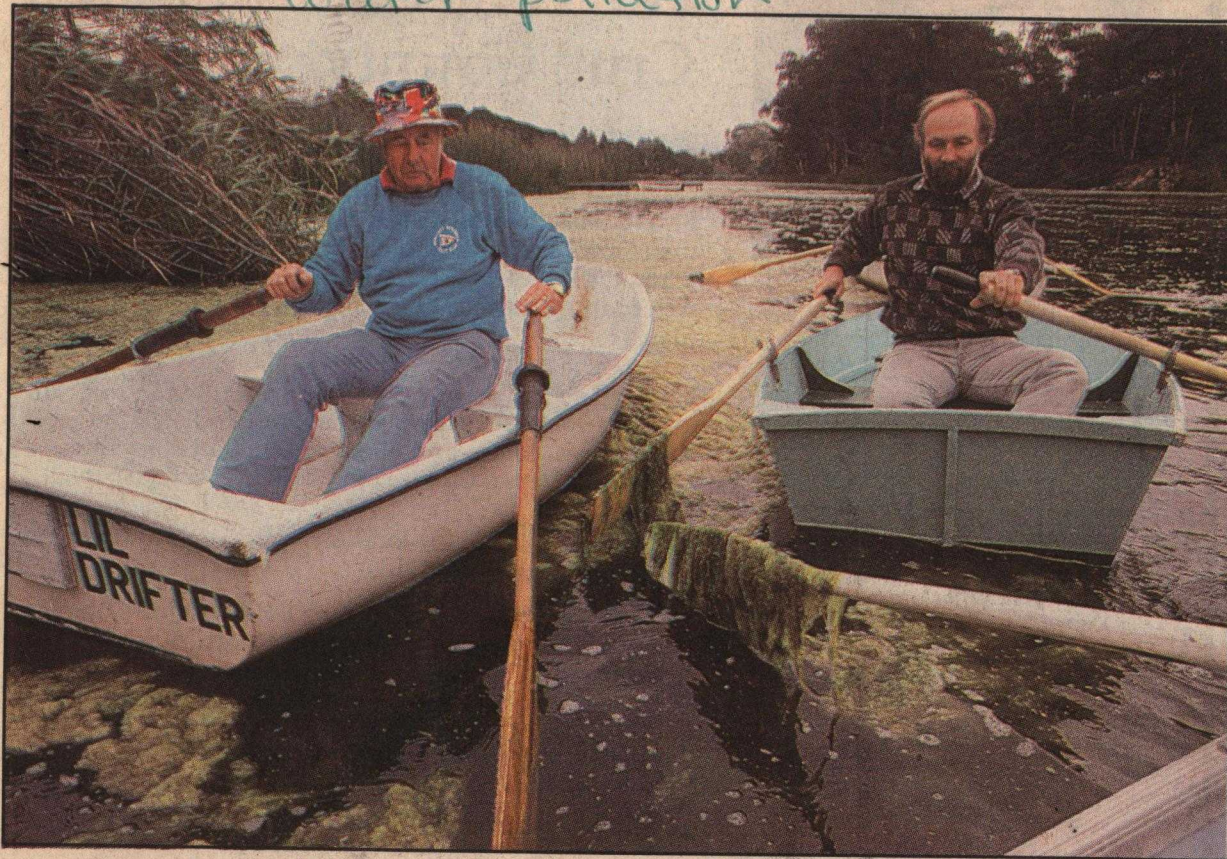


water pollution



A disgruntled duo, Leon Gottlieb and Jerry Paul row slimishly along Schwan's Lagoon.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

# Yuck! Schwan's Lagoon is just wasting away

7-16-89

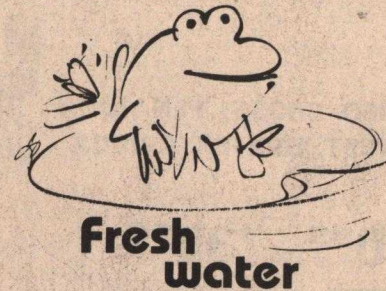
By ERIK ESPE  
Sentinel correspondent

**A**T TWILIGHT, John Smith and George Heisinger sit in separate rowboats surveying the declining condition of Schwan's Lagoon, a body of water the two men have lived near for over a decade.

"It makes us sick," Smith says, as he lifts his oar out of the water and looks at the slimy film of algae and weeds which hangs from it.

Alan Simpkins watches nearby from the dock in his back yard. "It used to be just gorgeous here," he comments. Pointing to the scum-like yellow algae which covers two-thirds of the lagoon's surface he adds, "This stuff grows three inches a day."

In June, the lagoon was among the Santa Cruz fresh water bodies included in an Environmental Protection Agency list of America's



most polluted waterways. The only fresh water body in the Twin Lakes area of Santa Cruz, Schwan's has seen better days.

A walk along a trail off of East Cliff reveals the toll litter has taken. An entire pack of bread sits moldy and rotten near the water. It is surrounded by wrappers, cans and old bottles. In a poison oak bush on the shore, a Burger King Whaler Burger box sits, partly disintegrated. Dog droppings are scattered across the trail.

This lagoon was once nicknamed "Swan Lake." Capitola resident Shoba Jones, who feeds duck here weekly, can remember the swans that were here two years ago. "There were two of them," she recalls sadly. "Now there's none."

Now, the ducks who waddle along neighboring Ninth Street look grimy. Their once white feathers have been dirtied to an ugly yellow-brown. Duck carcasses near East Cliff Drive are not an uncommon sight.

**B**UT WHAT concerns local residents like Smith and Heisinger most is the rapid decline of Schwan's water over the last two months.

Sailboats don't traverse these waters anymore. Children never swim here. And if the algae problem continues, fish may die. This

Please see YUCK! — E2



# Yuck!/ Lagoon waters are icky

*Continued from Page E1*

evening, Heisinger has spotted at least one dead fish.

The weeds may also mark the return of mosquitos to the area. Heisinger notes the recent lack of sticklebacks, the insects which feast off of mosquito larvae. "There used to be millions of them here."

The weeds are so thick, they scrape the bottom of the rowboat. A boater has to stop rowing every few minutes to shake weeds off of the oars.

"The key word is 'infestation,'" emphasizes Smith, who says he doesn't want anyone to think of the problem as temporary and easily solved. "We'd like to come out with rakes, but this will need something bigger."

According to Kenneth Gray, resource ecologist at the state Department of Parks and Recreation, the weed invasion at Schwan's is probably the result of urbanization and the artificial dam which was built between it and the ocean. "It's a natural response to some artificial manipulations that have taken place," he says. "If this were a natural area, not surrounded by urban residents, we wouldn't do anything."

But the lake's neighbors are working to see that the state does do something.

**S**MITH IS part of a local movement to get the state government to follow its legal obligation to maintain the lake. The fact that his home is near the lake is not his only motive, he says. He has lived with the lake since childhood. Born on Ninth Avenue in 1937, he floated on a log for the first time in Schwan's when he was 8.

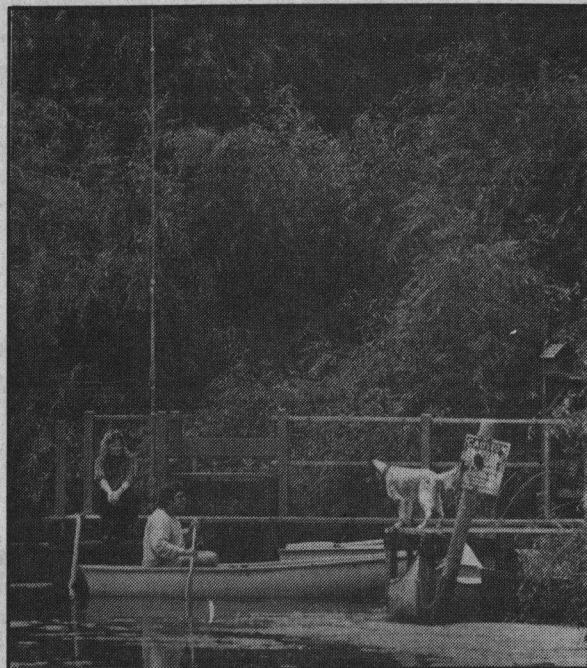
His daughter, Andrea, has written a fact sheet about the lake's sickly condition and contacted fresh water experts to try to get some answers. Like her father, she grew up here.

"I was looking forward to doing a lot of sailing this summer," she says sadly. "In May we were sailing. There was no problem."

Now she isn't even sure if the lake itself is going survive another decade. "It's slowly killing the lake. If this continues, the lake will die. It will just become a huge smelly puddle."

Located next to Twin Lakes Beach, Schwan's Lagoon is probably best loved by the residents who live around it. A privately owned dock gives these residents access to rowboats and a prime view spot.

For the public, Schwan's is difficult to access. A



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

**Andrea Smith and Bill Farnsworth at the dock.**

dusty path off of 17th Avenue leads to a state park on the inland side of the lake. There is also a small area near East Cliff Drive where people come to feed the ducks and geese, which are so populous they are even inter-breeding.

But these public areas have lost much appeal because of the algae and litter problems.

The state of Schwan's Lagoon is a sharp contrast to the other state park located directly across the street: Twin Lakes State Beach.

"It doesn't look like it's served weekly like the beaches," Jones noted. "You never see anyone servicing this area. Look across at the beach and you don't see any litter."

But the litter won't be much of an issue if this lagoon dies.

"I've prayed that the lake would heal itself," commented one man hiking through the park. "But it hasn't."