

The Voice of our Community, Marsh and Meadow

Editor's Splash

The truth isn't always pretty, but as long as there is mud in the pond, we will dig through it!



Where to find us

Pin your comments to The Old Willow and we will collect them!

DOCK DESIGN DISASTER: NEW BOARDWALKS DECLARED "TOO SLIPPERY WHEN WET" BY LOCAL ELDERS

EDITORIAL SHOCKER: BITTER-BILL THREATENS RESIGNATION (AGAIN) AMID LILY-PAD GOSSIP SCANDAL

NORTH-SIDE SCUM SHORTAGE: YOUTH SPLASHING TO BLAME, CLAIMS ANGRY RESIDENT



Grumbly from the Ruffled Feather

By Barnaby Bitter-Bill

I look out from my desk across the marshland today, and frankly, I am disgusted by what I see. The sheer lack of decorum in Waddletown has reached an all-time low. Just yesterday, I witnessed a group of young, bright-eyed mallards splashing carelessly near the main canal, completely oblivious to the fact that honest, hardworking ducks are trying to read the morning news in peace. Back in my day, we didn't "splash for the sake of splashing." If you were in the water, you were diving for pondweed or migrating. This modern obsession with floating aimlessly and preening in the mid-day sun is exactly why our local economy is sinking faster than a stone in a bog.

And don't get me started on the town council's latest logistical nightmare: the boardwalks. They've gone and replaced the perfectly good, slippery mud paths with pristine wooden planks. Do you know what happens to a wooden plank when it gets damp? It warps! My webbed feet haven't had a decent grip since Tuesday, and I nearly threw my back out trying to deliver the late-edition proofs. It's a vanity project, pure and simple, funded by tax-worms that should have gone

toward dredging the north-side scum ponds. We are marsh ducks, not park ducks! If you want dry feet, pack up and move to a backyard swimming pool in the suburbs.

Finally, we need to address the rampant, unchecked gossiping at the lily pads. It seems a duck cannot moult in season in privacy anymore without the entire flock speculating on his health. To the hedgehog who spread the rumour that my left wing is failing: it is not failing, it is merely resting from the sheer exhaustion of carrying this entire publication on its back. If this community spent half as much time gathering hard facts as they do quacking about who was seen preening with whom by the cattails, *The Waddletown Gazette* wouldn't have to print the crossword puzzle twice just to fill space. Pull yourselves together, Waddletown, or the next editorial you read will be my resignation letter.



**DOCK DESIGN
DISASTER:**
By Quillan Swamp-Scribe

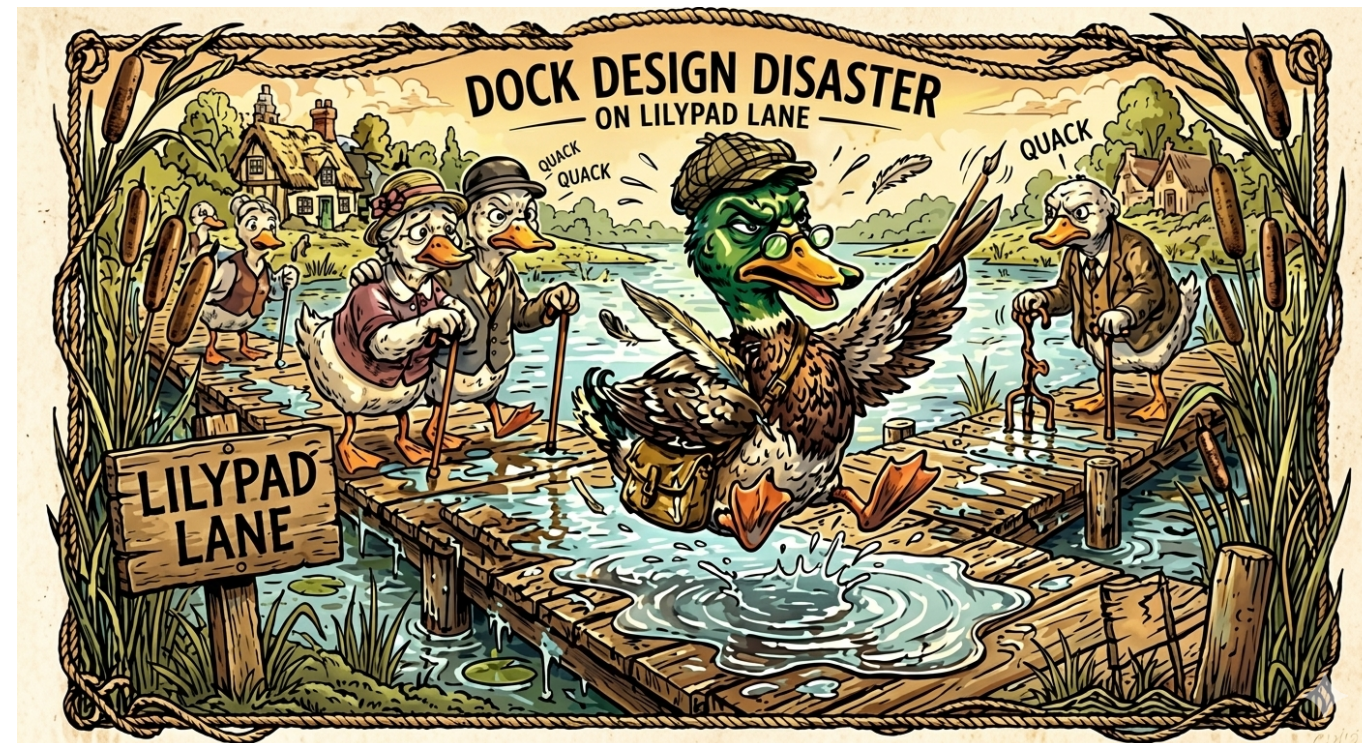
The scene along Lilypad Lane has descended into absolute chaos, perfectly capturing the exact "Dock Design Disaster" that Barnaby Bitter-Bill warned the town council about in his scathing editorial. The newly installed wooden boardwalks have become a treacherous slip-and-slide for Waddletown's most vulnerable citizens. Stripped of their natural, high-traction marsh mud, the sleek planks glisten with a dangerous layer of marsh water, turning a simple morning stroll into a high-stakes balancing act.

Right in the center of the frame, Barnaby himself can be seen nearly losing his footing, his webbed feet sliding wildly over a slick puddle while he fiercely gestures with his quill. Behind him, a growing crowd of local elders shares his outrage. An elderly duck couple clutches onto each other for dear life, while further down the pier, another senior resident relies heavily on a walking cane just to stay upright. The collective mood on the boardwalk is one of deep curmudgeonly resentment, with every ruffled feather shouting a silent "I told you so" to the parish council.

This chaotic snapshot perfectly illustrates the generational divide currently gripping Waddletown. While the town's younger waterfowl might view the boardwalks as a trendy, modern upgrade, the elders are left to deal with the literal

fallout. With slips, trips, and disgruntled quacks echoing all the way down Lilypad Lane, it's safe to say Barnaby's printing press will be running hot with complaints for many monthly editions to come.

**NEW BOARDWALKS
DECLARED "TOO
SLIPPERY WHEN WET" BY
LOCAL ELDERS**



Spilling the Algae Roxy Ripple Maker

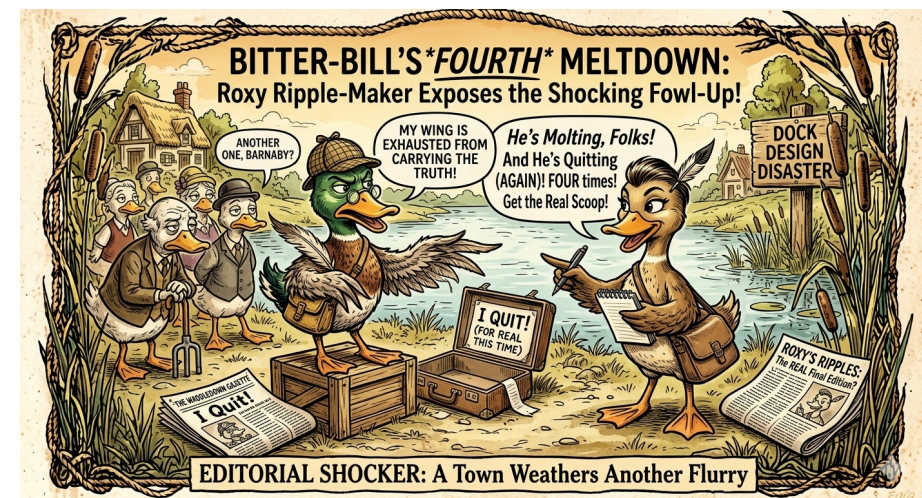
BITTER-BILL THREATENS RESIGNATION (AGAIN) AMID LILY-PAD GOSSIP SCANDAL

By Roxy Ripple Maker

Hold onto your tail feathers, Waddletown, because our resident King of Complaints is throwing yet another temper tantrum! In his latest column, Editor-in-Chief Barnaby Bitter-Bill has officially fired back at the local rumours swirling around Lilypad Lane regarding his rather dramatic moulting health. Rather than admitting that he's simply getting a bit thin up top, Barnaby used his precious front-page ink to boldly claim that his wing isn't failing—it's just tired from "carrying the entire publication." Oh, please! If ego could float, Bitter-Bill would be a hot air balloon.

Naturally, long-time readers of *The Waddletown Gazette* remain completely unfazed by this sudden, feather-ruffling outburst. In fact, if you ask anyone down at the marsh mud flats, they'll tell you this is a classic Bitter-Bill routine. By our official newsroom count, this marks the fourth time *this year alone* that he has threatened to pack up his printing press and quit for good. It seems our favourite curmudgeon loves a dramatic exit almost as much as he loves complaining about the parish council's new boardwalks.

Personally, I say let him threaten to splash away! If Barnaby actually follows through on his promise to resign this time, I'm more than ready to step in and give this sleepy town the spunky, wave-making journalism it actually deserves. But let's be real—Bitter-Bill isn't going anywhere. He loves the sound of his own quack far too much to ever give up the microphone. Stay tuned, pond-dwellers, because you know I'll be right here to catch the fallout when his next "final" edition hits the stands!



Other Local Scoops

Pond-erous Theft: Local Bakery Reports Devastating Crumb-Snatching Incident; Suspicion Falls on Flocks of Canada Geese

The Great Molt of '26: Feather Clutter Reaches Crisis Levels on Main Street; Town Council Debates Leaf-Blower Ban

Feathered Felony: Notorious Snapping Turtle Caught Operating Unlicensed Ferry Service Across the Reeds

Property Boom: Luxury Lilypad Development "The Pads at Cattail Creek" Sparks Outrage Over Affordable Nesting Rights

Local Hero: Mother of Twelve Successfully Coordinates Synchronized Road Crossing During Rush Hour traffic

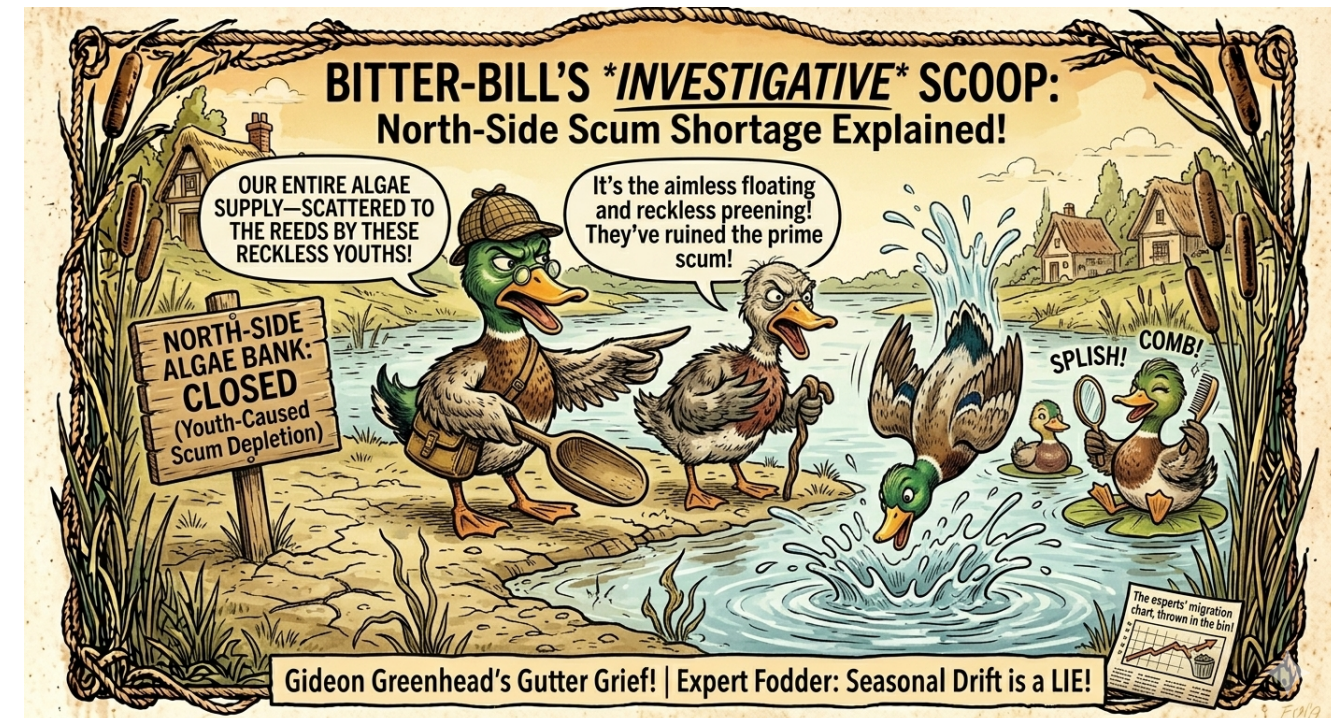
**NORTH-SIDE SCUM
SHORTAGE: YOUTH
SPLASHING TO BLAME?**

By Barnaby Bitter-Bill

The north side of Waddletown Pond is facing an unprecedented ecological catastrophe, and it has absolutely nothing to do with Mother Nature. Our prime, succulent algae beds and thick, glorious layers of pondweed—the very lifeblood of a respectable duck's morning forage—have practically vanished overnight. While high-brow, textbook-reading "experts" from the Marshland Environmental Board point to seasonal migration patterns and natural water cooling, local residents with actual common sense know better. This isn't a climate shift; it is a direct assault on our food supply.

According to longtime resident Gideon "Grumple-Gizzard" Greenhead, the culprit is obvious: the sheer, unadulterated disrespect of the pond's youth. "You can't have prime scum when you've got teenagers practicing synchronized diving routines and doing cannonballs into the lily pads at all hours of the afternoon," Greenhead quacked furiously, aggressively smoothing down his chest feathers. He firmly blames the "aimless floating, reckless preening, and excessive tail-wagging" of the younger generation for completely disrupting the delicate surface silt, scattering the premium scum before it has a chance to properly ferment.

While the town council remains silent, the elder waterfowl are left to starve on thin water and subpar duckweed. The younger generation claims they are just "enjoying the public waterways," but their relentless splashing is eroding the very foundation of Waddletown's traditional feeding grounds. If the parish doesn't implement a strict "No Wake, No Splash" zone on the north side immediately, we will be looking at a completely barren pond by winter—and the youth will have no one to blame but themselves when their feathers are dry and their bellies are empty.





From Plot to Pot - The ultimate guide to growing your own marsh greens and turning them into a five-star lakeside feast.

Wild Celery - How to Start!

Let's face it—relying on the erratic generosity of park-goers throwing stale sourdough isn't a viable long-term nutritional strategy. Plus, your digestive tract will thank you for skipping the gluten. If you want to take control of your diet and level up your foraging game, it's time to start dabbling in backyard agriculture.

Growing your own food right at the edge of the marsh is easier than it looks, and you don't even need fingers to do it. Here is how to get your webbed feet wet.

To start your own wild celery patch, focus on the shallow, slow-moving edges of the marsh where the water is between one to three feet deep. Simply take the runners or root tubers and tuck them firmly into the soft, muddy bottom using your webbed feet or beak to ensure they don't float away before taking root. For the best results, clear out any aggressive algae or dense lily pads beforehand so your young celery stalks get plenty of sunlight, and consider shielding the area with a small barrier of woven reeds to protect the tender, growing shoots from hungry passing turtles and eager diving ducks.



The Muddy Chef: Crunchy Celery & Duckweed Salad

For the refined mallard who wants a crisp, refreshing lunch on a hot afternoon, this raw salad balances the bitter crunch of fresh wild celery with the smooth, protein-packed texture of fresh duckweed. It is the perfect meal to whip up right on the riverbank.

Ingredients:

- **3 whole stalks** of freshly dived Wild Celery (rinsed of excess river silt)
- **1 generous bill-full** of vibrant green Duckweed
- **4-5 local Water Snails** (crushed and shelled for a savoury protein crunch)
- **A splash of clean river water** (for texture)

Instructions:

1. **Prep the Celery:** Lay your wild celery stalks across a flat, sun-warmed rock. Using your beak, crimp and snap the stalks into bite-sized, half-inch pieces.
2. **Toss the Greens:** Push the celery pieces into a shallow mud hollow or a hollowed-out piece of driftwood. Scatter your fresh duckweed evenly over the top like a leafy green dressing.
3. **Add the Crunch:** Distribute your shelled, crushed water snails over the salad to add a rich, earthy umami flavour that perfectly complements the watery crunch of the celery.
4. **Toss and Float:** Give the mixture a quick mix with your webbed foot, drizzle with a splash of clean water to keep the duckweed from drying out, and enjoy immediately before the current carries it off!

Chef's Tip: Want a bit of spice? Forage a leaf of wild watercress from the shoreline, shred it with your bill, and toss it in for a sharp, peppery kick.



Darlings, to truly ruffle some feathers at the next lakeside gala, one must embrace the exquisite textures of the wetlands: pair the stunning, multi-layered **Hand-Polished Marsh-Beryl & Prehnite Necklace** with the iridescent, light-catching **Mosaic Abalone Shimmer Clutch** for a look that commands the entire pond. For that quintessential

touch of whimsical drama, top off your plumage with a striking **Woven Moss & Dragonfly Fascinator**—perched just so above a pair of chic, pastel-framed spectacles—proving that true style is naturally, effortlessly wild.

The Daily Preen

By Penelope Pinfeathers, Fashion Editor

Where High Fashion Meets High Flying



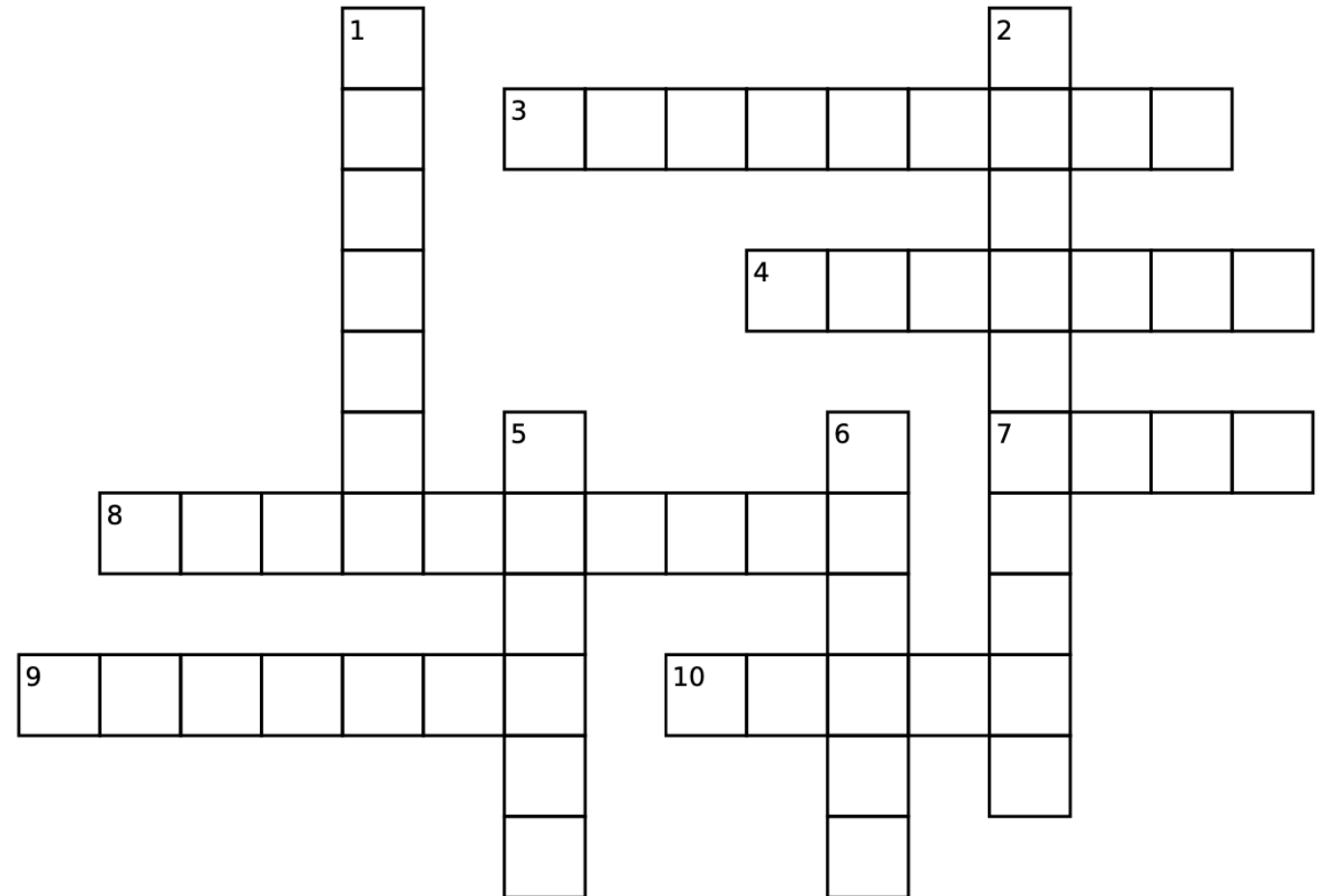
Crossword Puzzle

Down

1. The lane where the dock disaster took place
2. The angry duck columnist who yells about youth preening and his fourth meltdown
5. The main ingredient filling the hollow log down in the Wild Celery recipe
6. The protein found scattered on the top of the chopped stalks in the Wild Celery recipe

Across

3. This closed bank suffered from youth-caused depletion
4. The number of curled willow thorns required for the necklace in the fashion page.
7. The reporter duck who exposed Bitter-Bill's fowl up.
8. The local duck town
9. The type of leaf found in the fashion pages
10. The personal atelier responsible for creating the dragonfly fascinator



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**BOARDWALK BACKLASH BOILS OVER:
COUNCIL'S EMERGENCY "RE-MUDDING" PLAN
SLAMMED AS "TOO LITTLE, TOO SLIPPERY" BY
FURIOUS ELDERS**

**QUACK-CIDENT COVER-UP? PARISH COUNCIL
ACCUSED OF HIDING SLIP-AND-SLIDE INJURY
TALLIES AS LILYPAD LANE PETITION TOPS 200
WEBBED SIGNATURES**

**"NO WAKE, NO SPLASH" ZONE VOTE ENDS IN
CHAOS: YOUTH STAGE SYNCHRONIZED
CANNONBALL PROTEST ON NORTH SIDE**

**ROXY VS. BITTER-BILL: RIVAL COLUMNIST
DECLARES "THE OLD QUACK'S TIME IS UP" AS
RESIGNATION WATCH ENTERS FIFTH ROUND**