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## Netcong's Lake Musconetcong offers fishing, boating and a place to 'watch the wildlife'

BY MATT MANOCHIO • STAFF WRITER • JULY 19, 2010

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NETCONG — Pat and Kevin Ruffing routinely bring their folding chairs to a gravel lot overlooking Lake Musconetcong.

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"We come to relax and watch the water, watch the wildlife go by," Pat Ruffing, a borough resident, said Saturday.

"It's the peacefulness of it," her husband, Kevin Ruffing added.

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'Everybody minds their own business, everybody's friendly,' Pat Ruffing said.

The more widely known Lake Hopatcong feeds into the smaller Lake Musconetcong. Both are state-managed lakes.

The difference is Lake Musconetcong, which is bordered by Netcong and Roxbury in Morris County, and Hopatcong and Byram in Sussex County, doesn't see the crowds that usually visit Lake Hopatcong, which has public swimming and is much more populated.

What Lake Musconetcong lacks in swimming, it makes up for in other areas.

"I've been fishing here since 1971," Robert Brink, 41, of Budd Lake said as he cast his line into the lake, hoping to catch a bass.

"In the northern part of New Jersey, it's my favorite place for bass," he said of the lake.

Brink now brings his own children to the lake to fish, hoping to pass on the tradition.

The Lake Musconetcong Regional Planning board oversees the lake. Its mission is to work with the general public and local, state and federal governments to restore, preserve and protect and enhance the lake's environmental condition and its surrounding watershed.

The planning board holds annual Lake Awareness and Save the Lake days to promote its activities and volunteerism to help care for the lake. For example, in 2009 volunteers collected nearly 800 pounds of garbage and recyclables from the lake.

The planning board also encourages lake users to hand-pick invasive, and fast-growing water chestnut plants that threaten to cover the lake surface.

While powerful motorboats aren't usually seen on the lake, due to its maximum depth of 10 feet at spots, it's not unusual to spot small boats with tiny propeller engines, or sail and row boats, gliding across the lake. White swans, too, are a common sight.

Chester resident Wes Hughes, and his son, Tim Hughes, 25, returned from a day of fishing on the lake from their small powerboat.

"Today we caught a couple of bass and a couple of pickerel," Tim Hughes said. "It's nice because there's a decent array of fish."



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Early morning views around the lake--Frank Koval, from Landing, tests out one of his personal watercraft machines early Saturday morning. (Staff Photo: Karen Fucito)



Two fisherman troll the lake early Saturday morning.

For more information on Lake Musconetcong, visit [www.lakemusconetcong.com](http://www.lakemusconetcong.com) or call (973) 691-5748.

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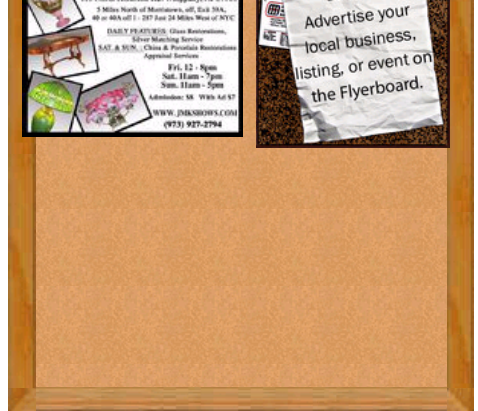
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His dad said this season has been a better one for boating and fishing on the lake because the planning board was able to harvest milfoil weeds more than it previously was able to do.

"This year, compared to last year or any years previous, you couldn't get your boat out," he said of how the weeds would impede boat travel. "It's a real jewel now."

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