

## Waterfowl Repellents

Potential carriers of the Swimmer's Itch organism include Mergansers, Mallards, Seagulls, Wood Ducks, Canada Geese, and Swans. A number of products are available to deter waterfowl from roosting or lingering in or near swimming areas. Here are a few, along with potential suppliers:

- **Poly Pennants DS-802**  
100 foot rope of multi-colored flags. Attach to the perimeter of the walking surface of small docks or platforms. Ducks avoid the bright pennants which flap in the breeze. This deters them from climbing up on the dock while swimming and feeding.  
dealersupply.com, 800.521.3870 – \$12.95
- **Gullsweep GS-1**  
For docks and platforms. May be unscrewed from the bracket when people are using the dock. Multiple units may be used on long docks. West Marine, 3500 Market Place Circle, Traverso City  
gullsweep.com, 231.928.2300 – \$50.00
- **Seagull Stopper**  
For use on canopies of shore stations. Four magnetized posts with crossed strings. Lake Enterprises, 863 NE Mullet Rd., Indian River, MI 49749, 231.238.7715  
\$140.00
- **Migrate**  
Non-toxic grape extract used to repel geese, ducks and possibly gulls. Apply to the ground or grassy areas. One gallon covers 16,000 sq. ft.  
absolutebirdcontrol.com – \$103.24 (includes shipping)
- **Liquid Fence**  
Apply to ground to repel geese, ducks, turkeys and possibly gulls. Two gallons of the concentrate covers 4,000 sq. ft., Frankfort Hardware – \$45.99

The information and prices above are subject to change.

## The Crystal Lake Swimmer's Itch Partnership

Swimmer's Itch is an allergic reaction that occurs when sensitive individuals come in contact with a microscopic water-borne organism that normally cycles between snails and waterfowl.

It has been a nuisance for many years in lakes throughout Northern Michigan, and elsewhere in the world — Michigan is not unique.

The Crystal Lake Swimmer's Itch Partnership was formed to take action regarding this issue.

**The Partnership** includes representatives from: The City of Frankfort, Village of Beulah, Congregational Summer Assembly, Crystal Conference Center, Chimney Corners Resort, Crystal Beach Cottagers' Association, Crystal Lake Yacht Club, CLWA and numerous individuals. CLWA acts as funding agent for the Partnership.

To support the Swimmer's Itch Program, tax-deductible contributions may be directed to CLWA or by using the enclosed CLWA enrollment form:



Crystal Lake &  
Watershed Association

P.O. Box 89  
Beulah, MI 49617  
231.882.4001

Please visit our website: [www.clwa.us](http://www.clwa.us) which provides a wealth of information about the area.



# SWIMMER'S

# itch

## on Crystal Lake

## We need your help in combating Swimmer's Itch

Your actions affect your neighbors. The organism that causes swimmer's itch does not respect property lines, and may drift with the waves for up to 24 hours after being shed by infected snails.

### What you can do to help:

- Do not feed any waterfowl.
- Remove unused docks, diving platforms or other structures that may become waterfowl perches.
- Repel or scare off waterfowl from swimming areas, docks and equipment year-round.
- Encourage family members, guests and renters to use waterproof sunscreens that may provide a barrier or include an insect repellent.
- Volunteer for research projects and allow access to your lake front property for use in Merganser control programs.

## Swimmer's Itch Facts

Swimmer's Itch is a skin irritation (medically known as cercarial dermatitis) that may occur when a swimmer contacts a microscopic organism that normally cycles between a snail and waterfowl. Many birds may host Swimmer's Itch, causing cercaria. The common Merganser is the most likely host on clear Northern Michigan lakes such as Crystal.

- If a cercaria encounters the skin of the proper species of waterfowl, it will attempt to burrow through the bird's skin to complete its life cycle. If instead, the cercaria encounters a human in the water, it may attempt to enter the skin, where it soon dies.
- The red spots of Swimmer's Itch are caused by an allergic or immune reaction as the swimmer's body attacks the foreign protein of cercaria.
- This is not usually a worrisome reaction. The spots may be uncomfortable and itch for several days. However some people, especially children, may develop severe cases with fever and/or intense itching.
- Some people seem to be unaffected, even if they swim in cercaria-infested water.
- Swimmer's Itch has been increasing in incidence, possibly as a result of warming trends. Often, clear lakes such as Crystal are the most affected, since they attract Mergansers and certain fresh-water snails.

## Preventing and Treating Swimmer's Itch

- Apply waterproof sunscreen or other products (see below) that may provide a barrier to the cercaria. Allow the product to dry before entering the water.
- For unprotected skin, while swimming run hand over the skin every 10 minutes or so. This may remove cercaria before they can penetrate. After swimming, towel off vigorously and shower with non-lake water.
- If using sunscreen and also showering, reapply the product before re-entering the water.
- If swimming for a long period of time, reapply the product according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Swim in deeper water when possible, as wind and waves may concentrate the cercaria in the shallows or close to the shore.
- If you contract a severe case of Swimmer's Itch, ask a pharmacist about anti-itch cremes or antihistamines.

At this time, there is no FDA approved product for Swimmer's Itch. No products are endorsed by the CLWA or the CLSIP. Here are some that have been tried locally:

- **Bullfrog Waterproof Sunscreen**  
With Deet or other insect repellents.
- **Rocky Mountain Waterproof Sunscreen** (Liquid or Lotion)  
Add five drops of citronella oil to an eight ounce bottle of Rocky Mountain Waterproof Sunscreen. Users may place the liquid in a small sprayer for application or apply the lotion by hand. Using too much citronella may stain towels or showers — [www.rmsunscreen.com](http://www.rmsunscreen.com)
- **Swimmer's Itch Guard**  
The CLWA/CLSIP conducted a study of this product in the summer of 2012. While the product was superior to Coppertone Sport SPF 30, it did not perform at the level claimed by the manufacturer.

## Swimmer's Itch Control

The Crystal Lake & Watershed Association and the Crystal Lake Swimmer's Itch Partnership are engaged in a multi-year effort to attack Swimmer's Itch using the best information available.

Ongoing activities include:

- CLWA is one of 20 lake associations that joined in a new coalition called Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership. Formed in the fall of 2014, it will help raise funds for scientific studies that will provide data regarding swimmer's itch. This data enables organizations (such as Department of Natural Resources and Department of Environmental Quality) to receive funding to address swimmer's itch. The formation and work of this partnership is a huge step in the quest to eradicate swimmer's itch.
- Oakland University in Detroit, Michigan will be working with CLWA/CLSIP to conduct biological studies relating to swimmer's itch on Crystal Lake. A graduate student in Biology and her professor will carry out tests that will provide greater knowledge regarding causation of swimmer's itch. This increased knowledge is critical to finding an answer to swimmer's itch. Initiated in 2015.
- Hunting the common Merganser during the legal autumn hunting season. Initiated in 2002.
- Pyrotechnics are used in the spring to deter Mergansers from nesting and encourage them to leave the lake. The program accesses private property only with permission from owners. Initiated in spring 2014.
- Raking or scarifying the lake bottom to a depth of about two meters at popular beaches. This is designed to reduce the number of snails, and to float snail eggs and snail food sources — which may then be consumed by minnows. Initiated in 2010.
- Posting large Swimmer's Itch information signs at major beaches. Completed in 2011.
- Communicating with the DNR. Initiated in 2002 and ongoing.
- Working with local pharmacies in stocking products that may help reduce Swimmer's Itch or provide relief. Initiated in 2010.