

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2003

The Economics of Oneida Lake Fi\$hing

By Jack Henke

Good fishing produces positive economic returns. Excellent fishing can bring prosperity. But, if a fishery declines...?

Fishing stimulates the economy in many ways. Anglers lease boat slips in marinas. Fishers spend money on gasoline, oil, and boating supplies. Out-of-area anglers rent motel rooms and book lodging at cabin/campground resorts. Fishermen and their families patronize restaurants and purchase supplies at quick-stop markets. Boat dealers and bait/tackle shops thrive in areas where angling excels. Real estate prices rise and hold their values on waterways known for excellent fishing. A region's economy can experience an era of good feeling when game fish bite hard and often.

The Oneida Lake area's economy prospered through the early 1990's. However, businesses that derived revenues from anglers began to suffer toward the latter part of that decade, despite the national boom, and continued to experience financial woes into the present century. This economic downturn directly coincided with a precipitous drop in the lake's walleye and perch populations, a decrease that was heavily influenced by double-crested cormorant predation.

Cormorants are the leading cause for mortality among Oneida Lake's 1 and 2 year old walleyes and perch. The vast majority of walleyes that reach their first birthday and perch that attain age 2 would normally survive to adulthood. These fish would enhance the lake's angling and, consequently, the lake area's economy. Currently, cormorants consume at least a third of every year's class of walleyes, and hundreds of thousands (sometimes millions) of perch besides. Losses like these

keep Oneida's walleye and perch populations at depressed levels.

Statistics reveal the economic ills that lower fish populations have produced. Oneida Lake's most famous walleye event is the annual opening weekend Cicero Lions' Club Tournament, a wonderful happening that raises funds for area charities. Over 3700 anglers entered the tourney in 1990, over 4300 in 1991, and over 3500 in 1992. Oneida's grand fishing drew crowds aplenty. By decade's end, however, numbers had changed. Around 1700 entered in 1998, 1400 in 1999, and under 1300 by 2000. In 1991, over 450 people who lived 50 miles or more from the lake enlisted in the tourney. This included over 200 from Pennsylvania. By 2000, the 450 had waned to 150 and only 70 Keystone State anglers participated.

Fewer anglers equaled far less spending. The lake area's economy suffered. Note these examples.

Brewerton Sports is the oldest bait and tackle store on Oneida Lake. Started by Chuck and Millard Rogers in 1946, the store has long prided itself in dispensing quality fishing products and reliable angling advice. The 1990's saw the store's bait income drop by 70%. Tackle revenues fell by 60%. Workers at Brewerton Sports once handled as many as 25 phone calls per day related to angling advice. Now, few callers ask how or where the fish are "hittin."

During the 1990's, a mere fifteen marinas around the lake lost a total of over 500 dock rental customers whose primary interest was fishing. The *Bulletin* canvassed the owners of these marinas and every one of them stated that the decline in walleye and perch angling was the reason why their

former patrons left.

Five hundred boat owners, plus their families and friends, created one heck of a lot of spending – spending that left the Oneida Lake area's economy.

Statistics tell a story, but it doesn't take a statistician or research scientist to judge the impact of a declining fishery on the lake area. The tragedy unfolds before any alert observer's eyes. Oneida Lake's bays and tributaries were often jammed with boats and shore anglers on past opening walleye season weekends. Now, there's plenty of room. One observer counted over a hundred boats on opening day at Upper South Bay in the early 1990's. Last year there were about 25. Fishing spots like Shackleton Shoals, Buoys 109 and 113, the North Shore drop-off from Cleveland to North Bay, the Sylvan Beach rock pile, and the deep weed beds of Oneida's bays were once heavily used on fair-weather spring, summer, and early fall days. Now, an angler can get a bit lonely at these places.

These are a few examples. There are plenty more.

Financial losses directly related to the Oneida Lake fishery's decline doubtless total millions of dollars. But the issue runs deeper than that. There's an intangible, human loss that occurs when a fishery suffers. Chuck Rogers, founder of Brewerton Sports and an OLA member since the Association's inception, captured this loss in last summer's *Bulletin*. Rogers wrote:

"My grandson is amazed when I tell him stories about what Oneida Lake used to produce. He may never have a chance to experience this. Cormorants have stolen a great legacy from the people."

President's Message

I am taking this opportunity to review the events of my "watch" as President. I believe that we have made great progress in many important areas. We have not, however, resolved several questions. These issues may become long-term problems.

The OLA's efforts concerning these controversies have engendered more movement than any similar attempts by any other organizations. In many cases, we are the "hammer that makes things happen." This is a noteworthy achievement for you, the members, and for your Board of Directors.

Cormorants - I believe that we have made great progress toward controlling the birds but, at this writing, there has been no expansion of the DEC's harassment program. I have been informed of potential changes and they may be immediately forthcoming. Significant time and effort have been focused on this problem. We will be dealing with it, in depth, at the Annual Meeting.

We must never relax the pressure here. Cormorants have devastated our fishery and we must not rest until their effects have been eliminated.

Our Walleye Population - It appears that the lake contains an excellent year class of walleyes. Cornell reports that there were 600,000 yearlings in 2002. This demonstrates beyond a doubt that Oneida Lake is capable of producing.

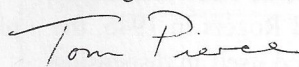
Cornell also predicts, however, that this class will be reduced to 120,000 by the time they reach adulthood in 2006. The primary cause? Cormorant predation. That's an environmental tragedy. More data on fish populations will be discussed at the Annual Meeting.

Water Chestnuts - The Association has encouraged mechanical harvesting. Our members have been involved in plant-pulling events. Chestnut numbers, however, keep increasing. The latest information reveals that chemical treatment, proven effective and safe in other areas, has been sanctioned by the DEC. A ray of hope now sheds welcome light on a potentially severe problem. The chestnut issue will also be aired at our meeting.

Water Levels - So far, so good. All policy changes must be balanced between Oneida Lake's ecological health and the needs of our residential community. Lake levels must be kept high enough to insure the sanctity of its vital food web, while protecting property owners' interests. The Association's continued vigilance is mandatory.

Thank you for allowing me to be your President. Your support and an excellent Board of Directors have made an occasionally frustrating experience tolerable.

For the good of Oneida,



Thomas Pierce
President - Oneida Lake Association

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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Nominating Petitions

Under the OLA bylaws, members may nominate officers and directors. A petition, that is to be signed by at least fifty (50) OLA members in good standing, must state the name of a member or members that the petitioners wish to nominate as officer or director. The petition must be served on any present OLA officer no later than three (3) days before the Annual Meeting. It will be

mandatory that the names on any such petition be placed on the OLA Nominating Committee list with the persons nominated by the committee, all in alphabetical order, for election at the Annual Meeting.

The OLA Secretary will make the membership list available for inspection by any OLA active member on request.

The slate of officers nominated for 2003

reads: President - Kurt Snyder, Vice Presidents - Thomas Pierce, Bill Schriever, and Richard Colesante, Secretary - Thomas Giufre, Assistant Secretary - Robert Gang, and Treasurer - Edwin Olmstead.

The Directors nominated for terms beginning this year are George Angeloro, Anthony Buffa, Robert Cote, Robert Ripberger, and Jack Henke.

Editorial

Years pass, the numbers vary, but the tragic story remains the same.

Cornell biologists estimated that double-crested cormorants ate 32,000 walleyes that were age 2 and older during 2002. The birds also eliminated around 56,000 yearling walleyes from Oneida's ecosystem. In addition, 95,000 yellow perch age 2 and older and 129,000 yearling perch fell victim to cormorant predation. Total consumption was estimated at 95,000 walleyes and 246,000 perch.

Cormorants ate fewer walleyes and perch because, in part, gizzard shad and other fish created a protective buffer. This was a year of "lighter" predation. Lighter, yes - but unacceptable to anyone who values Oneida Lake as the incomparable aquatic resource it has been in the past, and can be again.

We know what heavy predation means. Look at 2001. Over 350,000 walleyes and

2,000,000 yellow perch became part of the birds' diet. This can happen again under current conditions. Other years have yielded similar, infuriating numbers.

When will New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation grasp the situation's gravity? Oneida Lake's biological potential is equaled by few comparable bodies of water. A biologically productive lake translates into a strong, viable economic resource. We're in a recession. Our state needs every economic stimulus it can get. The DEC can - and should - do much more to combat cormorant predation on Oneida Lake.

Never has there been a more urgent moment for the Oneida Lake Association's membership to mobilize their every resource. It's time to make our voices loud and clear, to register our disgust with the DEC's current cormorant management policies. These practices continue to allow

the birds to devastate what department officials once proudly boasted as one of "the best walleye lakes in the country."

What can you, as an OLA member, do?

Last winter, the Association initiated a letter-writing campaign in which many of you wrote to your New York State Senators and Assemblypersons. You voiced your concerns about the cormorant problem. If you haven't already written, do it now. Addresses are on page 5 of this *Bulletin*. Every letter constitutes an important step forward.

Secondly, come to the Annual Meeting. Our theme is "Oneida Lake - Cormorant Free in 2003." We plan to expand this fight to save our lake. We'll be detailing our plans at the meeting.

April 23, 2003. Cicero-North Syracuse High School. 7 p.m. We know that you care. Be there.

Cormorants, Oneida Lake, and the OLA - A Chronology of Events

We thought you might be interested in some salient details from the Oneida Lake cormorant story. The *Bulletin* staff assembled this chronology so that OLA members might be able to quickly understand and assess events surrounding the current problem.

Summer-Fall 1984 - Cornell biologists observe the first recorded double-crested cormorant nest on Wantray Island.

September 1988 - Island habitat and common tern protection begins on the lake.

October 1992 - New York State proposes the formation of a cormorant task force.

September 1994-May 1995 - This task force recommends non-lethal harassment of Oneida Lake's fall cormorant population.

September 1998 - Hazing of Oneida Lake's cormorants begins. Population estimates of the lake's birds range from 2,800 - 3,200. These numbers include resident birds and migrants.

June 1999 - The Cornell Field Station releases data showing that cormorants have a substantial impact on Oneida Lake's walleye and yellow perch populations. The OLA *Bulletin* begins a series of articles concerning that impact.

November 1999 - The United States Fish and Wildlife Service announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement regarding cormorants. Public scoping sessions will occur throughout the country.

December 1999 - The OLA issues an official position statement on cormorant policy for Oneida Lake asking for professional controls for the lake's summer and fall populations.

Spring 2000 - OLA Directors present the Association's position at the Fish and Wildlife Service's scoping sessions in Watertown and Syracuse. The Association submits a detailed report regarding

the birds' impact on Oneida Lake's fish populations. This document cites substantial evidence of the dramatic economic decline experienced by lake area businesses as fish populations plummeted.

Fall 2001 - The Fish and Wildlife Service publishes a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on Double-crested Cormorant Management recommending expanded state powers for cormorant control.

Spring 2002 - OLA Directors attend a Fish and Wildlife Service meeting and present the Association's comments about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Spring 2002 - The OLA petitions New York State's DEC to move up the starting date for cormorant harassment from the Tuesday following Labor Day to August 15. DEC officials approve the OLA's request.

Summer 2002 - DEC officials reverse themselves and deny the OLA's request for expanded harassment. Officials cite potential problems with terns. Hazing begins after Labor Day.

Winter 2003 - The OLA initiates a letter-writing campaign whereby members voice concerns over cormorant depredations to New York State legislators. The Madison County Board of Supervisors passes a resolution petitioning the state to effectively control Oneida Lake's cormorant population.

Spring 2003 - The OLA's Annual Meeting theme is "Oneida Lake - Cormorant Free in 2003."

The OLA Fishing Corner

Just Keep Jigging

by Captain Tony Buffa

What will the 2003 Oneida Lake spring fishery offer? Anticipation of the walleye opener evokes mixed emotions, given last decade's history. Excited about opening day? Of course - this day celebrates what we enjoy, regardless of the catch. Perhaps at times we complained like spoiled fishing brats from the 1980's, accustomed to consistent limit catches of walleyes, as well as pails of yellow perch. Let's be grateful that we had the opportunity to share in those days. Now, it's time to show just how loyal we are to the sport of fishing, and to Oneida Lake.

So much fishing is measured in terms of tangibles - inches, pounds, catch numbers. How about fishing itself? The experience has value that transcends any statistics. Whatever happened to the notion that fishing provided an opportunity for families to savor time together while enjoying a wonderful natural resource? Have we allowed ourselves to be manipulated by "dot this and dot that" to the extent that our latest fishing experience has been with a "mouse," not a rod?

Enough for philosophy. You can bet that I'll be there on opening day, rod in hand and lake in heart. There will be walleyes to be caught, albeit not as many as in previous decades, but enough to provide challenging sport and reasonable opportunity. I approach this season with eagerness, fueled by the jigging experiences we had during 2002.

I found walleyes receptive to jigs, whether it was in the shallows or the deep, from late May through July. At times the fish bit so well that we handled 20 to 30 walleyes per outing. I said "handled," not kept. Many fish measured between 15 to 17.5 inches. With the current abundance of buckeyes and shad in the lake I expect most of these walleyes to have crossed that legal 18" line by now.

The jig is a versatile lure. It can be fished at all depths, fast or slowly, on the bottom or off, with hair or plastic, with worm or minnow, with mono or fire line, with or without stinger hook, with vertical or horizontal movement, with anchored or adrift boat. Do I like jigging? And how!



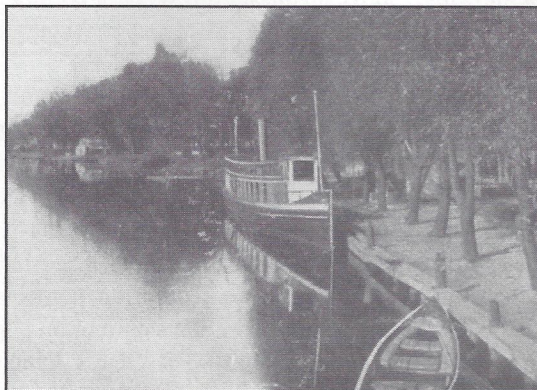
The happy results of Oneida Lake jigging.

I live and die by the jig on Oneida Lake. Mostly live - because on any given day there exists a location with walleyes willing to hit a particular color, with a certain movement, at a calculated depth. Fishing is just another form of problem solving. It has a variable mix that changes daily. Yesterday's solution quite often fails to answer today's problem - and that's where you come in. Every fishing outing starts with questions like "Where should I go?" and "What will I do - drift bait, troll, cast lures, or jig?"

Now you know my answer. Good luck to all on this season's opener. Try a little jigging, if you haven't already. It works.

Oneida Lake Photo History Quiz

These photos were taken at approximately the same Oneida Lake locale. Where is it and when were they taken? Answer on page 8.



OLA Presses Pals on Cormorant Issue

Last winter, your Board of Directors sent the following letter to elected officials whose districts included all or parts of the Oneida Lake region. We've put the cormorant issue on the front burner and we intend to keep it there until it's resolved.

The Oneida Lake Association's thousands of members need your help! For nearly sixty years, we have worked with local, state and federal agencies, and the public, to preserve and protect Oneida Lake. A substantial percentage of your constituents and taxpayers live on the lake, recreate on the lake, and enjoy a business benefit from the lake.

ONEIDA LAKE IS UNDER ATTACK BY CORMORANTS!!! They have decimated fish populations in a fishery that was once one of the best in the U.S. They have altered the historical predator-prey balance so dramatically that the lake is now more vulnerable to other invasive species. They have caused a monumental collapse of business revenues and taxes. They are stealing the future of the lake from us all.

The Association has been working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture since the early 1990's, trying to stop cormorant devastation. WORKING WITHIN THE SCOPE OF EXISTING FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REGULATIONS, summer and migrating fall populations of cormorants were progressively reduced. This allowed some restoration of island and shoreline habitat areas, improved nesting success of endangered common terns, and reduced mortality on fish populations. The O.L.A. has long been a proponent of the revitalization of the lake's common tern populations and we feel that a return to the walleye and yellow perch numbers that existed before the invasion of cormorants is critical for the people and businesses in the area. We were hopeful that there would be continuing progress in reducing cormorant numbers on the lake.

We were blind-sided in August, 2002 by the D.E.C. Commissioner's decision to delay the fall harassment until the first week of September, rather than the third week of August, a date frame that the D.E.C. previously committed to. Just a small thing to bureaucratic administrators. However, a decision that resulted in thousands of birds consuming tons of fish, and further habitat destruction, during a short period when cormorants should have been moved off the lake. We were given the lame excuse that harassment threatened terns, even though this activity is conducted by U.S.D.A. professionals that are qualified and accustomed to resolving issues involving one specie without detriment to others.

The Oneida Lake Association asks that you add your voice to ours by contacting D.E.C. Commissioner Erin Crotty at 518-402-8540, or write to her at New York D.E.C. , 25 Broadway, Albany, New York, 12233. Insist that the Department remove the cormorants from Oneida Lake, using methods currently permissible and acceptable under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidelines. This action on your part will demonstrate your support and interest in Oneida Lake, and the economy and environment of your constituents. Please let us know what she says.

The Oneida Lake Association, Board of Directors

If you haven't already written your representatives, PLEASE DO IT NOW! Your lake needs your voice! AND if they don't respond to your letter, write them again!

Governor

Hon. George Pataki
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

State Senators

James W. Wright, 48th Dist.
317 Washington Street
Watertown, NY 13601

Nancy Lorraine Hoffman, 49th Dist.
State Office Building, Room 801
333 E. Washington Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

John A. DeFrancisco, 50th Dist.
State Office Building, Room 804
333 E. Washington Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

State Assemblymen

William A. Magee, 111th Dist.
214 Farrier Ave., Box 417
Oneida, NY 13421

David R. Townsend, 115th Dist.
1310 Utica Street - Box 906
Oriskany, NY 13424

Jeff Brown, 121st Dist.
c/o Mackenzie Hughes
101 S. Salina Street
Syracuse, NY 13221

Sturgeon Through the Ice - an Oneida Lake First

Imagine Gary Worosylo, veteran angler and OLA member, jigging for walleyes near the channel in the lake's eastern basin on a very frosty late January morn. Worosylo feels a slight bump and sets the hook into what feels like bottom. Only this "bottom" starts moving.

John Pitaressi, outdoor writer for the *Utica Observer-Dispatch*, reported the catch in his weekly column. Pitaressi, a dedicated friend of Oneida Lake, described what happened after the sturgeon struck:

"Worosylo battled the fish for about 20 minutes and he had to be careful, since he was using 8-pound test line.

When he finally pulled the beast up through the ice, he found that it was a lake sturgeon - 47 inches long and weighing who knows what.

'I didn't have a scale,' Worosylo said, 'I guess it weighed about 45 pounds. We had all we could do to get it back in the lake through a 10-inch diameter hole. It was huge...'

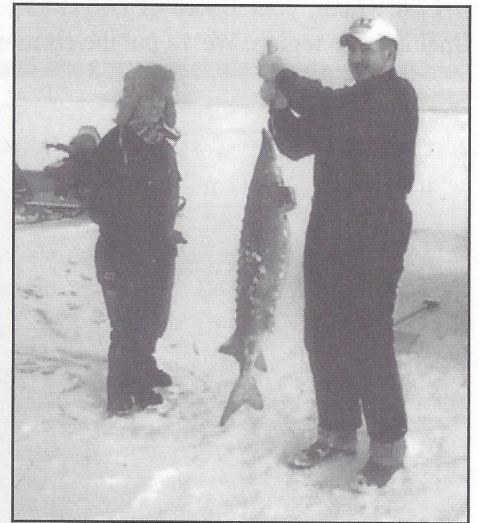
Worosylo hooked up with the sturgeon while jigging a Kastmaster, baited with a minnow. He was fishing in 32 feet of

water at the time. He credited his reel - a Daiwa 700 Tournament Series - and rod - a custom-made, walnut-handled model crafted by a friend - with helping him land the fish."

The *Bulletin* contacted Cornell Field Station biologist Randy Jackson, who specializes in lake sturgeon research. Jackson has recorded statistics from numerous sturgeons that the Station netted during the past few seasons. He praised the success of the sturgeon restoration program, citing the fish's outstanding growth rate. Oneida Lake's zebra mussels and plentiful bottom-dwelling invertebrates provide sturgeons with a rich diet that encourages rapid growth.

Jackson stated that Worosylo's fish was released into Oneida in 1995, the restoration program's initial stocking year. He speculated that the fish weighed slightly over 30 pounds and that it was probably a female. Jackson also noted that Field Station nettings commonly yield sturgeons and that Oneida Lake's population is extremely viable.

In light of other difficulties that the lake



Jared Williams and Jessica Worosylo proudly pose with Gary Worosylo's impressive lake sturgeon.

has endured in the past decade, the sturgeon saga is most heartening. If you catch one of these living fossils, remember an important rule - handle it gently and release it as quickly as possible. If all anglers adhere to this axiom, Gary Worosylo's thrilling experience will surely become more commonplace.

Ripples...

Come to the Annual Meeting! The cormorant issue is critical to our lake's future. OLA members need to be active participants - now!

The OLA will hold its annual "Take A Kid Fishing" Derby on June 28-29. Derby headquarters will be Brewerton Sports. There will also be an entry station at Tag-a-Soke Campgrounds at Fish Creek Landing, near Sylvan Beach. Mark your calendars - it's a fun event!

When the *Bulletin* reaches you, spring panfishing should be "hot." Bullheads bite in the bays and tributaries, sunfish, bluegills, and crappies fill marina basins, and jack perch spawn in the Barge Canal near Sylvan Beach. Spring fishing can provide a spectacular family outing!

The Fish Creek Atlantic Salmon Club is working to restore Atlantic salmon to the Oswego River system. Fry have been stocked in the East Branch of Fish Creek below the Boyd Dam and in the Mad River tributary of the West Branch of Fish Creek. The club requests that anglers report catches of these fish. Just call 1-888-531-5080. Details such as length, weight, location, tackle used and, if possible, a photo would be appreciated.

Constantia now boasts a library. Community volunteers opened this public treasure last summer in the building that formerly housed Fleet Bank. The library has an excellent "start-up" collection that is being steadily increased. It's situated in a beautiful spot and is well worth a visit.

Keep white perch. First, they're a very tasty fish. Second, the lake is full of them and their numbers may approach those of the more coveted yellow perch. Whites are commonly found on or near rock reefs in summer. Oneida Creek and the Barge Canal along the lake's East End are spring "hot spots." Whites are aggressive, hard-fighting, kid-pleasing fish. You'll enjoy them.

**Don't Forget -
Take A Kid
Fishing Derby
June 28-29**

Water Chestnut Alert!

We have described Oneida Lake's impending water chestnut problem in past *Bulletins*. The situation hasn't magnified to a critical state yet, but it has the potential for full-blown catastrophe. Water chestnuts multiply quickly. They spread through shallow bays, effectively choking navigation, as well as aquatic life. They have the capacity to seriously damage bodies of water.

If you find water chestnuts in Oneida Lake, immediately report them. In Madison County, call Scott Ingmire, County Planning Department, (315)-366-2498. For Oswego County, call John DeHollander, County Soil and Water Conservation Department, (315)-592-9663. In Onondaga County, call Amy Samuels, Cornell Cooperative Extension, (315) 424-9485 ext. 233.

The OLA helped spearhead the crusade against these destructive plants since they were first observed near the Route 81 bridge. Cornell Cooperative Extension has also taken up the fight and, last year, sponsored several plant-pulling outings at Brewerton and Long Point. Amy Samuels heads CCE's chestnut task force and she contributed the following article for the *Bulletin*:

"Over the past year there has been an increased effort by individuals and organizations to harness the water chestnut infestation on Oneida Lake. This summer there will be new and 'old' ways for people to get involved.

First, the new. Think of it as the "water chestnut watch patrol." When you are out on your boat, walking the shoreline, or sitting on your dock, look around for water chestnuts. Chestnuts have been found near Theisen's Marina, the Route 81 Fishing Access Site, Long Point, and Big Bay. If you find other chestnut growths, you can call the Madison County or Oswego County numbers listed above. Or, you can report it to our CCE office in Onondaga County.

Reporting can be done several ways. You can call me, Amy Samuels, at



A water chestnut in late July.

(315) 424-9485 ext. 233. You can send a postcard or letter to the Water Chestnut Task Force, c/o Onondaga County, 220 Herald Place, 2nd Floor, Syracuse, NY 13210. You can report via the net by linking to this web address - www.cce.cornell.edu/onondaga.

Please include your name, number, and the location of the sighting. Be specific. If you have a GPS unit, send the coordinates. And, if you can, pull as many plants as possible. Pull all parts of the plant and carry them well away from the water.

Once again, Brewerton Boy Scout Troop 3112 will 'take on' the chestnut infestation at Long Point. Last year, with help from some additional volunteers, the boys removed all of the chestnuts present at the site. They could use your support again. The pulling session has been tentatively scheduled for June 16. Please come and lend a hand. For full



Brewerton Boy Scouts pull chestnuts at Theisen's Marina.



details, call ahead - (315) 424-9485 ext. 233.

Oneida Lake's water chestnut problem must be addressed annually. Only through cooperation of residents, government agencies, and concerned citizens can these destructive plants be controlled."

Annual Meeting at Cicero-North Syracuse High School

April 23, 2003

On Wednesday April 23, the OLA will hold its 58th annual meeting at the Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium. Doors will open at 6 p.m. Early attendance is encouraged so that you can enjoy our numerous exhibits.

You will be able to register for the annual Cicero Lions Club Walleye Derby at the meeting. Extra prizes are included for derby winners who are OLA members. Membership renewals and new sign-ups for the Association begin at 6:15 p.m. You need not be a member to attend the meeting.

This year's meeting will begin promptly

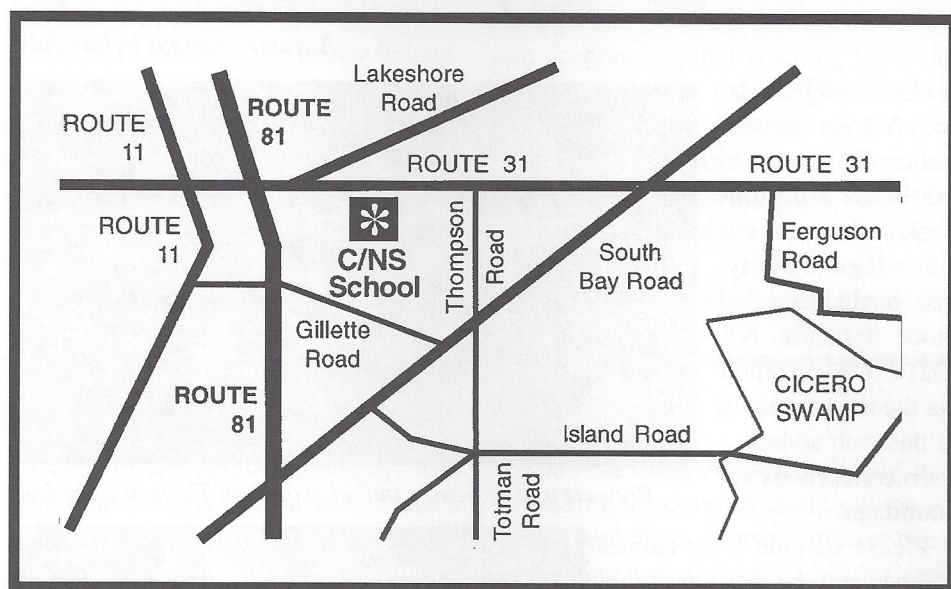
at 7 p.m. with a short business session. Our meeting's theme is "ONEIDA LAKE - CORMORANT FREE IN 2003." You can expect biologists to update the status of our fishery and the walleye spawning statistics from the Constantia Hatchery.

A special presentation on "invaders" will provide us with the opportunity to be on the alert for new exotic organisms and fishes. This is a "must" meeting to attend. The OLA needs your support. Come and share in the action plan to enlist our elected officials in our efforts to eradicate Oneida Lake's cormorants. Your fishing future and the well being of Oneida Lake are at stake.

Mark your calendar -**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23-6 P.M. - OLA at CNS!**

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

We encourage you to join us for an evening of information and OLA solidarity.



Directions to C-NS High School Route 31, Cicero

From the Thruway

Take the Thruway to Route 81. Take Route 81 north to the Cicero exit. Turn right onto Route 31. The school is about 1/2 mile away on the right.

From the East

Simply get to Route 31. Follow it west. The high school will be on the left just before you enter Cicero village.

From the West

Get to Route 31, to Cicero village, continue east under Route 81's overpass, and the high school will be on the right, about 1/2 mile away.

Walsh Aids Oneida Lake

Congressman James Walsh has obtained a \$500,000 grant from the Department of Agriculture to manage cormorants in Central New York, with priority being given to Oneida Lake and surrounding lakes.

This program can help maintain and expand existing cormorant management on Oneida Lake that reduces the number of fall migrating birds, while minimizing effects on other birds and on people. The grant can help reduce Oneida Lake cormorants' nesting population. The funds will also provide technical and operational aid to reduce cormorant conflicts on other area lakes.

The OLA thanks Congressman Walsh for caring about Oneida Lake.

Enjoy safe boating -
observe the
"rules of the road"

Answer to page 4 history quiz:
Sylvan Beach harbor in the 1890's.

Hatchery Happenings

by Richard Colesante and Mark Babenzien

Fish production went smoothly during the 2002 season. Our hatchery's staff handled about 31,100 adult walleyes from April 1 through April 10. The 2001-2002 winter saw little ice forming on Oneida Lake and this made us initially wary because we didn't know how it would affect the walleyes' spawning run. There was no impact, however, and the fish spawned on schedule.

We collected about 320 million eggs, the normal yearly requirement. We only used 4,300 females to accomplish this. Normally, almost 6,000 females are needed to collect this quantity. Our lake's female walleyes are much larger now (many weigh between five and eight pounds) and larger fish produce more eggs.

Early warm weather in mid-April caused the eggs to begin hatching, only one week after our last collection. About three weeks are required during most

years. A total of 162 million newly hatched fry were stocked in Oneida Lake during late April. About 28 million were stocked in other state waters.

Advanced fingerling production was very successful. About 260,000 walleyes that measured nearly six inches were ready by late September. About 160,000 of these were stocked into 12 State waters, including Black Lake, Cayuta Lake, Crystal Lake, and Eaton Brook Reservoir. The remaining 100,000 were held over winter at the Oneida and South Otselic Hatcheries. They will be stocked this spring, should it ever come. This has been one long winter!

In addition, the hatchery reared about 800 large fingerling paddlefish during the 2002 season. These were placed in the Allegheny Reservoir. About 6,000 round whitefish fingerlings were also raised and stocked into three Adirondack ponds. Both

of these species are endangered and New York is trying to reestablish them. We didn't have lake sturgeon eggs last year and that negated this aspect of our species restoration program.

The hatchery is ready for production in 2003. We expect to have lots of walleyes, paddlefish and, hopefully, lake sturgeons for visitors to enjoy. Our visiting room now sports bulletin boards where anglers can display photos of their catches. The boards would be great spots to show your kids' fishing accomplishments!

Be sure to stop by and visit us. We expect the walleye run to be delayed, possibly occurring in mid to late April. The hatchery is open for visitors from April through September, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Full operations will begin shortly after Oneida Lake's ice-out. If you plan to visit us, please call first to be sure the "action" has started. Our number is 623-7311.

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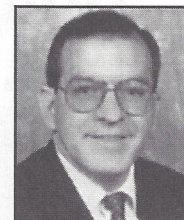
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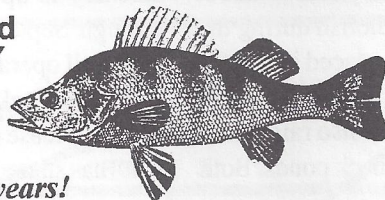
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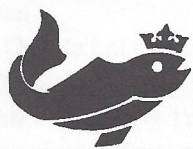
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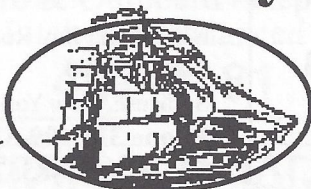
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