

THE ALIC NEWS

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JULY 2001

From the editor:

This edition of the ALIC News focuses on the Dead River and the "Dam". Important negotiations are going on this summer about the future of the Dead River Dam. We are starting to be recognized across the state as a caring and involved lake community. Now is the time the learn the facts, get involved and take a stand. Together we can protect Androscoggin Lake!

You will notice this newsletter is sprinkled with many questions. There is so much we do not know about this unique situation. I am hoping that my inevitable mistakes will spark comments and even controversy. We need a dialogue on the history and management of the dam, and we need it now!

We welcome any answers to these questions. Please write us or call with information on the history of the lake, Dead River, and dam, and any corrections of errors or omissions in this newsletter. There are great gaps in our knowledge, but if we all put our heads together and share information, we will strengthen our ability to protect the lake.

Molly Saunders, 695-4982

Our Stand on the Dead River Dam

On Dam ownership and responsibility:

1. **The reverse flooding of the Dead River has a serious negative impact on the water quality of Androscoggin Lake.** Initial estimates are that as much as 40% of the phosphorous load to the lake may be coming from the Dead River Pollution from waste discharge has led to fish advisories and possible harm to wildlife.

2. **The ALIC does not have the resources or the expertise to own, operate, and improve the dam so that it can function as an effective pollution control device.**

3. **The towns of Leeds and Wayne do not license the discharges on the Androscoggin River; therefore, they have limited ability to protect the lake from outside pollution.**

4. The State allows the industrial and municipal discharges into the river through a permitting system. It is illegal to give a permit to discharge into a lake.

The State of Maine has a moral and legal responsibility to actively protect the lake from this pollution. **The State should own, maintain and improve the Dead River Dam or replace it with a modern floodgate.**

Short term goals:

1. To get **State funding for an engineering study of the Dead River dam**, its condition, the impact of increased flashboards, and the feasibility of building a new structure in a better location.

2. To introduce and **pass legislation** to implement the best short term solution to dam ownership and improvements.

Long term goal:

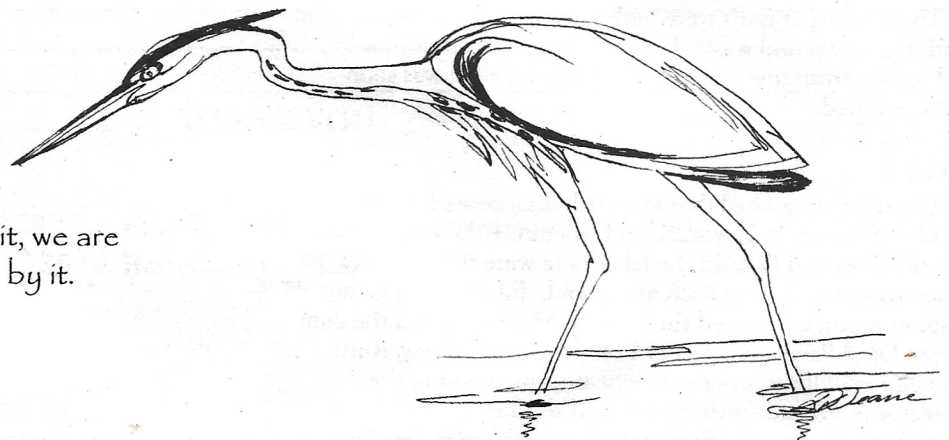
No engineered solution can possibly hold out the water during the big floods.

ALIC is committed to working for clean water coming into the Dead River and into Androscoggin Lake.

The Androscoggin River is not a suitable river for industrial discharges. The Dead River has been flooding the lake for 12,000 years. For the last 100 years it has been polluted. Some day it will run clean again.

We are people of water, we play in it, we are
nourished by it, we are cleansed by it.
Water is the gift of life.

Rev. Eric Dupee



When is a dam not a dam? When it's a pollution control device, a floodgate.

The concrete structure on the Dead River is unique; experts cannot even decide what to call it, so it's a "dam" by default. The Dead River Dam is the only dam and the only pollution control device that is owned by the State of Maine. They say that they are not in the business of owning dams, yet the mission of the Maine DEP, is to protect water quality in Androscoggin Lake.

What is the history of the dam? How well is it working to protect the lake?

HISTORY OF THE DEAD RIVER

the link between the lake and the
Androscoggin River

12,000 years ago

The huge mile-thick glaciers during the last ice age scooped out the basin that became the lake. As the glaciers receded, huge rushing rivers formed, carrying heavy loads of sand, clay and gravel. Since the lake is only five feet higher than the river, it would often reverse flow and run INTO the lake, through the Dead River channel. This reverse flow happened so often, and carried so much sediment, that a fresh water delta formed where the Dead River empties into the lake.

11,000 B.C to 1500 A.D.

The Androscoggin River settled into its present course and was an important travel route for Native people. Canoe carries across the Dead River delta and over to Wilson Pond were the link between two great watersheds of Maine, the Androscoggin and the Kennebec. The river water was pure and abounded with fish, including sturgeon, salmon and alewives.

Late 1800's

The first paper mills were built on the Androscoggin River. With log drives and waste discharge from the sulfur process, and sewage from towns along the river, the river was soon badly polluted.

1933

The river was so bad that most fish disappeared, paint peeled off houses in Lewiston, and whenever the Dead River reversed flow and flooded the lake there were fish kills and concerns about diseases such as typhoid. Ed Healy, of Camp Androscoggin, convinced the State of Maine to build the dam on the Dead River, at a cost of \$14,000. Scott Libbey, Ruth O'Halloran's father, was the engineer. The report of the project says, "Henceforth, people will see a beautiful lake instead of a pus-pocket for hundreds of miles of sewers."

Diagrams in the 1933 report show the lake at 269 feet, the Androscoggin River at 265 feet, and the top of the dam at 274 feet, with four feet of flashboards bringing it to 278 feet. Large wooden gates swing out to let the water flow out of the lake, and swing shut against the reverse flow when the river is higher than the lake. (This report makes interesting reading; we'll put it on the new ALIC web site, coming soon.)

1936

The worst flood of the century overwhelmed the dam, ripping out the four foot flashboards. The lake went so high it flowed back into Pocasset Lake.

In fact, the dam was not built high enough, and the river has overtopped the dam an estimated 118 times since 1933. The dam would have to be 16 feet higher to hold out the 50 and 100 years floods (of which there have been three since 1936); but if it were four feet higher (the height of the original flashboards) it could hold out the typical spring floods.

1940's

Chlorine bleaching replaced the sulfur process at the paper mills. From this time on every flood brought dioxin into the lake.

1970's

The Clean Water Act (thanks to Senators Muskie and Mitchell) mandated the first pollution abatement at the mills and sewage treatment plants. The river got cleaner; fish populations began to recover, and the worst of the pollution was dealt with.

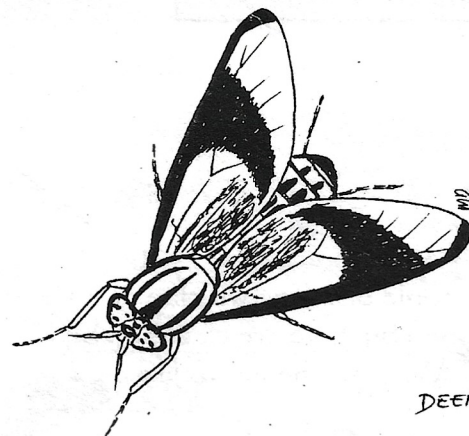
1971

Tom Lane, head of maintenance for Camp Androscoggin, began putting boards in the lake side of the dam to hold two feet of water. The 1933 report states that the dam will not be used to hold water in the lake, but a 1980 agreement between ALIC and the State allows the use of the dam to hold water in the summer.

1974

The State Conservation Commission began reimbursing the ALIC for repairs to the dam.

(continued on page 3)



DEER FLY

(continued from page 2)

1980's

Dioxin (which is highly toxic in very small amounts and can only be detected by sensitive equipment) was found to be an unintended by-product of chlorine bleaching of paper pulp. Maine DEP began the fish monitoring program and found dioxin in Androscoggin River fish.

1980

A bill was introduced to abandon the Dead River dam. A subsequent agreement signed between the ALIC and the Conservation Commission established that the ALIC will maintain the dam and be reimbursed by the State.

1985

An extended report by the state recommended that the towns of Wayne and Leeds take the title and responsibility for the dam. The towns rejected this idea.

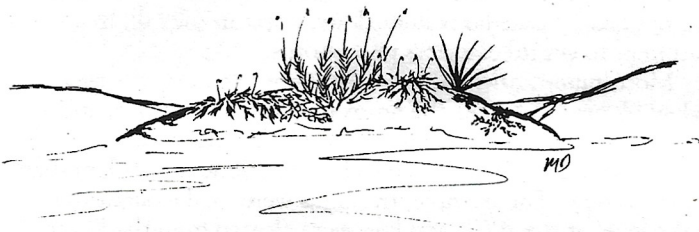
The agreement to reimburse ALIC, which was on a yearly basis, lapsed and was never renewed. At some point the Conservation Commission was disbanded and the title to the dam reverted to the Department of Agriculture. The State told ALIC to stop asking for reimbursement for repairs and threatened dam abandonment. This threat worked; for at least 16 years, the ALIC has been paying for repairs to the dam.

1991

Eagles, which had disappeared from the lake in the 60's, returned to nesting on Lothrop Island.

1997

After 10 years of requests by Jack Mahoney, the DEP finally included lake fish in the river fish study. Dioxin was found in Androscoggin Lake fish, at the same level as in the river. The ALIC woke up to the fact that the Dead River reverse flow is a very serious threat to the water quality and the whole lake ecosystem.



FIRST COLONISTS ON STREAMSIDE
COBBLE

1999

For the first time, the whole lake had an algal bloom which lasted for two weeks. The Dead River also turned green, which means it is out of compliance as a Class B river. *

1999- 2000

Negotiations began with ALIC, DEP, Mead, and IP, and Livermore Falls sewage treatment plant. The result was the "Androscoggin Lake Project" a \$70,000 study of the lake's water quality problems, both algal blooms and toxins, and the effect of the Dead River on the lake.

Fall 2000

The Department of Agriculture is still the "owner" of the dam. When informed of this fact by the DEP, they were first surprised, then threatened to petition DEP to abandon the dam. The Dead River Task force, a group of stakeholders including the towns of Leeds and Wayne, businesses, Sen. John Nutting and Rep. Linda McKee, ALIC, and interested citizens, met and then asked the Dept. of Agriculture to wait until Summer 2001, when the DEP will issue its draft report on the Androscoggin Lake project. They agreed.

Winter 2001

ALIC retained a lawyer and began preliminary discussions with the DEP about how this whole issue of the dam can be resolved.

Spring 2001

The eagles had a nest failure for the third year in a row. The cause is unknown, but accumulation of toxins may be a factor.

Summer 2001

ALIC is waiting for the draft report of the Androscoggin Lake Project, which will estimate the effect of the Dead River on the lake. We are waiting for the 2000 dioxin tests and waiting for the DEP to find money for an engineering study of the condition of the dam. The Department of Agriculture has agreed to wait as long as necessary to resolve this question.

The ALIC is planning to introduce legislation for the January 2002 session of the Maine legislature.

Questions:

What species of fish and wildlife were natural to the lake before the industrial era? What fish migrated up the Dead River? Do fish move from the river to the lake on floods today?

Was the 1999 algal bloom really the first one? What was the water clarity in the 30's, 40's and 50's?

*The State classifies rivers as Class A, B, or C, depending on how clean they are. Each class sets standards for dissolved oxygen, suspended solids, and water quality. Even a Class C river is supposed to be "fishable and swimmable". DEP agrees that "fishable" means being able to eat the fish, so in that sense these rivers are out of compliance.

All lakes are classified as GPA (Great Ponds Act) lakes and have set standards. Our position is that Androscoggin Lake is out of compliance as a GPA lake, because of the algal bloom, and because of the toxins in the fish. Unfortunately, the burden of proof is on us.

About Water Level and Dam Maintenance

Every year there are comments, questions and complaints about the lake being too high or too low. How much control do we really have over lake level?

The water level in most lakes varies by two or three feet. Androscoggin Lake is very unusual in that it floods as much as 15 to 20 feet above the natural level, and it is not clear what the natural level is. Agreement around the lake seems to be that the normal level is 269 feet. Can this be maintained?

ALIC hires Charlie Barker to maintain the dam. He has been doing this work for 15 years and has great experience with all the variables at the dam.

There are four parts of the dam that require maintenance.

1. The **heavy wooden floodgates** swing on hinges to let the water flow out of the lake. When the Dead River reverses flow, the gates swing shut and hold the water out. Often debris gets stuck in the gates and they do not shut all the way.

2. In the 90's the ALIC installed **two foot wooden flashboards** (\$4000) on the top of the dam, in an attempt to hold out more of the floodwater. Ice and logs usually rip out sections of these flashboards during flooding, and often floods go over the top of them. ALIC has not repaired them for two years, because DEP has questioned their effectiveness; also, Charlie Barker is not sure if the old concrete will sustain drilling to install larger metal pipes to hold flashboards.

3. Every year a great deal of **debris and huge logs clog the floodgate and have to be removed with a winch.**

4. Since 1971, **plywood sheets** have been placed on the lake side of the metal grates, to hold extra water in the summer.

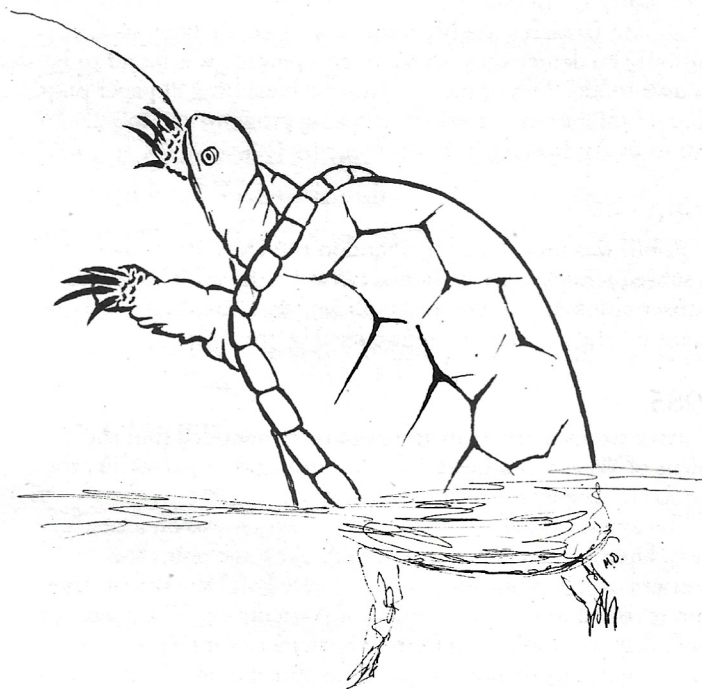
Last winter Charlie Barker replaced one of the big wooden gates, which he has done once before. Tom Lane also replaced a gate once, so this work has been done three times since 1971. In the spring, Charlie has to wait for the current to go down before he can clear the gates of logs and debris which retard the flow of water out of the lake. Often the level drops quickly after this work is done. Last year Maine IF&W complained that the water level dropped too quickly; this is harmful to nesting bass.

Only when the current has slowed much more can Charlie install the four 4x10 plywood sheets in the grates, on the lake side. These boards are supposed to hold the lake at 269 feet, but it can be difficult to get them on so they do not leak. If there is too much current, he may not be able to push the boards all the way down, so the water runs underneath them. Or they may leak at the overlap between the boards. Last year the boards were installed well, and there was plenty of rain, so the lake level was fairly steady all summer. This summer they were not installed effectively and the water is running out around them. We're working on this problem.

If the river rises from a heavy rain, the boards will float off.

There is no policy on what should happen in the fall. Should the boards come out in an effort to lower the lake before winter? This can interfere with fall bass tournaments, especially out of Riverbend Campground.

In any case, spring, summer or fall, the amount of rainfall is the determining factor in water level. The second factor is how well the boards are working. ALIC has less control over water level than is commonly believed. If the lake is very high or very low, it is usually because of rainfall.



TURTLE TRYING TO CLIMB OUT

In managing what control we do have, our first concern must be to protect water quality. We need much more information about the effect of the dam on the lake. Are phosphorus or mercury levels increased because flood waters are up in the woods, sometimes for weeks at a time? How much does the presence of the dam slow the flow of water out of the lake? Some lakes draw down water in the fall, in an attempt to get rid of excess phosphorus.

Most importantly, does low water contribute to the treat of algal bloom? We need the answers to these questions, and then a plan should be made to best protect the lake.

We realize that there used to be more done to the dam than there is now. For example, transoms were used to sight the lake level at the AYC, and logs were cleared from the Dead River to prevent the spring pile-ups. Any comments on past or present maintenance of the dam would be greatly appreciated.

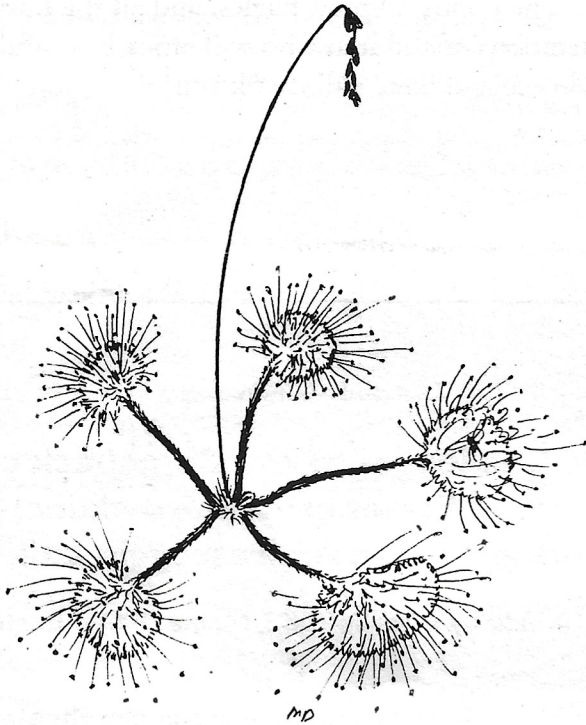
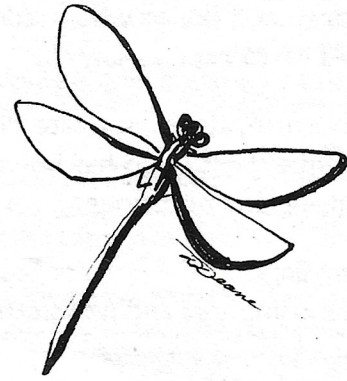
Water quality must be our primary concern. If we are a lake association attempting to control lake level for the benefit of sailing (higher water) or better beaches (lower water), we will not have the same level of credibility with the DEP.

A full engineering study of the condition of this 68 year old dam is needed. This study will lead to a plan, based in the realities of lake, river, dam, and weather, for how to fix, improve, maintain and manage the Dead River dam.

Fundraising Campaign

ALIC has reached a place in our work for the lake, where we need to begin a fund raising effort in earnest.

In the past the primary goals of ALIC were the Dead River dam maintenance and buoys on the lake. Of late, we have realized the need to focus more directly on issues targeting the continuing health of our lake. In the past few years we have initiated studies concerning the aquifers in our watershed, nutrient and toxic loading of the lake from the Androscoggin River and our other sources of pollutant introduction (rivers, streams and runoff from developed areas). These studies have been developed in conjunction with the state, and have been funded by grants we have received from volunteer effort and state help. The state's help has been wonderful and we have developed solid working relationships in both the DEP and Department of Fish and Wildlife, but state funding is hard to get.



SUNDEW

Our income from dues no longer meets our needs, and while we will continue to raise monies from grant applications, we hope to develop an endowment of twenty thousand dollars to cover as needed expenses; legal, sampling and testing (fish tests for dioxin can cost up to \$1000 each), studies, etc. So far we have pledges of \$4000 towards this goal !!!

But we need everyone's help to meet our goal. We have applied for our 501C3-tax status, with attorney Howard Lake of Winthrop donating his expertise, and he has assured us we will have our number this year and all donations can be written off.

So thank you in advance for your help and no doubt you'll be hearing more from our fledgling development group.

by Peter Davis, Fundraising Chair

Have you made the trip down the Dead River? It is such a lovely peaceful place, sometimes jungley with trees hanging in the quiet water, sometimes pastoral as you float past cows and corn fields. You encounter waterlilies, herons, osprey, beaver, maybe an eagle flies on ahead. Turtles sun on rocks, and there are dragonflies to eat the mosquitoes. What other wildlife have you seen on the Dead River?

It's worth a trip down the river especially to see the dam, which is a crucial part of our efforts to protect the lake.

You can also drive there: from Rte. 219, go right on 106 North, then take the first left, a dirt road (Knapp Road). About .3 mile on the left is the woods road that leads to the dam. Sometimes you can drive in if it's dry, or walk in (5 min.) People like to fish and have picnics there. It's good to take a trash bag with you if you have the urge to clean up a little.

Who owns this land? Is it open to the public?

THANK YOU!

To the people of the towns of Wayne and Leeds, for voting in Town Meetings for their allocations to ALIC.

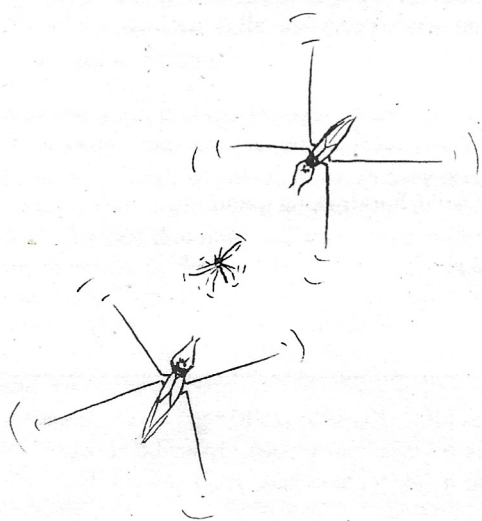
To the anonymous donor who made it possible for ALIC to retain a lawyer.

To Ron Kreisman, attorney, waste discharge license and dam expert, who has been teacher, friend, challenging and encouraging advocate.

To the New England Grassroots Foundation, for a grant for computer and newsletter support.

To all those who donated to ALIC in memory of Harriet Weiskel, long time summer resident. Harriet loved Androscoggin Lake and we will miss her.

To Deb Deane and Mark Deyrup, who donated their beautiful drawings. Deb's grandmother, Alice Gould (who married Homer Deane) was born and raised on the Dead River. Deb's brother-in-law Mark is an entymologist.



MD

WATER STRIDERS CONVERGING ON
DROWNING MOSQUITO

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Get involved! Voice your opinion about the lake at the annual meeting August 11 and in letters to the editor. Write to the DEP. State the problem, ask what they are doing to protect Androscoggin Lake. Have they devoted sufficient time and resources to the problem? The rationale that they have limited money and staff is not acceptable. We need an engineering study of the Dead River dam now! One way or the other we are going to the legislature in January. (So far we have told the press that the DEP has been helpful).

Send letters to:

Martha Kirkpatrick, Commissioner, DEP, 17 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333

The Loons, Osprey, Eagles, and all the future generations of children who will enjoy beautiful Androscoggin Lake will thank you.

You are invited to:

“Challenges to the Comeback of Bald Eagles in Western Maine: Insights from Androscoggin Lake”

A Talk by Charlie Todd, Maine IF&W Eagle expert

**Where: Camp Androscoggin, at the theater
When: Wed., August 1 at 11AM**

Why is Androscoggin Lake such important bird habitat?
Why have the eagles had three nest failures?
Is the Eagle,s reproductive behavior affected by increasing body burdens of toxins?

Directions: to Camp Androscoggin, from Rte. 133, Wayne, go left at the Corner store. Sign for Camp is 1/2 mile on the left. Follow the signs for parking and to the “Playhouse” theater.

Hosted by ALIC, Camp Androscoggin, and the Wayne Conservation Commission

Save the Date!
ALIC ANNUAL MEETING
 Androscoggin Yacht Club
Saturday, August 11, 2001
9 AM
 Pot Luck Breakfast
Please join us for great food, updates on lake issues
 Help plan the year,s efforts to protect our lake!



From The Road to Summer Paradise, memoirs of Lincoln Point residents:

From Pete Spivey:

Also remember Charlie Gott bringing eggs, milk, butter, and other food stuff down; sometimes by boat and later by truck. My Mom used to run across the rocks to town (something I found hard to believe til this summer with the lake so low). I guess we tend to forget the times when the lake was so low that there really were 7 - sisters in front of Cummings place.

Fred Korsmeyer, friend of the Stevenson's, writes,
. . . when I graduated from High School, in 1934, I persuaded my close friend to go camping with me on the lake. . . We canoed down to Wayne for groceries and I remember exploring the Dead River . . . It was our intention to go down the Dead and further explore the Androscoggin. We found the Dead River to be very interesting and pleasant except for mosquitoes. However, when we reached the Androscoggin we found the river bottom was composed of paper mill waste to a depth of several feet. This was a soft material, something like thin mud. We decided that, if we capsized in the river, we would find struggling in the paper mill waste to be very unpleasant, so we turned around and went back to our pristine lake.

Your support is needed to ensure that ALIC is able to continue our mission to protect and preserve beautiful Lake Androscoggin.

Name _____

Summer address: _____

Winter address: _____

Email Address: _____

Amount enclosed _____ **THANK YOU**

DUES:	Individual \$20	Family \$35	Loon supporter \$50
	Contributor \$75	Benefactor \$100	

Mail To: ALIC, PO Box 307, Wayne, ME 04284

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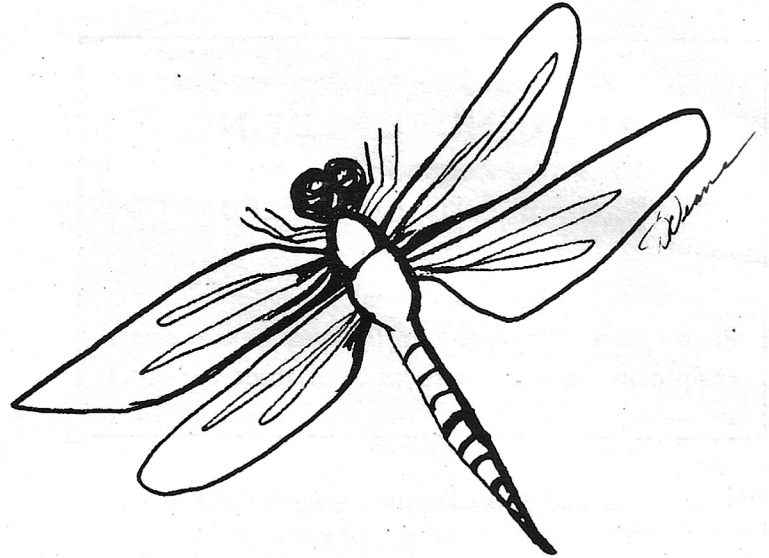
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Winter 2001

NEWS

THE ALIC



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