**Search for Eurasian Water-milfoil on Black Oak Lake 2014**

Susan Knight October 2014

On September 15, Walt Bates, John Annin, John Clarke, Jim Fleming, and Dirk Meyer and I searched for, but did not find Eurasian water-milfoil (EWM), curly-leaf pondweed and purple loosestrife. On October 12, John Annin, Cheryl Mitchel and I continued the search along the shore of the deep central section and also the Barber’s Bay area and again did not find any unwanted plants. The weather was not ideal for the search on Sept. 15, but better, though colder, on October 12. I used the viewer most of the time and was generally able to see the bottom when the water was less than 8’ deep. The viewer allows me to see deeper, and more clearly into the water, but I see a much smaller area of the bottom than I can when looking straight into the water without the viewer. It is better to not have to use the viewer, but I still feel confident we would have found something, had it been there.

We followed our grid of points to thoroughly cover the western end of the lake. As in other years, we found some EWM look-alikes, including water marigold and alternate-flowered water-milfoil in the west bay. Later, Cheryl and I canoed part of the west bay where the water is especially shallow to be sure we did not miss any part of the lake. Although it is very unlikely EWM could grow in such shallow water, it is a good idea to scout these shorelines since any EWM growing out in the lake is bound to fragment and float in towards shore, where it could root.

In the area we canoed, I was surprised at how much common bladderwort we found – a change (and not at all worrying) from other years. The common bladderwort had fully developed miniature mitten-shaped winter buds, or turions that will stay dormant until next spring. We also found common bladderwort (also with well-developed turions) in another small bay that had been dry in other years. We found a small bit of large purple bladderwort in the west bay on our first day. I have found it in Black Oak Lake before, and in that same area. While large purple bladderwort can become a nuisance in some lakes, I just saw it once on this visit to BOL. This plant is evidently common in neighboring George Lake, and possibly may have come in from there.

After a day and a half of searching the entire lake, we found plenty of native northern water-milfoil and other native plants indicating a healthy plant community. We did not find any EWM, curly-leaf pondweed or purple loosestrife. The lake level is obviously higher. Though I do not think this will have any effect on the potential introduction of invasive species, it is interesting to note that there is now more surface area, and littoral zone, to watch.

It is critically important that everyone involved in the Clean Boats Clean Waters and the Vigilante program remain alert to invasive species throughout the open-water season. Remember to watch for EWM along the shoreline as well as in the water, since EWM, should it ever occur, will likely fragment and wash up on shore. With so many eyes watching, invasive aquatic plants are much less likely to slip in. If anyone finds anything suspicious, I hope they will bring it to me to identify. It is far better to examine a number of suspicious-looking plants and learn they are actually native plants, than to have even one invasive plant escape notice and begin to colonize the lake.

See you next year!