

## Dartmouth Lakes Advisory Board

I hope that my request is being sent to the right group of people. I ask the Advisory Board to request that HRM install signage to prevent people from feeding the waterfowl at the public boat launch on Morris Lake (accessible through the Portland Hill Estates Blvd). The reason is simple enough; the numbers of ducks in that smaller area of the lake is not ecologically sound. On any given day you can see 30-40 adult ducks either on the boat launch area or waiting closely for someone to come and feed them. In contrast the rest of the lake harbours a much lower number of ducks. The fecal coliform contribution of such a density of duck is probably pretty substantial but impossible to measure without some bacterial source tracking. However another impacts of that density of duck is the prevalence of swimmer's itch in this small area of the lake compared to the rest of the lake. In mid-August, I went swimming in the lake near the boat launch with my daughter for approximately 10 minutes and we were both covered by itching spots within approximately 2 hours and they lasted for about 3-4 days. I don't know if you are familiar with the life cycle of the trematode worm that causes swimmer's itch but basically it usually spreads from waterfowl feces (as the hosts for this parasite) to mollusk (snail) to water and then to waterfowl (duck) (A more detailed explanation and diagram are posted below from the City of Ottawa website). However if the trematode worm doesn't find a waterfowl host as it swims in the top layer of the water column, it will adhere to human skin and burrow underneath the skin as soon as your skin begins to dry. Once in your skin the trematode (flatworm) is dead but your body reacts strongly to these foreign body and therefore the "itch". The possible solutions to this are various; you could use a chemical molluscicide in the water to get rid of the snails but I think this is of significant environmental impacts. Some have used drugs placed in food bait to treat the parasite in the waterfowl but this is contrary to the fact that people should not be feeding wild waterfowl. Lastly the solution I am suggesting is that waterfowl concentration be lowered in this part of the lake by posting sign either advising not to feed water fowl or even better to put a sign explaining the swimmer's itch cycle and why we should try to lower the number of ducks in a given area. I would appreciate a reply to my request. I am also available to come to one of your meetings to discuss further or answer any questions

Thanks in advance

Benoit

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There are numerous good web pages explaining swimmers itch;

<http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile52.stm>

[http://www.aocd.org/skin/dermatologic\\_diseases/swimmers\\_itch.html](http://www.aocd.org/skin/dermatologic_diseases/swimmers_itch.html)

[http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/health/inspections/beaches/swimmers\\_itch\\_en.html](http://www.ottawa.ca/residents/health/inspections/beaches/swimmers_itch_en.html)

**How do you get swimmer's itch? (reference; www.ottawa.ca)**

1. Waterfowl are the hosts for the parasite that causes the presence of cercariae in the water you swim in.
2. The cycle begins with bird feces that are the source of contamination for the snails along the shore.
3. The cercariae emerge from the snails and return to contaminate the birds.
4. Unfortunately, the cercariae do not distinguish between birds and people. Therefore, people in the water are bitten by accident.

