

FLATHEAD LAKE JOURNAL

(Formerly the Yellow Bay Journal)

A publication of the

Flathead Lake
Biological Station



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Flathead Lake Research Cruise

You are invited to join Flathead Lake Biological Station researchers for an afternoon cruise on July 14, 3:15–6:15 PM at Flathead Lake Boat Tours, Lakeside Marine, Lakeside. Learn about FLBS ecological and water quality research and enjoy music by 17 Mile while cruising on Flathead Lake in the *Far West*. Appetizers and beverages will be served.

Tickets are \$50 per person and proceeds benefit Biological Station Research and Monitoring in the Flathead. Limited seats are available so RSVP soon by emailing Tom Bansak at events@flbs.umt.edu or calling 406-982-3301 x229. i

Summer Seminars June 25 and June 29

The station is hosting two free seminars this month, starting with postdoctoral scientist Shawn Devlin's talk titled "Modeling Flathead Lake: Using 35 Years of Data to Investigate Climate Change, Nutrient Loading and Trophic Interactions" on **Thursday, June 25**.

Chris Frissell, consulting research ecologist and freshwater conservation biologist, will present "Riparian Forests: Ecosystem Science and the Management of Western Watersheds for Freshwater Resource Protection in the Face of Fire" on **Monday, June 29**. **Both lectures will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Elrod Lecture Hall at FLBS.** i

STATE OF THE LAKE

Synopsis by B. K. Ellis

The Flathead Lake Biological Station (FLBS) has carefully documented the status of water quality in Flathead Lake and its tributaries since the Station was founded in 1899. In the early days, studies were periodic. Since 1977, measures have been obtained about monthly by the Biological Station using standardized protocols. These studies have been the technical background for development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocation for the purpose of managing nutrient loads reaching Flathead Lake.

Based on Station research, the Flathead Basin Commission (FBC) recommended the following interim targets for protection of water quality in Flathead Lake:

1) no increase in biomass of lakeshore periphyton, 2) no



Jim Craft collecting zooplankton

measurable blooms of *Anabaena flos-aquae* (or other pollution algae), 3) no declining trend in oxygen concentrations in the hypolimnion, and 4) average annual concentrations of the following variables in the photic zone of the Midlake Deep site in Flathead Lake will not exceed the values indicated: chlorophyll *a*: 1.0 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (1 microgram per liter) and primary production: 80 $\text{g C m}^{-2} \text{yr}^{-1}$ (80 grams of carbon per square meter per year).

The first target for the protection of water quality is not being met. There is a significantly increasing trend in periphyton biomass (algae on rock surfaces) at the Horseshoe site for the period of record (1999–2013) (Fig. 1). Although there was no significant trend in periphyton biomass at the "B" Beach site for the period of record, biomass in 2013 was statistically significantly higher than measures made in 1988 (i.e., 5.6 versus 1.2 $\mu\text{g cm}^{-2}$). Hence, our measurements confirm comments from long-time residents that shoreline rocks are coated with more algae in recent years.

No visual evidence of an algal bloom was detected in fall 2012 or summer 2013, but qualitative assessment will have to be confirmed after enumeration of surface phytoplankton samples. Additional funding is warranted to examine possible factors causing toxic blue-

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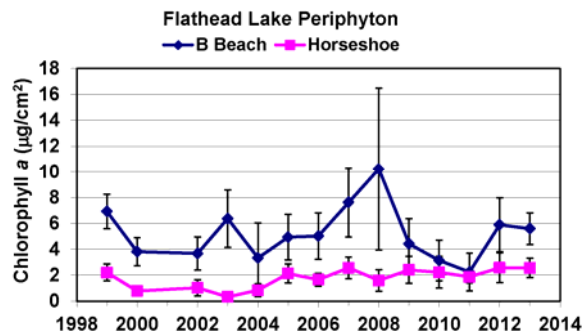


Figure 1. Mean periphyton biomass as chlorophyll *a* ($\mu\text{g cm}^{-2}$) + 1 standard deviation at 5 m depth in August of each year at the two long-term monitoring sites on Flathead Lake.

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

green *Anabaena* to flourish in certain years to gain insight into conditions favoring growth of this noxious species.

Although there is no significant long-term trend in bottom DO at the Midlake Deep site, the percent saturation of DO dropped to 79% at Midlake Deep and 82% at Midlake North in 2013. Lower DO values continue to occur at the Ross Deep site in Big Arm Bay. In July 2013, DO saturation was only 78% just off the lake bottom. Low oxygen limits habitat for many trout. Oligotrophic lakes like Flathead generally do not exhibit DO saturation values below 90%. The most probable cause would be increased production of algae in that area of the lake. As the algae die and fall into deeper waters, they are fed upon by bacteria. Bacteria then use up oxygen in the breakdown process. Additional analysis of 2012–2013 synoptic data from the Ross Deep area and 2012–2013 data from the automated profilers at the long-term Midlake site (monitored DO and many other water quality variables 4–6 times a day) should provide more insight.

In WY 2013, the average annual chlorophyll *a* concentration slightly exceeded the TMDL target (1.2 µg/L see Fig. 2). Five nutrient variables recommended by the FBC TMDL Technical Committee as targets—total phosphorus, total nitrogen, nitrate + nitrite, ammonium and soluble reactive phosphorus—were measured. Numerous studies have shown both phosphorus and nitrogen stimulate growth of algae in Flathead Lake. Mean midlake concentration of total nitrogen was above the long-term average (Fig. 2). Water year 2013 means for the other analytes (i.e., total phosphorus, soluble reactive phosphorus, nitrate and ammonium nitrogen) were quite similar to long-term (1988–2012) annual means.

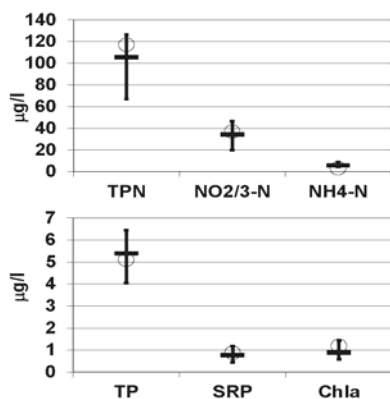


Figure 2. Long-term annual mean (thick bar) and range of annual means (thin bars) for nutrient and chlorophyll *a* concentrations of 0–30 m integrated samples collected from 1988–2012 at the Midlake Deep site on Flathead Lake. Integrated means were calculated for each water year (i.e., Oct. 1–Sept. 30). Integrated mean concentrations for the 2013 water year, Oct. 1, 2012–Sept. 30, 2013, (circles) are also presented for comparison.

Primary productivity is a measure of the ability of the lake to produce algae (Fig. 2). The annual rate of primary production at the Midlake Deep monitoring site in WY 2013 (Fig. 3) exceeded

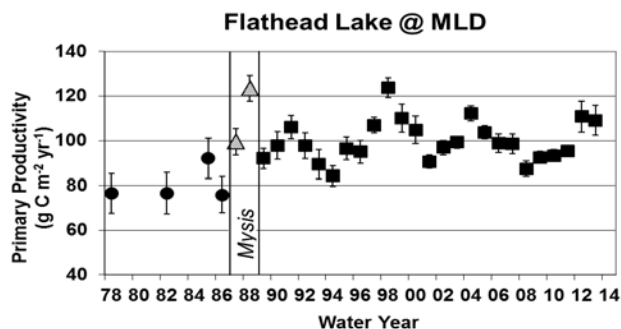


Figure 3. Mean annual pelagic primary productivity ($\text{g C m}^{-2} \text{yr}^{-1}$) at Midlake Deep site for Flathead Lake from 1978–2013. Bars represent minimum and maximum yearly estimates.

the TMDL target by 36%. With the exception of water years 1994 and 2008, annual primary productivity in Flathead Lake has been at least 10% greater than the FBC target since 1989, and in 1998 exceeded the target by 55%.

This target variable requires understanding of food web dynamics and cannot be interpreted independent of those dynamics. We are currently developing a detailed physical-nutrient-food web model for Flathead Lake aimed at understanding the dynamics of food web interactions and the linkages of increasing nitrogen in the catchment and lake response variables, such as primary productivity.

Dramatic alteration of the composition of at least 3 trophic levels (e.g., fish, zooplankton and algae) of the lake food web occurred during the establishment of the opossum shrimp in the mid to late 1980s (Ellis et al., *PNAS USA*, 108, 1070–1075, 2011). This essentially resulted in a lake with a different biological community that has likely altered nutrient cycling. Utilizing the food web model, we will be able to examine changes that have occurred and their effect on the TMDL target parameters.

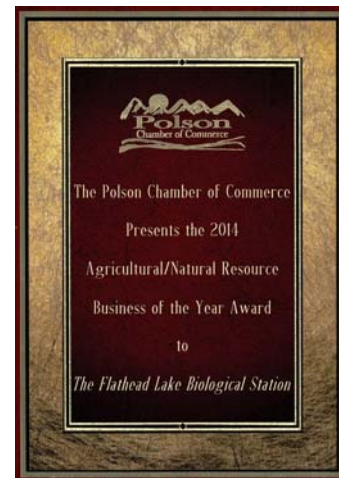
Maintaining clean, clear water is a quality of life issue for Montana. We cannot know conditions without accurate measurements taken routinely year after year. Government support for monitoring has been drastically reduced during the last decade. An endowed fund to help continue the necessary level of sampling to assess trends in water quality for Flathead waters was established a few years ago. This fund will supplement limited government funding and provide long-term support for water quality monitoring of Flathead Lake and many basin tributaries. Continuing these monitoring efforts is essential to ensure that the Flathead Lake of the future is as spectacular as the one that we enjoy today. i

Next State of the Lake Update on August 18 at Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting

Dr. Jack Stanford, Bierman Professor of Ecology and Director of the Flathead Lake Biological Station, will present the next State of the Lake update on August 18 at the Flathead Lakers Annual Meeting.

POLSON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARD

The Bio Station was voted Polson Chamber of Commerce Natural Resource Business of the Year! Many thanks to the Polson Chamber of Commerce, the businesses and community of Polson, and all of you who voted on our behalf. We are honored to have been selected as the Natural Resource Business of 2014. FLBS Director Jack Stanford accepted the award and enjoyed his time at the lively Polson Chamber's Annual Awards Banquet. i



FLBS Postdoctoral Scientist Shawn Devlin and Flathead Lake: Climate, Nutrients, and Fish



Shawn Devlin, a lake ecologist, joined the Flathead Lake research team at FLBS in 2014 as a postdoc. He is tackling some important questions about the lake using a sophisticated computer model and the extensive dataset collected by researchers at FLBS over the past 35 years. Shawn is investigating how climate change may affect the lake's biogeochemistry and

thermal dynamics. He is also studying how nutrient loading and changes in land use may affect primary production and how changes in the lake's fish community may reverberate throughout the food web.

Shawn earned his Ph.D. from Wright State University studying the important role of periphyton (better known as pond scum) in clear water lakes. Shawn then spent three years in Jyväskylä, Finland taking part in a whole-lake experiment to investigate how fish may regulate greenhouse gas emissions from lakes.

Soon after arriving in Montana to start his new position at the Bio Station, Shawn and his wife Hilary welcomed their third son, now almost a year old and proud to be from Montana! Shawn and his family are thrilled to be in the Flathead Valley and have quickly become part of the community. Hilary is already on board at the Flathead Lakers and Shawn joined the Ferndale Volunteer Fire Department.

Shawn is an avid fly-fisherman and enjoys exploring Montana's famous lakes and rivers as well as hunting, brewing beer, and spending time with his family. The Devlins love spending time outdoors and what a place to do just that! i

Will Deacy Studies the Iconic Kodiak Brown Bear

In 2010, Will Deacy volunteered to assist with a bear project at the National Wildlife Refuge on Kodiak Island, Alaska where Kodiak brown bears instill a reverence for nature. Kodiak Island generally has a healthy and high density brown bear population. During the 2010 field season, US Fish and Wildlife Service biologists conducted an aerial survey in the southwest corner of the Kodiak Refuge and were perplexed when they found a 48% decline in bear population from 2003 to 2010. This piqued Will's interest to further study Kodiak bears. Will said, "I did not foresee this as my PhD focus, but I was compelled to discover what could cause such a dramatic decline. Salmon runs in southwestern Kodiak had been erratic and some observational evidence corresponded to the decline in bear population. But in ecology, oftentimes something that looks very simple turns out to be very complex." Needing a mentor with salmon ecology expertise for studying salmon-bear interaction, Will found an advocate in Dr. Jack Stanford and began his PhD work at the Station in 2012.

Funded by USFWS and FLBS, Will has been working with USFWS biologist Bill Leacock, wildlife ecologist Jonny Armstrong (University of Wyoming) and Professor Stanford to understand what caused the dramatic drop in bear numbers. The



researchers devised innovative methods to monitor salmon runs on 11 streams and bear movement across the study site. Will says, "We haven't fully solved the problem of bear declines, however, we've learned a lot about how important salmon are to Kodiak bears and how well bears track salmon across the landscape."

During 2013 and 2014, Will notes they found that bears follow the salmon as they arrive at different times in different spawning or migration sites. Much like wildebeest follow green-up of grasses on the Serengeti in Africa, scientists refer to this pattern as bears tracking the red wave of spawning salmon. This was a novel finding about Kodiak bears with big implications for bear-salmon management. But in 2014, a completely unexpected event occurred in the bears' use of food resources. Bears largely abandoned salmon streams in July and August when salmon were very abundant for an early and copious crop of red elderberries, suggesting a preference for berries over salmon. Will postulates the bears exploit elderberry patches to maximize weight gain.

Will is back at the Refuge this summer for another field season. You can learn more about Will's research and the iconic bears of Kodiak Island at <http://www.fws.gov/FieldNotes/regmap.cfm?arskey=35482> and a video of Will presenting his research at <https://www.youtube.co/watch?v=w9CboTwjPts>. i

Reggie Heiser is the newest member of the maintenance team at the Biological Station. He graduated from Big Sky High School in Missoula, MT and then worked over 20 years for Les Schwab Tire Center in Missoula and Polson.



At the Polson Les Schwab, Reggie met the Station's property and facilities manager Mark Potter, who told Reggie all about the Station. Reggie thought it sounded like a dream job. As the years went by, every time Reggie saw Mark he jokingly asked him, "When are you going to retire, because I'm going to take your job." Mark went into Les Schwab one day and told Reggie that he had indeed retired—next day, Reggie put in his application.

As it turned out, Mark's job went to long-time Station employee Eric Anderson, but Reggie still got his dream job when he started last September as the Maintenance Tech. Reggie is currently working towards a 2C wastewater treatment plant operator certification and has capably jumped into every new assignment at the Bio Station.

Reggie married his high school sweetheart Kelly and they have two daughters Kyla and Miranda who are very active in sports. Due to his new work schedule, Reggie now has more time to spend with family on adventures like camping, hunting, fishing, flying, and everything outdoors. He also has more time for the Polson Volunteer Fire Department where he has volunteered for 3 years. i

Summer Academic Program 2015

Summer courses are in session at the Station June 15 to August 7. At the end of the first week, we asked student Emily Drake if she would recommend the program to anyone. **Emily replied, "Not just anyone, I'd recommend it to everyone! I love it here."**

Thank You To Our Generous Contributors!

December 15, 2013 to May 31, 2015

We are honored tremendously by our contributors—named or anonymous—and we are energized by the help received from many citizen volunteers(*). We wholeheartedly appreciate the generosity and interest you have in the mission of the Flathead Lake Biological Station and the work we do. Thank you from all of us at the Biological Station!

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FLATHEAD LAKE BIOLOGICAL STATION PUBLICATIONS FROM 2014

- Al-Chokhachy, R., C. C. Muhlfeld, M. C. Boyer, L. A. Jones, A. Steed, and J. L. Kershner. 2014. Quantifying the Effectiveness of Conservation Measures to Control the Spread of Anthropogenic Hybridization in Stream Salmonids: a Climate Adaptation Case Study. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* 34:642–652.
- Andrews, K. R., P. A. Hohenlohe, M. R. Miller, B. K. Hand, J. E. Seeb, and G. Luikart. 2014. Trade-offs and utility of alternative RADseq methods: Reply to Puritz et al. *Molecular Ecology* 23:5943–5946.
- Andrews, K. R., and G. Luikart. 2014. Recent novel approaches for population genomics data analysis. *Molecular Ecology* 23:1661–1667.
- Appling, A. P., E. S. Bernhardt, and J. A. Stanford. 2014. Floodplain biogeochemical mosaics: A multidimensional view of alluvial soils. *Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences* 119:2013JG002543.
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Summary of Research Projects - 2014

Project Title	Project Director	Sponsoring Agency
DNA Markers for Sex ID-Bull Trout	Luikart	Avista Corporation
Inundated Wetlands Earth System Data Record	Kimball	California Institute of Technology
SMAP Level 4 Carbon Data Product Algorithm	Kimball	California Institute of Technology
Viral Pathogens via Farmed Salmon	Luikart	Gordon And Betty Moore Foundation
Otter Genetics Project	Luikart	MPG Ranch
DNA Markers to Assess Bull Trout	Luikart	MT Fish Wildlife and Parks
Genetic Evaluation of Lake Trout	Luikart	MT Fish Wildlife and Parks
Genotyping Westslope Cutthroat	Luikart	MT Fish Wildlife and Parks
Changes in Ecosystem CO ₂ Exchange	Kimball	NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
SMAP Carbon Cycle Science	Kimball	NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
Assessment Global Freeze Thaw	Kimball	NASA Stennis Space Center
Carbon Cycle Science Contributions	Kimball	NASA Stennis Space Center
Continuity of Freeze/Thaw ESDR	Kimball	NASA Stennis Space Center
Contrasts in CO ₂ and CH ₄	Kimball	NASA Stennis Space Center
Climate Change Pacific Rim Rivers	Luikart	NASA Stennis Space Center
NSF NEON Yellowstone	Crabtree	National Science Foundation
<i>Brucella</i> Transmission in Yellowstone	Luikart	National Science Foundation
Mechanisms Influencing Spread of Hybridization	Luikart	National Science Foundation
Selection Across Spatial Scales and Environ. Gradients	Luikart	National Science Foundation
Completion of Multispectral Imagery	Hauer	New Mexico Environ. Dept. Surface Water Qual. Bur.
Northshore Erosion Control (2)	Lorang	PPL Montana LLC
Shoreline Restoration Projects (3)	Lorang	Private Citizens
Accuracy Assessment Inundated Wetlands Earth Systems	Kimball	Research Foundation, City University of New York
Riverscape Analysis and Mapping Nushagak River	Whited	The Nature Conservancy
Monitoring of Flathead and Whitefish lakes	Ellis	UM and Private Contributions
Linking Salmon Portfolios	Stanford	University of Washington
Early Detection of Mussels	Luikart	USDA Forest Service Flathead National Forest
Genetic Analysis of Cutthroat Trout	Luikart	USDA Forest Service Flathead National Forest
Genetic Rescue Westslope Cutthroat Trout	Luikart	USDA Forest Service Flathead National Forest
Water Quality Monitoring Near Hungry Horse Dam	Craft	USDI Bureau of Reclamation
South Fork Water Quality Monitoring	Ellis	USDI Bureau of Reclamation
Effects of Climate Change on Aquatic Ecosystems	Hauer	USDI Fish Wildlife Service
Predicting Climate Change Impacts	Luikart	USDI Geological Survey
SNP Genotyping for Lake Trout	Luikart	USDI Geological Survey
Enhance Lake Trout Suppression Yellowstone Lake	Luikart	USDI National Park Service
Transboundary Flathead River	Sexton	Wilburforce Foundation
Transboundary Science Coordinator	Sexton	Wildsight

Flathead Lake Biological Station
University of Montana
32125 Bio Station Lane
Polson, MT 59860-6815 USA
flbs@flbs.umt.edu
http://flbs.umt.edu/
http://flbs.umt.edu/webcams
Phone (406) 982-3301
Fax (406) 982-3201



The Flathead Lake Biological Station is located 17.5 miles north of Polson or 14 miles south of Bigfork. Visitors are welcome year round Monday–Friday to take a self-guided walking tour. For more information, send an email to flbs@flbs.umt.edu, call 406-982-3301 or see the FLBS website at <http://flbs.umt.edu/>.

VOLUNTEERS ENGAGE ON FLBS PROJECTS!

Volunteer Ellen Achenbaugh (Polson and the Montecahto Club) assisted for five days, Gary and Alice Erb (Hellroaring Bay and the Montecahto Club) and Ron and Barb Kohler (East Bay) stopped in for a day, and then Gary returned two more days—all were working with Tom Bansak, FLBS Research Scientist/Development Coordinator on a large mailing project. Barbara Hammons (Yellow Bay) also took 500 letters and got them in the mail. Gayle Crane (Gravel Bay) worked on the mailing and returned to help with the 2014 Open House. Volunteers make it possible for FLBS personnel to spend more time informing area citizens and stakeholders about the lake and FLBS research.

Steve Rosso (Lakeside) volunteered to help take water quality samples in Dayton, and Greg McCormick (Flathead Lakers President) participated in buoy retrieval and lake monitoring on the big lake. Wayne Anderson (Rollins) contacted us about doing something special in memory of his wonderful wife Velora LaMunyon. He requested memorial donations be made to the Station and thoughtfully provided his west shore camera feed to link to the Bio Station webcam page. What better way to honor and remember Velora by giving so many an Internet window to gaze upon beautiful Flathead Lake. i

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FLBS 2015 Open House August 5, 1 to 5 PM



The Flathead Lake Biological Station's Annual Open House provides an opportunity for the interested public to learn more about the ecology of Flathead Lake and its watershed, as well as FLBS and its research around the globe.

Activities this year will include: tours of FLBS facilities, demo boat trips on our newly refurbished 30' research vessel, the *Jessie B* (below), exhibits of recent Flathead research and presentations by FLBS research scientists. This event is open to all and there is no admission fee. For more information, email Tom Bansak at tom.bansak@umontana.edu or call 406-982-3301 x229. i

