why mess with success?

Thursday, September 16. Paddle 52.

What do you do at the end of a perfect September day? Go paddling (again) on GRR, of course!



FGRR BOARD NEWS

The Annual Meeting of the Membership was held by Zoom on 29 July 2021 with 29 members in attendance. We reviewed our mission statement:

We are dedicated to protecting the wilderness-like character and wildlife habitat of Green River Reservoir State Park while preserving its heritage and historical uses for future generations.

Year in Review: Milford reviewed the Friend’s accomplishments from the past year. This then prompted a conversation around the bear lockers currently in use and future bear lockers. Members also vocalized support for the FGRR initiative with Forests, Parks, and Recreation to make several camp sites ADA. Additionally, we extended our appreciation to Ross Bryant and the park staff for their work this year.

Dam Update: An update on relicensing of the Green River Dam was provided by Mike Wickenden. Updates on relicensing are posted on the FGRR website under news and events as we have new information.

Nominating Committee: Tom Rogers was elected to a three-year term (until 2024). Re-elected to three-year terms were Sally Laughlin, Tom Kastner, and Lisa Dimondstein. This brings our Board to eleven, the maximum number set in our bylaws,

Continuing Board members are:

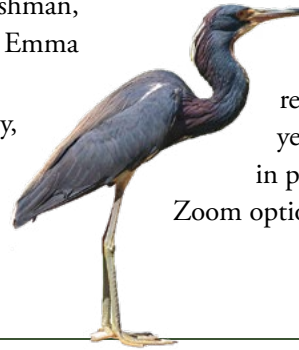
Terms to 2023: Milford Cushman, Sheila Goss, Ron Kelley, and Emma Marvin.

Terms to 2022: Terri Gregory, Eric Nuse, and Michael Wickenden.

Honorary: Bill Bartlett

Membership: The Friends have nearly 400 memberships – nearly 100 of those consist of two people, so the Friends has roughly 500 members. The group briefly discussed new member requirement strategies – noting that membership has been stable for the last several years.

Good part of meeting by Zoom: Appreciation was expressed around having the meeting by Zoom, making it more accessible and allowed for participation that wouldn’t have happened otherwise. However, we do miss the social contact having a meal together and a chance to chat. Covid restraints allowing, next year we propose to meet in person and have a join by Zoom option!



Tom Rogers joins the FGRR Board

Our new Board Member Tom Rogers is a professional conservationist who works in fundraising for The Nature Conservancy in Vermont. He is a trained wildlife biologist with an M.S. from the University of Montana, where he did research on grizzly bears. He is an enthusiastic birder and has worked on bird conservation projects from warblers to bald eagles. Tom also serves on the Stowe Mountain Rescue team, rescuing lost or injured hikers, climbers, and paddlers. He lives in Stowe with his wife Julia and their two daughters. FGRR is most fortunate to have him as a Board member!

Tom says *“There is nothing I enjoy more than camping at Green River Reservoir with my family. My daughters seem to transform the moment we shove off the boat launch and their sense of curiosity and wonder is alive the entire time we’re there. I also sometimes get out for solo paddles in the early morning, and there are times where the water is so glass-still that it appears like you’re paddling through the clouds. Green River Reservoir is one of the most special places in Vermont – for people and for wildlife – and I’m excited to contribute in any way I can to helping it stay that way.”*

