

Earth Day project protects loons

Anne Delong
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In an effort to protect loons, staff and volunteers at the Mersey Tobetic Research Institute (MTRI) in Kemptville headed onto Mary Lake April 22 to carry out an Earth Day project.

The MTRI program involves researching loons, said coordinator, Linda Lavers.

Volunteers each pick a lake to record many loons are using it, she said.

What we're really interested in is whether the loons have families because some environmental problems like rain and mercury pollution, she said.

Those problems can affect how many loons have and how many sur-

vive. Right now MTRI has volunteers on 40 lakes in Queens, Annapolis, and Lunenburg counties.

Last year was a very good year. We had between 25 and 30 lakes with pairs of loons and we had 16 chicks on those lakes," said Lavers.

One of the problems with loons

besides the acid rain and mercury pollution is climate change, she continued. "Lakes are more likely either to flood or have really low water levels."

Last year MTRI received funding to build four nesting platforms for loons, unfortunately they did not finish building them in time to launch them into the water.

The platforms float, like "little artificial islands," said Lavers.

"Loons like to nest on islands because there are no predators and they are really clumsy walking on land so they want to be near the water."

Blair and Gene Douglas, who own N.F. Douglas Lumber Ltd. in Caledonia are also volunteering with MTRI watching loons on a lake.

Lavers said they donated use of a truck on April 22 to MTRI to move the platform to Mary Lake behind Douglas' lumberyard.

Upon arriving at the lake they towed the platform by canoe to its resting spot.

They also covered it with soil and other natural material.



Mersey Tobetic Research Institute researchers, Kyle Rowter and Josie Todd are shown preparing a loon nesting platform before setting it in the waters of Mary Lake. MTRI has four nesting platforms they plan to launch in an effort to protect the loon population. This launch was carried out on Earth Day, April 22 in Caledonia.

Larsen Delong Photo

ladelong@theadvance.ca