

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Summer 2010

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Martin Lowney Named 2010 Conservationist of the Year

The Oneida Lake Association has honored Martin S. Lowney of the U.S. Department of Agriculture as its 2010 Conservationist of the Year. Lowney, the New York State Director for USDA/Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service - Wildlife Services, was honored for his leadership of the state's cormorant management program. The honor was presented before more than 300 OLA members at the organization's 65th Annual Meeting.

The Conservationist of the Year Award is presented annually to the individual who has contributed the most to protecting Oneida Lake's invaluable fishery. Past honorees include retired Congressman James Walsh and retired Cornell Field Station Director John Forney. Lowney was chosen to join their ranks because of his tireless service to Oneida Lake and its people in establishing an environmentally effective, economy enhancing cormorant control program.

"Martin and his tremendous team were the angler's best friend and the cormorants' worst nightmare. Their time on the water was a cost-effective stimulus because it restored New York's most important fishing opportunities and protected local jobs," said Matthew Snyder, OLA president. "Cormorant management under Martin Lowney's leadership was a great example of government at its best."

Although Oneida Lake's cormorant management program began more than a decade ago, the USDA got involved in 2004 to ensure that the program yielded sustainable results. Martin Lowney and his staff established a nationally known model for managing cormorants in multiple locations without creating conflicts with non-anglers or problems in other areas. No cormorants hatched on Oneida Lake

in 2008 or 2009 because of USDA's efforts. Harassment ended fish depredations by huge flocks of migrating cormorants every fall. As a result, the lake's walleye population doubled in the past six years.

The cormorant management program reversed a horrific decline in Oneida Lake's invaluable fishery. Cornell University researchers documented cormorant consumption of millions of walleyes and yellow perch. As the fishery withered, anglers stayed away, and

the lake area's economy suffered. USDA economists analyzed the monetary effects engendered by poor fishing and concluded that the fishery's revival brought about an economic resurgence. Hundreds of jobs have been restored as millions of dollars flowed back into the lake area's economy.

Martin Lowney has been a beacon of expertise for the OLA's Board of Directors. "Before anyone else volunteered to help, Martin led the way and answered all our questions about restoring this great fishery," stated Snyder. "Martin's got plenty of other things he could do, but he recognized cormorant management's value to New Yorkers right away. He demonstrated a deep concern for Oneida Lake's biological integrity."

Since 2007, Lowney has headed USDA's efforts to manage conflicts between wildlife and people - everything from beavers to cormorants, airport geese, and starlings at dairy farms. Previously, he was state director in Virginia for sixteen years and, before that, held USDA posts



Martin Lowney and his Oneida Lake "cormorant crew." Front row (left to right) - Dan Hojnacki, Liz Cranker, Carl Cranker. Back row - John Hatfield, Lowney, David Nicolay, Rick Murphy.

in Mississippi and Alabama. He earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts and a master's degree in wildlife management from Mississippi State University.

A lifetime outdoorsman and accomplished angler, Lowney is a member of The Wildlife Society and one of its certified biologists. He is an active member of the TWS Wildlife Damage Management Working Group and the Wildlife Disease Working Group, as well as a wildlife services representative to the USFWS Atlantic Flyway Council.

The OLA salutes and thanks Martin Lowney for his meritorious service.

Cormorant Update!

The House of Representatives did not restore funding for Oneida Lake's cormorant management program in the 2011 budget. Read the President's Message on page 2 for OLA's response.

President's Message - The Cormorant Crisis

Editor's note: The House of Representatives (which includes local Congressmen Maffei, Owens, and Arcuri) failed to renew funding for Oneida Lake's cormorant program for the second consecutive year. OLA President Matthew Snyder's message responds.

An Open Letter To:

Our elected federal and state legislators, and the appointed officials of the United States Department of Agriculture and the New York State DEC -

I write this on behalf of the thousands of your constituents who count on you to safeguard Oneida Lake.

Do you care about Oneida Lake? Will you work to protect its invaluable fishery? Do you have the ability to protect the lake and its economy from the devastation caused by double-crested cormorants?

Over three thousand members of the Oneida Lake Association have been asking questions like these since the OLA's founding in 1946. Their focus turned to cormorants in the 1990s when the birds decimated Oneida Lake's fisheries. In 2004, Congress provided an effective answer: the USDA's New York State Cormorant Management Program. Its small price tag (less than \$1 million) produced impressive results - a resurgence in fishing and a \$50 million payoff in local revenue and jobs.

Recently, the Oneida Lake Association's membership has worried about whether today's Congress understood this program. Taking the advice of many elected officials, and with the diligent help of our members and partners, we started addressing this concern in early 2009. We asked the Obama administration, Congress, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, our state legislators, and the USDA whether they cared enough about Oneida Lake to protect it from cormorants.

Along the way, we heard some commitments to help - and more than a few excuses. In 2009, our New York congressional delegation was invited to participate in budget hearings where a compromise was reached that protected several other states' cormorant funding. *No one from New York chose to attend.* Thus, funding disappeared for this year's Oneida Lake cormorant program. That loss is an infuriating example of environmental and economic negligence.

One month ago - despite the efforts of our members and partners - we heard "no" again. The House of Representatives ignored Oneida Lake a second time as it failed to approve a funding request to restore cormorant management.

We realize that our Congressmen are working in a tough political climate and that our wildlife management agencies are strapped for cash. But no excuse makes up for the fact that there are twice as many cormorants as last year, flying around unbothered, and thousands more on their way with the fall migration. Their target? Oneida Lake's thriving fishery - and there's no harassment plan in place to prevent the damage!

It's ridiculous that politics has anything to do with cormorant management. It's a low cost program that saves thousands of jobs and pumps millions of dollars into a depressed regional economy. Cormorant management is a hell of a lot better way to spend government dollars than many of the other choices politicians make.

The OLA won't take "no" for an answer on this critical issue. As for commitments to help, we'll believe them when we see elected and appointed officials renew this economically and environmentally sound program.

The thousands of OLA members and the tens of thousands of Oneida Lake users are counting on you, the elected and appointed stewards of the lake, to get it right. If you care about Oneida Lake and the people you serve, you will find a way to get the job done and restore cormorant management.


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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In Memoriam: Robert “Bob” Ripberger, 1918-2010

The Oneida Lake Association joins the New York conservationist community in mourning the passing of longtime director Robert “Bob” Ripberger, who died in Syracuse on May 27.

Bob was a prince of a person and a lion of an environmentalist whose accomplishments brought security and enrichment to Oneida Lake and its people. An OLA director for over forty years, Bob served several terms as the association’s president, chaired numerous committees, and parented many causes to maturity. For decades, he articulately represented the association on the New York State Conservation Council and the Onondaga County Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs. He nurtured a first name basis relationship with state senators, assemblymen, DEC commissioners, and regional biologists, relationships that amplified his effectiveness and broadcast his views to a wide audience. Bob served as the official greeter at OLA summer outings

for movers and shakers whose decisions affect the lake, and his welcoming overtures immediately brought all within his warm, persuasive, charm.

Bob, who retired from Carrier Corporation after a long tenure, taught the New York hunter safety course for over fifty years. He was a founding member of the Central New York Izaak Walton League and the CNY Bowmen. In addition, Bob served on the board of the Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency and organized the first annual children’s fishing derby at the Carpenter’s Brook Fish Hatchery. On the state level, he represented Region 7 on the New York State Conservation Fund Advisory Board.

Bob was a dynamic OLA director. He almost single handedly led the association’s successful crusade to upgrade Oneida Lake’s South Shore Boat Launch. “Led” is an understatement in this case because Bob so aggressively lobbied state legislators and DEC officials that refusal was never their option. In conversation,

Bob always expressed pride in the new launch, but spoke even higher of the Oneida Fish Cultural Station at Constantia, another OLA victory in which he played a major role.

Bob leaves his wife, June; a son, Ron; a granddaughter, Gayle Mueller; and three great-grandchildren - Allyson, Cori, and Jacob. Another son, R. Dale, predeceased him. He also leaves countless friends and associates in his extended Oneida Lake family.

At OLA board meetings, Bob customarily spoke last, adding the calming words of reason and consensus to debate over crucial issues. As an unequalled mentor for novice and veteran directors alike, his was a voice of wisdom that inspired all. Unquestionably, his work made Oneida Lake and its environs a far better place. If the lake could evaluate Bob Ripberger’s life, it would doubtless say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

Chapman Park Pier Expands Fishing Access

Shore-bound Oneida Lake anglers received a tremendous gift when the Town of Sullivan’s Chapman Park Fishing Pier opened on May 15. This jetty, brainchild of Sullivan Councilmen Dave Miner and John Brzuszkiewicz, and the town’s park board, was funded through grants from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and the Town of Sullivan Parks and Recreation Department. The OLA strongly supported the project and sent letters of support to Sullivan that backed the grant application.

The pier stretches 220 feet into prime fish habitat on the lake’s south shore. Summer and early fall fishers will enjoy bass and panfish angling, while spring and late autumn’s sports can target bullheads and walleyes. Rip-rap stone piles, on which the pier rests, will attract forage and the

gamefish that follow. Over six-feet of water on the pier’s northern extremity provides ample depth for all Oneida Lake fish.

Strict rules govern pier conduct. Swimming and jumping from the pier are prohibited, as are jet ski and boat mooring. Pets, bikes, skateboards, and alcohol and tobacco use, are also banned. An adult must accompany children under twelve at all times.

Sullivan charges a day-use non-resident \$3 fee to enter Chapman Park on weekends from mid-June through mid-August, when the swimming area is open. There is no admission during other times. The park offers tennis courts, a basketball court, soccer fields, a

picnic area, pavilion rental, and rest rooms. The fishing pier will be closed from mid-December through March, although the park is often open for ice-fishing access.

Any questions about the pier can be directed to Justin Pokines, the Town of Sullivan’s Parks and Recreation Director, (315) 687-3471.



Investigating the Lake's Bed

by Dr. Eugene Domack, Hamilton College

Cornell University has been conducting valuable research of Oneida Lake's biological mysteries since the 1950s. During the past five years, Hamilton College geologists and students have joined the lake's research community and uncovered some fascinating data.

Oneida's east end navigators may have noticed a strange looking pontoon boat cruising the waters since 2005. This research vessel, named *Continental Drifter*, is moored at the Oneida Lake Marina in Upper South Bay and owned and operated by Hamilton College and its Department of Geology.

Continental Drifter mirrors Hamilton's namesake/mascot "Continental," patriot soldiers during the American Revolution. "Drift(er)" holds both aquatic and geologic significance, hence the title *Continental Drifter*. The boat was custom designed with the help of Ron Renslow at the Oneida Lake Marina and the Hamilton College physical plant staff. The vessel is equipped with state of the art navigation tools, bottom sounding devices, a core winch, and a towing arm for advanced sonar.

Bathymetry involves studying and mapping depths of lakes and oceans. The *Continental Drifter* staff's current agenda entails production of a new, high-resolution, digital bathymetric map of Oneida Lake's bottom, or "bed." This is an ambitious task. The Hamilton research crew has enjoyed two productive summer seasons on the lake, but has only mapped the eastern third of the basin.



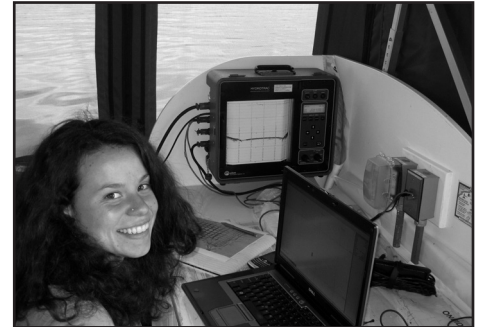
The "Continental Drifter," Hamilton's research vessel.

Our results, however, reveal significant scientific and historical data. The features we mapped on the bottom - channels, submerged shoals, and benches (ridges) - reflect a time when Oneida Lake was dry and Fish Creek wound its way across the floor of the basin, flowing westward. The next time you're navigating the lake, take along a depth map (such as the fishing charts sold in bait and tackle stores) and try to envision the lake bed's contours. Imagine walking across Oneida Lake's floor, strolling by the edge of a meandering river! That's the scene our investigations are attempting to document.

Further mapping, along with sediment core studies, should determine when Oneida Lake's "dry time" occurred, and what climactic factors produced these conditions. The Great Lakes experienced an arid period that brought about lower lake levels some 7000 to 8000 years ago.

Oneida Lake is a smaller, shallower version of the Great Lakes, and it probably responded to the same environmental change.

Hamilton College researchers eagerly anticipate further Oneida Lake investigations and look forward to sharing their results with the Oneida Lake Association.



Hamilton student Manique Talaia-Murray records data about Oneida Lake's bed, using a digital echo sounder.

To Rent a Boat

The OLA's website (www.oneidalakeassociation.org) often receives anglers' questions about boat rentals. The Bulletin staff recently canvassed the lake's periphery and discovered three businesses that lease fishing boats. Details regarding these marinas appear below. The OLA apologizes to any liveries that its research inadvertently missed.

Anglers' Bay (www.fishoneida.com, 315-675-3662), on Route 49 between Cleveland and Jewell, offers several deals. G3 fishing boats, equipped with 8-9.9 hp motors, rent for \$35 for four hours and \$70 for the day. Gas is included in the price. For larger groups, Anglers' Bay leases a 16-foot pontoon boat (seven person capacity) for \$185/day and a 24-foot pontoon craft (nine person capacity) for \$245. Customers pay for gas for each of these vessels. An attractive mid-week special markets the smaller pontoon boat for \$125/day. Anglers' Bay also offers bait, tackle, gas, ice, boat launching, and cottage rentals. Peter Rich, the marina's owner, is a longtime OLA supporter and *Bulletin* advertiser.

Marion Manor (www.onenterprises.com/content.php?key=18, 315-762-4810), at the corner of Routes 13 and 31 at Upper South Bay, maintains three 14-foot aluminum rental boats, all equipped with 9.9 hp motors. Customers pay \$65/day and a \$60 deposit. The marina features bait, tackle, launch facilities, gas, dockage, and a marine mechanic.

Charley's Boat Livery (www.oneidalakefishin.com, 315-668-6341) is located on McCloud Road in West Monroe (Toad Harbor). Owners Henry and Heather Gass boast a fleet of nine 14-foot Blue Fin aluminum rental boats,

(Continued on page 5)

Rent a Boat

(Continued from page 4)

all powered by 9.9 hp motors. Charley's charges \$60/day, with a \$75 deposit. Customers can rent a rowboat for \$10/outing. The marina features cabins, camper hookups, a boat launch, dockage, bait, and tackle.

Contemporary Oneida Lake boat liveries are a remnant of what was once a thriving cog in the regional economy. Nineteenth and early twentieth century Oneida Lake hotels commonly included usage of rugged wooden boats, crafted by the Damon family of Bridgeport or the Emmons or Milton families of Brewerton, as a part of their customers' package. Many boat liveries served Oneida's anglers as late as the 1960s and 1970s. Among popular liveries were Theisen's of Brewerton, Therre's of Lower South Bay, Tripp's of Constantia, Sawner's and Yahnke's of Sylvan Beach, Hamlin's of Messenger's Bay, Saville's of Maple Bay, Hottinger's of Lakeport, Hughes' Harbor of Upper South Bay, and Fern's of North Bay. Clarence App's livery in Cleveland became a legendary stopping point for north shore fishermen. App, a Syracuse University trained engineer, built the marina himself, gave every customer a detailed map of nearby fishing grounds (with hotspots marked with buoys that he set), wore a necktie every workday, and entertained regulars with colorful stories. Visits to App's often became extraordinary adventures into Oneida Lake history.

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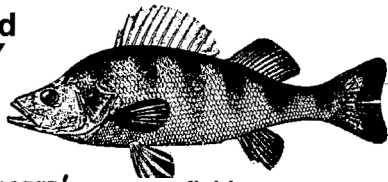
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