

Opinion

TriBeta Update

with Lisa Chassy



By the third issue of the Lance, our readers should know what Tri Beta is. But for those who have not been reading this column, the following is a quick explanation of who we are and what purpose we serve.

Tri-Beta is a biological Honor society which promotes both undergraduate research and the dissemination of Biological knowledge. Membership is determined by interest in research and academic excellence. This column was created to serve the second purpose of Tri Beta—dissemination of biological knowledge.

Some students may have noticed that our lake, Lake Ansley Moore, has a large number of water fowl, or water birds. Perhaps our most interesting species is the Coot.

The Coots are the dark, duck-like birds that dive under the water only to reappear several minutes later. The habitat of this bird ranges from Canada to South America. Its species name, for those bird buffs, is *Fulica americana*.

Coots are of special interest to Tri Beta as they feed on aquatic plants, which includes the Bladderwort that is currently present in abundance.

Another reason why the coots are of interest is that the St. Andrews Women's Volleyball team shares this name.

St. Andrews students have always been fascinated by the coots as these birds are not present all year long. They disappear and reappear at odd times. They are here this month, but they may be gone soon. There does not seem to be much of a pattern to their migration.

Two years ago, the coots arrived in large numbers one night after a very long absence, and stayed most of the winter. Last year, not as many returned. It seems that this year, the Coots arrived a few weeks ago.

Watching these birds is always interesting as they stay under water for a long time, and then suddenly pop up. Rainy days seem to be a good time to watch the Coots, for those interested in seeing these loveable St. Andrews birds.

Lake Ansley Moore is home to several other species of birds. The Mallard ducks are probably the most conspicuous to students, especially when the ducks decide to cross the road and one is late

driving to class. These ducks can be seen in large numbers after dark. They seem to gather near the causewalk, between SAGA and the Bell Tower. The Mallards are relatively tame because there are many people who feed them bread every day. Yet there are other, less conspicuous species in the area.

One of these is the Great Blue Heron. These birds are found all over North America. They are large, grey-blue birds that stand in the water on their long legs. They feed mostly on fish and other aquatic species, but will sometimes eat small mammals, reptiles, and other such animals. Our lake has only a small number of these graceful birds.

Another type of heron lives on our lake. This is the Green Heron, which really is not green. These birds are much smaller than the Great Blue Heron, and can be identified by their distinctive call. The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds describes this call as an "explosive, rasping 'skyow'."

Another species found in this area is the Common Egret, which is primarily a marsh bird. They are white birds of fairly large size. These birds also enjoy wading in the water, and are also members of the Heron family.

The final species of Lake Ansley Moore is the Osprey. This bird is a fishing bird that is fairly uncommon. According to Norm Melvin, there was a pair near the lower end of the lake for many years, but they do not seem to be around this year. Perhaps this pair has moved its nest elsewhere.

Biological Trivia....

1. Do you know where the majority of the Earth's oxygen comes from? The largest supplier of oxygen is a single celled algae called a diatom. This aquatic species produces oxygen in the water, which then passes into the air.

2. Do you know where 90% of the Earth's water is stored? If you said the polar ice caps, you are wrong. 90% of the Earth's water is tied up in the Earth itself—soil, rocks, etc.!

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I find myself asking my fellow humans why such abuse is allowed and even encouraged in the this enlightened society. No woman is safe from such attacks if any woman can be attacked. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

As human beings and educated persons we are obliged to recognize the inalienable rights given to all by the Creator. We are also taught to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Are your actions just? Think about it.

