

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2010

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

WANTED: A Congressman to Restore Cormorant Control

by Matt Snyder

As Federal programs go, Oneida Lake's cormorant management is one of the greatest success stories of all time. Initiated by retired Congressman Jim Walsh in 2004, this U.S. Department of Agriculture endeavor replaced smaller, state-led efforts and produced extremely positive, sustainable results - turnarounds in fish populations and fishing, decreases in habitat damage, and economic benefits that included more than 1,400 jobs and \$50 million in local revenue. Clear evidence from across the country shows that the best way to keep these benefits is to keep USDA boats on the water for the long haul.

Unfortunately, our new Congressmen haven't yet proven their commitment to this program. They failed to fund the program for 2010 and, at press time, we still haven't heard a commitment to fund it for 2011. That's despite the OLA's efforts, that started in December 2008, to reach out to the USDA and elected officials to request permanent funding. In early 2009, our USDA partners told us that Congress needed to take action to provide funding. And since then, New York's Congressmen have done nothing productive to help Oneida Lake with its cormorant problem.

The results are disastrous - there will be no USDA cormorant hazing on Oneida Lake this season! Your Oneida Lake Association directors and fellow members fought hard throughout 2009 to focus newly elected Congressmen's attention on the cormorant issue. This February, the OLA submitted a formal request for Congressional appropriations. Now, we need your help to permanently drive the point home - Federal officials must

"The loss of the critical funding [for USDA operations] would significantly impact ongoing projects to restore economies around Oneida Lake."

– DEC Commissioner Pete Grannis to Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, June 2009

"I share your concern about this issue and regret that funding was not directed to this important program for the upcoming fiscal year...I can assure you that I will support restoring funding in the next budget cycle."

– Congressman Maurice Hinchey to the OLA, January 2010

"While other states such as Arkansas and Virginia will enter fiscal year 2010 with federal support for their USDA programs, New York's Congressional delegation must work to restore the program. Federal support was critical in the past and it will be needed to keep the program going."

– State Senator David J. Valesky to Congressman Dan Maffei, February 2010

"_____"

– Response from New York's Congressmen to the OLA regarding a firm commitment to cormorant control funding in the 2011 federal budget, March 2010

restore cormorant management today to return hazing boats to the lake in 2011 and keep them here!

New York is the only state suffering this problem. When President Obama's proposed budget cuts threatened cormorant management in several states last year, the House and the Senate worked together to protect these valuable, cost-effective programs. Our Congressmen told us they would help. But no one from the New York delegation attended a critical budget hearing last fall! So, while Virginia, Arkansas, and everyone else saw their funding permanently restored, New York and Oneida Lake got ignored.

Only Congressmen and Senators can put this train back on its tracks. They can accomplish this by inserting funding language in the Agriculture Appropriations

bill that they're negotiating right now. At this writing, we haven't seen any proof that they'll do so, but a broad coalition is working hard to help. The New York State DEC, Cornell University and its Cooperative Extension, the Onondaga County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Trout Unlimited, Assemblymen Dave Townsend and Bill Magee, and State Senator David Valesky have all publicly encouraged Congress to restore New York's cormorant management program. We've even heard reports of Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy contacting his New York counterparts. Most important, hundreds of OLA members have called or written members of Congress.

More effort is needed – NOW! If Washington's legislative calendar looks

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message

Cormorant Management - The People's Choice

An article from last summer's Bulletin entitled "Congress Commits to Cormorant Funding" praised a local Congressman's commitment to financial support for cormorant management on Oneida Lake. The article stated, "By late summer, we will know if these commitments have been honored."

At the OLA's annual legislative retreat last August, Congressman Dan Maffei reaffirmed to us that he understood the issue and would work to maintain funding. He told us he was committed to this issue.

So we were disappointed to discover, late last year, that Congress never acted to help New York and that cormorant management would shut down across our state for the 2010 season. New York is the only state affected in this way! All other states whose cormorant budgets were threatened were able to get funding - permanent funding, in fact - while New York was left to fend for itself in an increasingly difficult fiscal environment.

To our elected officials - don't let us down! More than 1,400 workers, people whose jobs depend on revenues generated by a healthy Oneida Lake fishery, are relying on Congressmen and Senators representing New York State. Tens of thousands of Oneida Lake anglers are counting on you. Threatened species' habitat will be lost unless you take real action. Don't let us down!

This program should be a proverbial "slam dunk." Cormorants nearly destroyed Oneida Lake fishing a decade ago, and cormorant management was bringing it back. Time and again across New York State and across the country, experience has shown that this federal approach is the only one that works. To his everlasting credit, retired Congressman Jim Walsh advanced this good idea and worked tirelessly to defend Oneida Lake.

Most federal projects aren't cost-effective, but this one is. Very. It creates and protects more than a thousand jobs and generates \$47 in local economic impact for every dollar spent. The average cost to taxpayers is less than one-half of one cent per person.

This issue isn't about Democrats or Republicans. It's not about politics. It's about our elected officials' responsibility to recognize that cormorant management works and to work hard to protect the good things the program does for their constituents.

In this tough climate, the 2011 budget is Congress' last, best chance to restore funding. The staffs of Congressmen Arcuri, Owens, and Hinchey have told me they will support a funding request, and we're hopeful that by the time you read this we'll get a commitment from Congressman Maffei as well. Even the Senate is getting involved, with reports of powerful Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy calling across Lake Champlain to find out what's going on with his New York counterparts.

Thanks to support from local elected officials like Assemblyman Dave Townsend, Assemblyman Bill Magee, and especially Senator Dave Valesky, we've made tremendous progress in the last few months. But until Congress takes positive action - until they show us the legislative proof - the outcome will be in doubt.

Help us erase that doubt, and erase Oneida Lake's cormorants for good! Call your Congressman and Senators and say, "Restore Cormorant Management." If you've already called, call again! You can find addresses and phone numbers on Page 3 and on our Web site www.oneidalakeassociation.org. Don't delay one minute. The future of our lake is at stake! We must be heard.


Matthew Snyder
President - OLA

The Oneida Lake Association Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the Association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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Annual Meeting
April 21 -
Be there!

Don't Delay -
Call your
representatives today!

EDITORIAL

OLA Members - Contact Your Representatives!

And tell them to restore our effective, essential cormorant management program! It is absolutely necessary that our representatives get the message that our association, our lake, and the Central New York economy need this program.

To save Oneida Lake's program, one of our Congressmen or Senators has to lead a coalition to advocate for including cormorant management in next year's federal budget (fiscal year 2011). New York's other Congressmen and Senators need to pull together to help the cause.

Arkansas, Virginia, and other states have succeeded in restoring their cormorant management programs - why can't New York? Don't let our state be left behind!

Important addresses and phone numbers are listed below. You can access a handy way to look up elected officials by ZIP code at votesmart.org.

If you live south or west of Oneida Lake, in the 25th Congressional District contact:

Congressman Dan Maffei

PO Box 7306

Syracuse, NY 13261

Phone: (315) 423-5657

Fax: (315) 423-5669

Website: <http://maffei.house.gov/>

If you live east of Oneida Lake in the 24th Congressional District, contact:

Congressman Michael Arcuri

10 Broad St.

Utica, NY 13501

Phone: (315) 793-8146

Fax: (315) 798-4099

Website: <http://arcuri.house.gov/>

If you live north or southeast of Oneida Lake in the 23rd Congressional District contact:

Congressman Bill Owens

120 Washington St.

Watertown, NY 13601

Phone: (315) 782-3150

Fax: (315) 782-1291

Website: <http://owens.house.gov>

If you live anywhere in New York, contact:

Senator Charles Schumer

313 Hart Senate Building

Washington, D.C. 20501

Phone: (202) 224-6542

Fax: (202) 228-3027

Website: <http://schumer.senate.gov>

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

478 Russell Senate Building

Washington, D.C. 20510

Phone: (202) 224-4452

Fax: (202) 228-0282

Website: <http://gillibrand/senate.gov>

Congressman Maurice Hinchey

Member, House Subcommittee on

Agriculture Appropriations

2431 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 225-6335

Fax: (202) 226-0774

Website: <http://house.gov/Hinchey>

Don't Delay – Call your representatives today!

WANTED: A Congressman to Restore Cormorant Control

(Continued from page 1)

anything like last year's, April will be a critical time. If funding language isn't inserted now, it'll be an uphill battle to add it later and Oneida Lake's vital program could be lost forever.

This is an important election year. Congressmen should know that their constituents will hold them accountable for Oneida Lake. Senators should know that we expect them to help our lake by restoring cormorant management permanently. OLA members should use their powers of the "pen and phone" to make sure Congress gets the point - cormorant management is too important to sacrifice because of political mistakes!

Hopefully, we'll have good news to report by our April 21 annual meeting. You can check the OLA's website for details. But - until USDA boats return to Oneida Lake - we need to keep the pressure on the elected officials who have, so far, let us down. Congressional commitments are hollow until legislative actions enforce them. Our Congressmen and Senators must act together to legislate cormorant management funding for New York.

Keep the heat on. Don't let them forget Oneida Lake again! Contact your elected officials from the list on this page. Tell them to "Restore cormorant management now!"

*Phone calls
help save
Oneida Lake's
fishery!*

The Lake in 2010

by the Cornell Field Station Staff

Oneida Lake boasts a long history of providing diverse opportunities. Central New York benefits from the lake's economic magnetism and that prosperity's effects ripple throughout our state and nation. Fish and fishing, especially, offer tremendous economic benefits to the Oneida Lake region.

Scientists at the Cornell Biological Field Station have been monitoring the lake for over fifty years and appreciate this opportunity to share an update on the state of the lake in 2010 with the *OLA Bulletin's* readers.

Our Educational Outreach Program

While the primary mission of our institution is research, the Field Station started the Oneida Lake Education Initiative in 2008. The OLA, New York Sea Grant, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board partnered with us in the project. This program uses the web to channel Oneida Lake into six local school districts (www.oneidalakeinfo.org) and sponsors teacher-training sessions that disseminate scientific information.

The Lake's Walleyes

Our samplings over recent years revealed an adult walleye population that fluctuates between 350,000 and 450,000 fish. This number exceeds levels observed from 1994 through 2003, when cormorant predation and biological changes produced



Cornell biologist Randy Jackson explains walleye lore to a group of visiting students.

severe declines. Our creel surveys show that the population can generate angler catch rates (#fish caught per hour) equal to the seasons when walleyes were very abundant. Thus, Oneida Lake remains one of New York's premier walleye lakes.

While the lake's walleye population should be able to sustain valuable angling into the near future, we are concerned with the consistently low levels of recruitment of new fish, a situation that arose in the early 1990s. On average, walleye year classes contribute around 50,000 fish to the population annually. This is roughly the same number that anglers harvested during 2006 and 2007. "Young of the year" walleyes (small, immature fish) haven't survived well for the past five years, so harvest increases could reduce walleye numbers.

Comprehensive creel studies are too expensive to conduct annually but, in 2010, we will initiate a modified program to monitor walleye catch and harvest rates through interviews with anglers. If you are approached by one of our clerks, please take a few minutes to answer their questions. Your information helps us better understand the walleye fishery.

A Stable Yellow Perch Population

Adult yellow perch numbers continue to hover around one million. While the population has grown since the mid-1990s, we are concerned with its slow recovery since cormorant management began. Anglers still enjoy good catch rates, however, and action from summer through fall can be excellent.

Bass Numbers Rise

Our catches of smallmouths continue to indicate a population three times larger than in the years before the mid-1980s. The lake's bass fishing ranks among the best in the state, attracting national attention and enriching the local economy.

White Perch Galore

White perch remain abundant. Their underexploited population creates superb fishing opportunities. And, to top it off,



Cornell intern Dana Seidel hefts a 60-inch, 65-pound sturgeon.

their fillets are delicious. We encourage sportspersons to take advantage of these fish.

Ever-Growing Sturgeons

Lake sturgeons stocked between 1995 and 2004 continue to thrive. In 2008 we netted a seventy-two pound sturgeon; this behemoth remains the largest we have seen. We tagged many of these great fish and encourage anglers to call us if they catch one, giving the location and tag number of their catch (315-633-9243).

Another Exotic Species

A fresh discovery in 2009 is the exotic shrimp, *Hemimysis anomala*, in the diet of a white perch. Follow-up samplings indicate that they are widespread. This shrimp, another import from the Caspian Sea region of Southern Europe, was brought to the Great Lakes by transoceanic shipping. *Hemimysis* feed on algae and other zooplankton, so we must monitor their impacts on the lake's food web carefully.

Concerning Cormorants

The hazing program for double-crested cormorants may be suspended during the summer of 2010, but hopefully reinstated soon thereafter. Cormorant numbers will definitely increase in the absence of the program and the birds' proliferation will cause declines in both walleye and yellow perch populations.

In Summary

All people who care about Oneida Lake must bond to preserve and protect this invaluable body of water. We at the Field Station pledge to monitor the lake's biology to assist and enhance their efforts, and to join them in this noble cause.

Constantia Hatchery Happenings

by Carl Rathje

Our hatchery's staff enjoyed great success last year. Because Oneida Lake's ice was completely gone by March 31, workers set twelve trap nets along the shore. Then the weather turned ugly, with nasty winds, snow and cold, but the walleyes were ready to spawn. Hatchery personnel netted 29,817 adult walleyes and collected over 325 million eggs during the next ten days!

Oneida Lake's healthy walleye population impressed all our visitors, as many large adult fish up to ten pounds were captured and thousands more were seen during their Scriba Creek spawning runs. The creek's upper dam made for an excellent observation area and our building's lobby enlightened guests with informational videos, displays, and guides. Our hatchery's spring walleye egg collection is a great time for families, school tours, and special interest groups to visit. Public hours run from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm each day from April to September.

The hatchery raised 164 million walleye fry and stocked them in Oneida in late April. Additionally, eleven other NYS state waters received thirty-four million fry. Approximately one and one-half million were transferred to the South Otselic and Chautauqua fish hatcheries and these facilities nurtured the fry to 400,000 pond-cultured, two-

inch walleye fingerlings for stocking throughout New York. No eggs or fry left the state.

Through May and June, hatchery staff kept busy feeding walleye fry live brine shrimp on a 24-hour schedule. The fish grew rapidly, reaching almost two inches by the end of June. An experimental stocking of 254,000 these fish was started in seven state waters. Black Lake (St. Lawrence County) and Otisco Lake (Onondaga County) received 180,000 and 44,000 respectively. The fish were marked with a special technique that stained their bones; this helps fisheries' biologists collect information on survival and growth. Specific stocking information for any fish species can be found on the NYSDEC website - www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7739.html.

The summer's agenda concluded with the hatchery's raising an additional 38,000 advanced five-inch "fall fingerling" walleyes, which were stocked into the Black River (Lewis County) and Lake Pleasant (Hamilton County). Building on past efforts, we reared and stocked paddlefish and round whitefish in New York as part of the endangered species program. After hatchery



Hatchery technicians net walleyes during the spawning "run."

employees finished their walleye season, they assisted at the State Fair's aquaria exhibit. Our staff also participated in the salmon egg collection at Lake Ontario, the fall Cayuga Lake trout netting and egg collection, and the Adirondack landlocked Atlantic salmon netting and egg collection.

As spring nears, the hatchery prepares for another year. Staff members are busy mending nets, maintaining boats and equipment, ordering supplies, and scheduling workloads. It won't be long before the cold weather vanishes, so don't forget to plan your visit to the hatchery just after ice out, when thousands of adult walleyes enter Scriba Creek to spawn. Give us a call at (315)-623-7311 for further information and remember - "fishing is great in New York State" - because of facilities like ours.

Update: East End Public Launch

by Richard Colesante

Your board of directors has been working diligently to obtain a seasonal, public boat launch on Oneida Lake's east end. We have met several times with the DEC, the State Canal Corporation, officials from the village of Sylvan Beach, Assemblyman David Townsend, Senator David Valesky, and other elected representatives.

After examining five different sites, we believe that the Canal Corporation is willing to open the seasonal launch under the Route 13 Bridge over the Barge Canal at Verona Beach. This site was closed about ten years ago after issues arose involving traffic congestion from summer boat launches. To prevent this problem from recurring, the OLA has proposed launch operation dates from the day after Labor Day to the day before Memorial Day. Up to four cars with trailers can park at this site but, at this point in the discussions, expanded parking remains questionable.

The OLA board of directors will continue to work towards a year-around, public boat launch at the lake's east end. We have long been dedicated to improving public access to Oneida Lake's rich offerings.

Annual Meeting at Cicero-North Syracuse High School Wednesday, April 21, 2010

by Capt. Tony Buffa

The OLA's 65th annual meeting occurs on Wednesday, April 21, at 6 P.M., in the Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium! Plenty of parking is available in the school's lots. This is an extremely important event because Oneida Lake's fishery is in danger!

After more than a decade of cormorant management - including six years of spectacular success by the USDA - Congress chose not to fund the program this year. As of this writing, we are still hoping to see evidence of a firm Congressional commitment to fund it for next year. Oneida Lake needs the support of all our members to make Congress restore the program. This meeting is perhaps the most critical we have held in recent years. Your lake needs YOU to attend--and bring your friends!

Doors open at 6 P.M. Early arrivals can enjoy our numerous exhibits. We are happy to once again announce that Gander Mountain and Bass Pro shops will exhibit new merchandise and donate door prizes.

OLA membership processing begins at 6:15. Although membership is not required

to attend, we encourage you to join forces with us to continue our long tradition of being the largest and most active lake association in the state and perhaps the entire country.

This year's meeting will begin promptly with a short business session at 7:00. Our theme is "Help Restore Funding for Cormorant Control on Oneida Lake." Our agenda contains some fascinating speakers. Biologists from the DEC and researchers from the Shackleton Point Field Station will discuss our fishery's health. Personnel from the USDA Nuisance Control Unit will explain the status of the cormorant management program. The director of the Constantia Hatchery will evaluate this season's walleye spawning "run."

The Association will also award its prestigious "Conservationist of the Year" plaque to an outstanding local environmentalist. The meeting will close with the distribution of door prizes and drawings for three GPS units. One winner will be chosen from the attendees, the other two from our membership at large.

Notice of Board of Directors' Elections

Attention OLA members! Don't miss your chance to vote at the 2010 annual meeting, to be held Wednesday April 21, 2010 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium. Members in good standing who attend the meeting will have the opportunity to vote on the following slate of eight OLA members who are seeking election to three-year terms on the OLA's Board of Directors: James N. D'Imperio, Thomas Giufre, Edwin Olmstead, Thomas Pierce, William Schriever, Kurt Snyder, Matthew Snyder, and Lance Vella.

Attend the meeting and invest in Oneida Lake's future. The lake's environmental integrity is constantly being challenged. There is strength in numbers, however, and the OLA can meet those challenges with your support. Mark your calendars - **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 6:00 PM, CICERO NORTH SYRACUSE HIGH SCHOOL - OLA.**

Oneida Lake's Cormorant Management, 2009

by Martin Lowney, NYS Director - USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services

Wildlife Services conducted cormorant management activities on Oneida Lake for the 12th consecutive year during 2009. Unfortunately, a funding cut necessitated a reduction in the number of hours that our staff hazed cormorants. This reduction produced a four percent increase in the average number of cormorants observed on the lake.

Wildlife Services harassed and dispersed cormorants for fifty-seven days

between April 9 and September 25. Two hundred thirty-five birds were lethally removed from the lake; 16,980 were harassed with 2,345 pyrotechnics during 719 staff hours. No cormorant nesting activity was observed for the second consecutive year.

As an interesting sidelight - one of four cormorants we captured and fitted with a satellite transmitter on Oneida Lake in May 2007 continued to transmit into 2009.



Dan Hojnacki of the U.S.D.A. and Cornell Ph.D. candidate Robin Debruyne band a cormorant.

This bird wintered around Mosquito Lagoon, Florida, from 2007 through 2009. It migrated during the spring and arrived at Oneida Lake on April 29, 2009. The bird remained on Oneida Lake at least until July 26, when the transmitter ceased operation.

Funding for the continuation of cormorant management on Oneida Lake and in New York was eliminated from the federal budget for 2010 and, as a result, management and research ended on September 30, 2009. All future cormorant management and planning efforts are uncertain unless Congress restores funding. This year, Wildlife Services' role will shift from protecting the walleye and yellow perch fisheries, common terns, and native forests to providing technical assistance only.

The OLA Fishing Corner

A Walleye Angler's Starter Kit

by Captain Tony Buffa

Oneida Lake, long revered for its walleye fishery, often frustrates seasoned anglers as well as novices. Both groups can benefit by reviewing the "basics" of walleye angling, information that one might place in an Oneida Lake walleye fishing "starter kit."

The first, and perhaps most important, skill in the kit is knowing how to use a black/purple bucktail jig with a night crawler attached. Jigging accounts for the lion's share of the walleye harvest throughout May and June - and the black/purple pattern works best. Bouncing this jig across the bottom attracts foraging walleyes in any depth.

Jigging is a casting "art" for some anglers, but it can be a challenging chore for beginners. I advise maintaining contact with the bottom and working hard - keep casting - until that first strike. Success, however, depends on the presence of bottom-oriented walleyes and this makes good fish detection equipment is a "must."

The second item in the kit is a "blade bait." This is a metal, vibrating lure fished like a jig, only more vigorously. Popular brands include the XPS Lazer Blade, Heddon Sonar, and Mad River Sports Jigging Blade. You will need the 1/4, 1/2, 5/8, and 3/4 oz. models, depending the depth and mood of the fish. The smaller models vibrate faster, often giving walleyes the motivation to strike. I call this extremely effective lure a "strike instigator" and prefer gold blades.

Our third item is a spinner and worm combo. Spinners and worms, whether drifted or cast and retrieved, account for significant catches of walleyes, particularly during July. In the open water, where

schooled walleyes suspend, trollers score with these combos. Inshore, along weed lines and on structure, the spinner/worm tandem will keep you busy with not only walleyes, but also every other creature that has tails, scales and fins.

Fourth on my list are "crankbaits" - plastic lures that are shaped like minnows. Shallow, medium, and deep diving "bills" direct these plugs through the water. The lures come in floating, jerking, and suspending models. Some even rattle! They're great to retrieve over structure or troll in deep water. Standard colors include chrome/silver, blue/silver, chartreuse, "fretiger," and shad, but other patterns materialize every year. "Rapala" is

probably the most popular brand.

On any given day, one of these weapons from the starter kit can out-fish the others. It's up to you to discover which one is most effective. Have a safe and successful Oneida Lake fishing season.



Robbie Reilly and a nice pickerel he caught with Captain Tony.

Early Duck Days: Oneida Lake Duck Hunting, 1930-1944

by Dr. William Schiess

Last spring's Oneida Lake Bulletin included an article entitled "Angling Memories," in which OLA member and lifelong sportsman Dr. William "Bill" Schiess recounted fishing adventures from his youth. Bill's article received such a warm response that we decided to ask him for more. Thus, as Bill approaches his 90th year and the OLA celebrates its 65th, we're honored to publish some of his recollections of Oneida Lake duck hunting.

My Oneida Lake waterfowling days go back to the 1930s, when my father rented Dunham's and Frenchman's Islands from New York State for duck hunting. We kept a blind on the west end of Dunham's, facing Frenchman's - a spot we knew as

"Deepwater Point." We often pitched a tent on Gravel Point, the southeast point on Dunham's, and hunted Friday through Sunday. Fortunately, Dunham's had a large population of rabbits in those days, providing good fun when the ducks weren't flying.

We used a pair of 16-foot wooden rowboats to transport our equipment. An outboard motor powered one boat, and we used this vessel to haul gear and hunters. We towed the other boat, which was used to carry and put out our decoys. We also rowed this boat to chase the occasional cripple and retrieve downed birds. In those days, it was illegal to chase cripples with a motorized boat and retrievers were not yet

popular with duck hunters. Our favorite duck loads (#4 shot) cost \$1 a box.

Early season flights commonly contained black ducks, teal, and wood ducks. We didn't see local mallards then. There were, however, migratory mallards that flew down in mid-season - we called these birds "redlegs." Local mallards appeared after World War II, when they were introduced to the lake. They quickly and aggressively competed against the black ducks and teal for nesting space and food - and for the female black ducks!

Bluebills were the most plentiful ducks; lesser scaup arrived early and greater scaup later in the season. The major blue-

(Continued on page 8)

Duck Hunting

(Continued from page 7)

bill migration occurred during the first two weeks in November, when thousands traded up and down the lake. Three Mile Bay was a favorite area for scaup hunters. The bluebills remained on Oneida for most of the season and were followed by migrations of redheads, canvasbacks, and whistlers.

Our hunting changed around 1939, when private interests purchased the islands. Ever adaptable, we erected a blind in the shallows northeast of Long Point by a spot we called "Peck's Point" (named for Duncan Peck, a noted 19th century water-fowler), and enjoyed good hunting there. Later, we hunted the McMahon Farm (the site of today's Oneida Shores Park) and that site offered good duck and pheasant shooting until the state bought it.

Today, Oneida Lake still provides outstanding duck shooting at several of the public and private places that Bill named. The Oneida Lake Association works hard to represent its hunting constituents' interests by setting waterfowl seasons and maintaining lake access. We're committed to making sure that today's young Oneida Lake hunters have a chance to collect memories like those Bill Schiess so graciously shares.



A young bill Schiess poses proudly with his limit of Oneida Lake bluebills.

Happy 65th Birthday to the OLA!

This year the OLA commemorates three generations of environmental activism and achievement. Started in 1945 by Dr. Benjamin Sauer (the first president), Fred Kreuzer, Eric Will, Maximilian Frey, T.C. Cramer, and Syracuse Mayor Frank Costello, among others, the fledgling OLA garnered immediate praise in a Herald-Journal editorial:

"All citizens of Central New York and indeed the whole state will approve heartily the decision of sportsmen and others to organize an Oneida Lake Association. Protection of this fine body of water is important not only to fishermen but to the public generally. The lake should be preserved in all its beauty and its waters protected.

When half a thousand citizens assemble to insist on protection of the lake, that is a clear indication to the state how the public feels. We are assured now that resolutions will be introduced in the Legislature this winter for a thorough investigation of conditions and that a strong organization will insist upon full protection of Oneida Lake and needed remedial measures."

Sauer and his directors protected a very different aquatic ecosystem. Today's Association deals with issues such as cormorant predation on critical fish populations; the lake's adjustment to changes induced by invasive species; the effects of expanding shallow water vegetation; the need to preserve public access; and concerns regarding shoreline development. The first OLA worried about illegal walleye netting, the product of a latent "fish pirate mentality." In 1945, walleyes (commonly called "Oneida Lake pike") could still be marketed and this bothered sportspeople tremendously.

Other issues appear prominently in news articles that covered the infant OLA. Fluctuating water levels created major concerns because the Caughdenoy Dam had yet to be upgraded. Several years of slow duck hunting prompted waterfowlers to voice their opinions. Septic drainage into the lake's basin which, combined with Oneida's normal nutrient-rich water, nourished incredible algal blooms, inspired notable alarm. Sylvan Beach members loudly protested what they felt was the over-netting of emerald shiners ("buckeye" minnows) by the state and by private bait dealers.

The politically savvy Sauer and his board saw the need for strong Albany connections. State Senator Vincent R. Corrou and Assemblyman Frank Emma of Utica were the OLA's guests at that first meeting, as was Assemblyman Harlow Bacon of Rome. Bacon and former State Senators Frank Wallace and George Fearon were a part of the OLA's organizing committee. Future Assemblyman Richard Brown of Bridgeport served as one of the first vice-presidents and future Assembly candidate Millard Rogers of Brewerton was active in association affairs.

History has recorded the achievements of those first OLA boards. The legislature banned walleye sales in 1961. The Verona Beach State Park opened in 1947. The Caughdenoy Dam received a needed renovation shortly thereafter. The seeds of wastewater treatment, planted by the founders six decades ago, germinated with sewer district construction in the 1970s. Oneida Lake became a better, safer place because of these leaders and, on this 65th anniversary of the association's genesis, we remember them with admiration and praise.

Blind Date

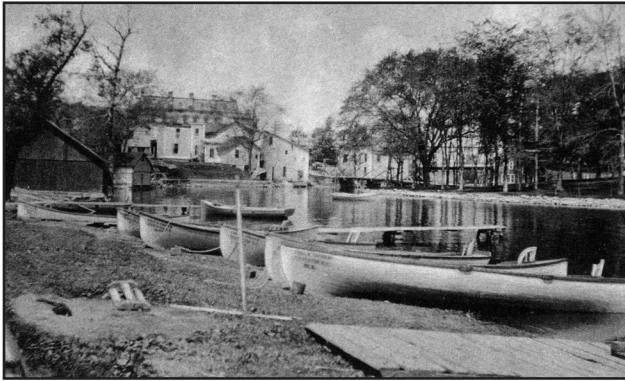
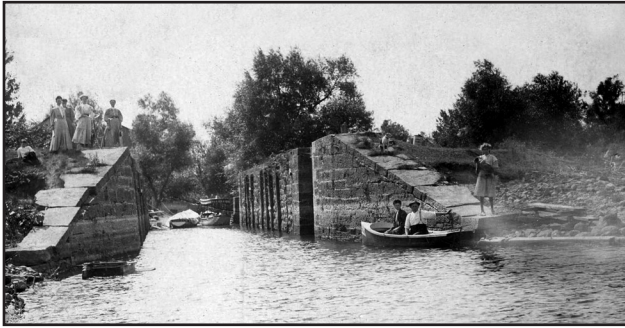
By Steve Schilder



Steve Schilder's Post-Standard cartoons helped the OLA recruit members.

Oneida Lake Photo History Quiz

Each of the "water photos" was taken at an Oneida Lake locale. Name the places (answers below).





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Answers: Top left photo, Oneida Lake Marina, Upper South Bay;
 Bottom left photo, Theissen's Marina, Brewerton; Photo right,
 Oneida Community Clubhouse, Lewis Point.

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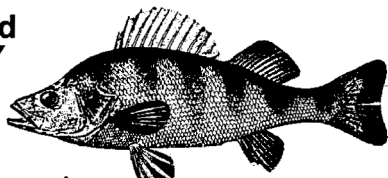
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