

Lakes Region

BOATING



Leave no trace: Protecting wildlife and keeping shores clean around the Lakes Region, beyond



By **BREE ROSSITER**
Lake Winnepesaukee Alliance

New Hampshire’s forests, lakes, and mountains offer more than just scenic views and summer adventures. They’re home to countless wildlife species that rely on clean, healthy habitats to survive. But when humans leave trash behind, even by accident, it can put these ecosystems at risk. Whether it’s a forgotten snack wrapper on the trail or fishing line left by the lake, litter (no matter how small) can have big consequences. One of my biggest pet peeves? When people bag their dog’s waste, then leave the bag behind.

“Leave No Trace” is more than a catchphrase, it’s a mindset that helps protect the fragile ecosystems we enjoy.

Trash, especially plastic, doesn’t just disappear. A single plastic water bottle can take over 450 years to break down, leaching toxic chemicals as it degrades. What’s even more shocking is how quickly plastics fragment into microplastics. Globally, freshwater lakes and reservoirs hold an estimated 10,167 tons of microplastics, that’s the equivalent of about 508 million plastic bottles in our lakes and reservoirs alone.

Birds, fish, and turtles are especially vulnerable to litter left behind. A bald eagle might mistake a shiny piece of plastic for a fish, while a curious raccoon could wedge its head into an empty

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After-Hours event showcases classic cars, vintage boats

MOULTONBOROUGH — The New Hampshire Boat Museum invites the public to experience its dynamic spirit at a special After-Hours at the Museum event on Friday, Aug. 22, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Moultonborough campus.

Classic cars will fill the parking lot while vintage boats shine inside the museum, offering guests a unique evening surrounded by timeless craftsmanship. Visitors can mingle with fellow enthusiasts, explore NHBM’s engaging exhibits, and enjoy a bite off the grill.

“This is an event any car or boat enthusiast will

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container and struggle to escape. Discarded fishing line can entangle wings, fins, or legs, cutting off circulation and causing severe injury or even death. According to the Loon Preservation Committee, lead poisoning from swallowed fishing tackle remains the leading cause of adult loon deaths in New Hampshire, responsible for roughly 38% of documented cases since 1989, an estimated 176 loons lost to a single source of preventable pollution.

Litter doesn't just harm individual animals, it alters their behavior. Animals that become accustomed to finding food in trash lose their natural wariness of humans, putting them in danger.

This summer, the U.S. Forest Service reported a rise in food-conditioned bear sightings in the White Mountains, with bears increasingly approaching hikers, tearing into backpacks, and seeking out human food left at campsites and shelters. Bears that learn to associate people with food lose their natural fear of humans, making dangerous encounters more likely. When bears become too habituated and pose a risk to public safety, wildlife officials are often left with no choice but to euthanize them, a tragic and entirely preventable outcome.

The good news? Each of us has the power to protect the places we love. Always pack out what you pack in, including pet waste. Snip six-pack rings before tossing them, and properly dispose of fishing line and tackle. Bring a trash bag on every outing, even if it's just a short walk or paddle. Better yet, join or organize a cleanup to help remove what others may have left behind. And if you're out on Lake Winnepesaukee, secure your trash so nothing blows overboard, everything you bring on the water should return with you.

As August brings more visitors to our lakes, trails, and campgrounds, let's be mindful of what we leave behind. Whether you're paddling through quiet coves or hiking up a favorite ridge, remember, every piece of trash picked up is a step toward protecting the wildlife that makes New Hampshire so special.

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Bree Rossiter is the conservation program manager for the Lake Winnepesaukee Alliance. She manages the water quality monitoring program, cyanobacteria monitoring initiatives, the Winni Blue/LakeSmart program, and assists with watershed management planning efforts. Bree can be reached at brossiter@winnepesaukee.org. The Lake Winnepesaukee Alliance is a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the water quality and natural resources of the lake and its watershed. To learn more, visit winnepesaukee.org.

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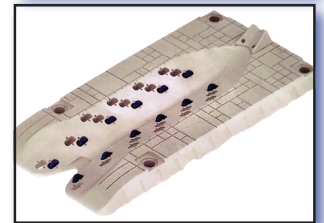
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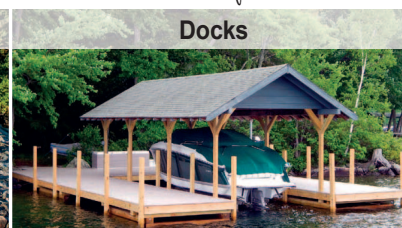
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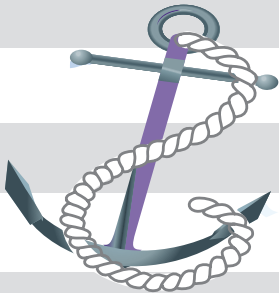
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Science center introduces animals, journeys in Species Spotlight series

HOLDERNESS — This late summer and early fall, Squam Lakes Natural Science Center invites visitors to engage deeply with New Hampshire's native wildlife through its new Species Spotlight series.

Each week highlights one species in the Science Center's care. Docents and staff will share their unique stories and discuss daily enrichment which includes novelty items engaging the animal's natural senses and abilities.

"Every animal has a story," said Executive Director Iain MacLeod. "Our ambassadors can't survive in the wild, but through their stories, visitors develop empathy and a stronger connection to nature."

The schedule is:

Week of Aug. 11: Coyote — Watch Belmont, orphaned as a pup in Belmont.

Week of Aug. 18: Fisher — Learn about this secretive forest carnivore.

Week of Aug. 25: Red Fox — Dis-

cover the challenges and care of the resident Red Foxes.

Week of Sept. 1: Bobcat — Observe New Hampshire's elusive bobcats and their stories.

Weekend of Sept. 6-7: Mountain Lion — Experience the power and history of the Mountain Lions.

Weekend of Sept. 13-14: Deer — Celebrate White-Tailed Deer and their care.

Weekend of Sept. 20-21: Raptors — Meet rescue raptors like Conway the Barred Owl.

Weekend of Sept. 27-28: River Otter — Watch playful River Otters and hear their stories.

Weekend of Oct. 4-5: Black Bear — Learn about Black Bears and their enrichment activities.

Each spotlight includes an explanation of daily animal enrichment, docents to share stories and answer questions, plus engaging facts and displays. All activities are included with trail admission; last entry at 3:30 p.m.

Visit nhnature.org for details.

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love," said Programs Manager Anne Lennon. "Walk around outside and check out classic cars and then head into the museum to see our exhibits."

The After-Hours event is one example of how NHBM continues to emerge as a vibrant, forward-thinking institution. With new exhibits, hands-on programs, and community gatherings throughout the year, the museum is dedicated to

celebrating New Hampshire's boating heritage while creating fresh opportunities for connection and discovery.

"Whether you're a longtime supporter or a first-time visitor, NHBM's evolving campus offers something for everyone," said NHBM Executive Director Devon Kurtz. "The museum's commitment to innovation and community engagement ensures that each visit is memorable, educational, and fun."

For more information, visit nhbm.org.

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Why Hampton Beach has seen so many bacteria swimming advisories this summer

BY ANGELJEAN CHIARAMIDA
SEACOAST ONLINE

HAMPTON — An unusual number of July water samples from Hampton Beach showed elevated bacteria levels, prompting state officials to issue swimming advisories. But officials say the findings don't point to a serious contamination issue.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services samples recreational waters — both fresh and salt — twice weekly, according to chief aquatic biologist Amy Smagula. On July 7, 9, 15, 22, and 29, samples from Hampton Beach exceeded the state's threshold of 104 MPN (most probable number) of enterococci bacteria per 100 milliliters.

Smagula said the counts ranged from 140 to 160 MPN — mildly above acceptable levels, but not cause for alarm.

“This could be from a dirty diaper,” she said, adding the problematic counts appear to be from Hampton Beach's north and center areas.

When bacteria levels exceed the state's threshold, DES retests the affected area daily. In Hampton's case, Smagula said, advisories were lifted within a day or so after follow-up samples showed levels had returned to normal.

Though the counts were only slightly elevated, swimming advisories were issued to inform and protect beachgoers. New Hampshire doesn't close beaches, Smagula explained, but advisories allow visitors to decide whether to swim at their own risk.

Historically, elevated bacteria levels are more common at beaches in North Hampton and Rye, especially after heavy rains flush animal waste from nearby salt marshes. But such spikes are rare along Hampton's shoreline. Smagula said the last time similar readings were recorded at Hampton Beach was in 2020 — and before that, not since 2016 or 2017.

She described this summer's readings as typical seasonal “blips,” not signs of a larger or ongoing problem.

Smagula explained enterococci is used as an indicator bacteria for coastal beaches, while E. coli serves the same role for freshwater sites. Both are fecal coliforms — bacteria naturally found in the intestines of warm-blooded animals such as seagulls, waterfowl, small mammals and humans. Elevated levels may signal possible contamination in a body of water.

These bacteria, along with other pathogens present in fecal discharge, can cause illness. Short- and long-term effects may include gastroenteritis, dysentery, skin rashes, and eye infections. To protect public health, the state issues swimming advisories — posted online on the state's Healthy Swimming Mapper and with signage at affected beaches.

DES investigates what's causing elevated bacteria counts

DES officials are still analyzing the situation in Hampton, but currently do not believe it's linked to warming ocean temperatures or boaters illegally venting septic

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tanks nearby. Smagula also doubts the cause is leaking underground septic systems left over from before Hampton installed public sewer.

For one, enterococci doesn't survive long outside the body — typically degrading within 24 hours and becoming undetectable in lab cultures. And unlike the runoff-related spikes seen in North Hampton after heavy rains, this July has been relatively dry, making rainfall an unlikely factor.

Still, DES is closely monitoring when and where elevated samples are collected, and under what conditions. Bacteria samples have been sent to the Jackson Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire for DNA testing, which can identify the animal source.

If the DNA samples indicate the bacteria comes from seagulls, for example, Smagula said, it could relate to the evidence of high levels of seagull waste in the tide pools along the beach that DES technicians have found. A theory is that when the tide sweeps these tide pools out to sea, it causes bacteria levels to rise in the waters around the shore.

Massachusetts has also endured higher than acceptable bacteria counts at a number of its beaches this summer. However, Smagula said DES has not seen a sweeping problem along the entire New England coastline that would indicate an endemic problem regionally.

How NHDES monitors the state's recreational waters

From Memorial Day through Labor Day, DES monitors the Granite State's fresh and salt recreational waters for the public's safety, testing for bacteria or cyanobacteria. Twice a week, Smagula said DES technicians take a number of samples from state waters.

In Hampton, for example, samples are taken from the north, center and south areas of Hampton Beach, Smagula said, to get a good indicator of water quality.

Samples are brought back to the lab, she said, filtered, cultured for 24 hours, then read for bacteria counts.

When higher than acceptable counts are found, advisories are posted on the Healthy Swimming Mapper.

A warning is issued on a waterbody when samples exceed 70,000 cells/mL at multiple locations. A watch may be issued based only on a photo when the cyanobacteria density is approaching 70,000 cells/mL, only one sample exceeds 70,000 cells/mL, or the bloom material has passed.

Advisory signs are also posted at affected beaches alerting visitors of a problem when they arrive.

"Our agency (NHDES) does not close beaches. (It) only issues advisories," according to Smagula, "If the beach is managed by a private entity, municipality, or State Park, they may elect to close a beach."

For advisories, she said, it is "a swim at your own risk situation."

"We provide information so that beach goers can make informed decisions about selecting a beach, or swimming if there is an advisory," according to Smagula.

DES wants beachgoers to check, look and report. Check the Healthy Swimmer Mapper, look for odd odors, smells or unhealthy conditions at beaches, and report anything suspicious or of concern to NHDES at 603-848-8094 so that the agency can investigate.

DES also advises that if anyone should fall ill or develop rashes, including pets, after patronizing a Granite State public beach, lake or river, he or she should get medical help, then submit a detailed report to help the agency track waterborne illnesses.

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