

Lake Ecology
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I spent my childhood counting clams in Webb Lake, building forts on the lake water's edge, catching frogs, swimming around the sunfish, but most of all, just spending as much time as I could outside. Like any child that has grown up along the shores of Maine lakes, I took my surroundings for granted, and never realized how lucky I was to spend so much time by the water.

As I grew, I became more aware of our natural footprint and fell in love with the natural sciences, eventually deciding to study wildlife ecology. I watched as reeds began to take over my frequented swimming spots on the lake, and the currents changed, carrying heaps of leaves and twigs up onto our beach. My lakeside environment changed, and the local lakes have evolved as well; native plants and fish are killed off by invasive species, and cold water fish species compete with warm water species for food during the summer months. Climate change has been ever-more present in warming water temperatures, causing more issues for species that prefer colder temperatures, and a great fluctuation in "Ice-Out" dates have been evident as well.

The over 2,600 Maine lakes play a large role in replenishing groundwater during a hot summer, and easing the impact of floods as they store water and release small amounts through shortages. Not only do lakes provide a haven for boating, fishing, and swimming enthusiasts, attracting tourists from all over, but they support a biodiversity of local wildlife that use their waters and shores as a home and a source of food.

Whenever I stay alongside a lake, whether it's on a canoeing trip or just a night at camp, on summer mornings just after sunrise I often find myself beside the lake. At that point the water is warmer than the air, which creates a light fog that rises over the glassy surface. The loons still call from a restless night and cut through the silence that the lake encourages. It's those morning that I find peace and am reminded of how lucky I am to have access to, and witness such a life form. I often forget how many people live without freshwater lakes, and for those that have never experienced such a clam morning I feel a great sadness. However, I know that even in Maine the future of our lakes is not promised, as they continue to evolve as we do. I can only hope that fellow lake-lovers can inspire others to care for our lakes and ponds so that the generations to come may enjoy them as well.