

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2012

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

A Busy Winter for the OLA

by Matt Snyder

Since the last *Oneida Lake Bulletin* arrived at your homes, your board of directors has been hard at work on a variety of projects to protect Oneida Lake's fishing. As we welcome spring and prepare for our annual meeting on May 2, the board is proud to share with our readers a sampling of these efforts.

Cormorant Control

Thanks to Congresswoman Ann Marie Buerkle and her colleagues, and led by the OLA members' passionate outcries, the House of Representatives passed a bill last year that would have restored cormorant control funding. Unfortunately, gridlock between Congress and the Obama administration stopped the bill's progress in the Senate and, in this election year, the program shows little sign of life.

However, the OLA is taking legislative and hands-on action to combat cormorants in other ways. Among these are:

1 - Encouraging counties around the lake to pass resolutions that implore federal officials to put cormorant control ahead of politics. To date, the Oswego and Madison County Legislatures have unanimously passed such resolutions. Similar legislative language will be introduced in Oneida and Onondaga Counties.

2 - Meeting with officials from Cornell University and federal agencies to share expertise and ideas for making volunteer hazing programs more effective.

3 - Working directly with the DEC and other partners on fall migration hazing efforts. A majority of the OLA's board of directors, and several OLA members, volunteered for these DEC-led efforts during the last two years.

4 - Working with Congressional staff to support legislation that gives more cormorant-control authority to New York and other states.

5 - Submitting official comments supporting cormorant control to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"As always, the OLA's greatest strength - an active, engaged membership - is our best way to keep in tune with the challenges facing Oneida Lake."

Angling Regulations

Since 2005, under pressure from fishing tournament organizers, the DEC has considered an expansion of Oneida Lake's bass season into March and April (after the lake thaws). The OLA has consistently opposed any extension that precedes the walleye opener because increased angling pressure during early spring weeks makes Oneida Lake's premier game fish - walleyes - more susceptible to accidental disturbance or poaching.

DEC biologists have once again advanced this plan despite the OLA's long-held position. The DEC is ignoring the fact that many other Region 6 waters have special regulations, and ignoring our lake's history. In response, the OLA re-iterated its public comment against any expanded fishing seasons that start in the weeks before walleye season's opener.

Many OLA members and most board members avidly fish for bass, but we do not believe that the benefits of a few weeks of bass fishing outweigh the potential, critical damage that can be done to vulnerable, spawning walleyes. We also recognize that there is a history of enforcement problems in spring.

Oneida Lake's fishery is unique, especially its walleyes, which generate the vast majority of angler effort and economic impact. Your board of directors knows that Oneida Lake deserves special regulations - a closed bass season until the walleye opener. We will continue to remind the DEC of this. If you care to join in the public comment process, email your thoughts to: fishregs@gw.dec.state.ny.us or write Shaun Keeler, New York State DEC, Bureau of Fisheries, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4753.

DEC Funding

Let me cite an extensively researched, well-documented fact: state and federal programs designed to benefit

(Continued on page 9)



**Win a Captain Tony Buffa Fishing Charter at the Annual Meeting!
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President's Message

To My Fellow Oneida Lake Association Members:

I am pleased to announce that the OLA is celebrating its 67th year as a voice for Oneida Lake, a significant accomplishment indeed. Started in 1945, the OLA continues to be dedicated to protecting and enhancing one of New York's finest, most unique resources. I am proud to say that no other environmental group's accomplishments match ours. Whether you are a homeowner, a tourist, an angler, a hunter, a birder, or a boater, the OLA speaks for you - and Oneida Lake.

The OLA's strength lies in members like you, and such "people power" leads to positive outcomes. I am proud of the OLA Board of Directors' history of accomplishments as they advocate for: a clean and healthy lake; protecting the lake's rich fishery; ensuring access opportunities and guaranteeing sound lake management in partnership with local, state, and national government agencies; and informing our membership of important lake issues through *The Oneida Lake Bulletin* and our website (www.oneidalakeassociation.org).

Let me take this opportunity to welcome our newest OLA board member - Warren Darby. You may know Warren as the current Undersheriff of Onondaga County, but you may not know that he is a passionate advocate for Oneida Lake's environmental health. He brings a lifetime of law enforcement experience to our organization. Welcome aboard Warren!

The OLA Board of Directors has been busy tackling a number of issues that face Oneida Lake. The board is your voice on issues ranging from changes in fishing and waterfowl regulations to lake access sites to law enforcement, water levels, cormorant control, and more. Your board is very active and has taken on a number of initiatives to improve the OLA's overall effectiveness. For example, our website committee is spearheading an initiative to improve the OLA's "e-voice" through its online presentation. We also have a government and legal affairs committee whose mission is to strengthen our legislative clout locally, as well as in Albany and Washington.

Oneida Lake is irreplaceable and we need all of you to help protect it. Consequently, I have directed our membership committee to strengthen the OLA's voice by exploring ways to help our numbers grow. A goal of 4000 paid OLA members is achievable. Strength through numbers leads to a stronger political voice for Oneida Lake!

I encourage your attendance and welcome you to our annual meeting on May 2 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Doors open at 6 p.m. with great exhibits on display, and the meeting starts at seven, highlighted by presentations on important Oneida Lake issues.

The times we live in are very challenging and Oneida Lake needs a strong advocate in the Oneida Lake Association. Together, we can and will make a difference.

Have a great summer!



Edward L. Mills
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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Vice President Scott Shupe
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Terms Expiring April 30, 2013

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**Annual Meeting
May 2 at C-NS!!**

OLA Initiates Membership Drive

This spring, OLA President Ed Mills announced a renewed membership drive to strengthen the organization. In a letter to current members, Mills wrote, "Your Oneida Lake Association, the strongest environmental organization in central New York, is committed to excellence in protecting, restoring, and preserving our truly unique and invaluable resource - Oneida Lake. The OLA is your voice

on important issues that involve changes in fishing and waterfowl regulations, lake access sites, law enforcement, water levels, and cormorant control, among others. A larger OLA membership strengthens our political clout."

The OLA encourages all members to recruit additional persons. Take time to talk to family, friends, fishing acquaintances - tell them about the invaluable work that

our organization performs. Ask them a basic question, "Who's going to fight for Oneida Lake when problems such as cormorants, wetland development, poaching, or misguided public policy threaten it?" The only answer possible is "the Oneida Lake Association."

Five dollars for membership in the OLA isn't an expense. It's an investment in our, and our children's, future.

Oh, What An Annual Meeting!

Wednesday May 2 – Cicero-North Syracuse High School

Mark your calendars for the association's annual meeting at C-NS on May 2! You won't want to miss this one!

Our theme is "Kids and Fishing: A Winning Combo," highlighted by keynote speaker Mike Riordan, chairman of Brewerton's Calvary Baptist Church's fishing seminar. Mike has dedicated his life to teaching children about the joys and techniques of freshwater fishing. He is an inspiring speaker and the OLA is honored to partner with him.

Keeping with the theme, one of the meeting's grand moments promises to be a drawing for a fishing trip for a child and two family members with famed charter Captain Tony Buffa. Only children sixteen years old and under are eligible for this drawing and they must be in attendance. Check the article on this page for details.

The OLA will hold additional drawings for two hand-held GPS units. One winner will be chosen from the meeting's attendees, the other from our membership at-large. Also, numerous door prizes will be awarded to lucky folks at the meeting.

You can renew your OLA membership at the annual meeting, starting at 6:15. Why not take this opportunity to sign up family members and friends in our association? Every additional OLA member adds strength to our organization. Your five-dollar dues isn't an expense; it's a wise investment in Oneida Lake's future.

Several fascinating speakers join Mike Riordan on the OLA's stage. New York Wildlife Services' Director and 2010 Conservationist of the Year Martin Lowney will discuss the permit process landowners need to understand for removing nuisance waterfowl. Representatives of the DEC will present their plan for this summer's cormorant control, including the volunteer program. News from the Constantia Hatchery flows from Director Mark Babenzien's annual report. Cornell biologist Randy Jackson will evaluate the "state of the lake" in his ever-lively presentation. Cornell Associate Professor Paul Curtis brings

details of the lake's successful tern restoration to the meeting and Dave White's talk focuses on his Oneida Lake Educational Initiative (check out the article about OLEI in this *Bulletin*).

You'll want to arrive early (doors open at six) to enjoy our exhibits. Bass Pro associates will demonstrate the Lowrance HDS-Gen2 depth/fish finder, a "hot topic in marine electronics forums." Gander Mountain promises to bring the latest in bass and walleye gear. The Atlantic Salmon-Fish Creek Club's photo/info display will communicate fascinating data about this once-prominent Oneida Lake fish. Mickey's Bait and Tackle of North Syracuse will show the newest line of Oneida Lake jigs and spinners. The Central New York Regional Planning Board's display always captures current trends in the lake's watershed's demographics. And, for those who enjoy a touch of the past, Jack Henke's history panorama opens a window of vintage Oneida Lake scenes.

A brief business meeting begins our

formal session in the C-NS auditorium at seven. The meeting's awarding of the OLA's annual "conservationist of the year" plaque recognizes a person who has made an outstanding contribution to our lake's well being.

The OLA can only meet the future's challenges with your support. Mark your calendars – Wednesday May 2 – OLA – C-NS! Your board of directors looks forward to joining you there.

Notice of Board of Directors' Elections

Attention OLA members! Don't miss your chance to vote at the 2012 annual meeting, to be held Wednesday, May 2 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 seven OLA members who are seeking re-election to three-year terms on the OLA's Board of Directors: Arnold Armani, Anthony Buffa, Richard Colesante, Robert Cote, Robert Gang III, Bill Girvan, Jack Henke, and Jim Novak.

Hey Kids - Win a Captain Tony Buffa Fishing Charter!

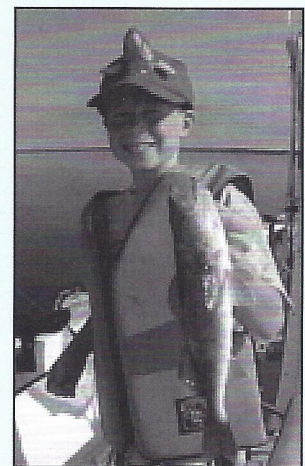
The ultimate Oneida Lake angler's dream - a "fishing charter for three" with veteran Captain Tony Buffa - will be awarded to a lucky youth at the OLA's annual meeting. This charter was made possible, in part, through the generosity of an anonymous donor.

Several guidelines apply. The young angler who wins should be accompanied by two family members. The winner must be sixteen years old or younger and must be in attendance at the meeting. Kids must sign in at the OLA membership desk to be eligible. OLA membership is not required, but is encouraged.

The drawing will be held as close as possible to eight o'clock. The charter will be scheduled during the 2012 fishing season.

Captain Tony Buffa has guided successful anglers on Oneida Lake for over three decades and his fishing trips enjoy a national reputation. The OLA is proud to offer this chance for a unique voyage into Oneida Lake angling as a part of our annual meeting's "Kids and Fishing: a Winning Combo" theme.

The drawing will be held at the annual meeting as close as possible to 8 p.m.



Sean Stanistreet proudly shows the results of a Captain Tony charter.

The Oneida Lake Ecosystem, 2012

by the Cornell University Field Station Staff

Oneida Lake features prominently in central New York's natural and economic landscape. Angler surveys conducted by the New York State DEC show the lake to be second only to Lake Ontario in the amount of angling effort attracted each year – a testament to the popularity and quality of the lake's fisheries. Direct expenditures on fishing bring more than twelve million dollars annually into Oneida Lake communities, proving that the lake not only adds beauty and recreational opportunities to the area, but substantial economic benefits as well.

In recent years, 60-70% of the angling on Oneida has targeted walleyes, long the lake's marquee fishery, but yellow perch and bass also provide excellent angling and draw many to the lake's waters. Scientists at the Cornell Biological Field Station have been monitoring Oneida for over fifty-five years and appreciate the opportunity to share with readers of *The OLA Bulletin* an update on the state of the lake in 2012.

The Walleye Population

Our 2010 mark-recapture population study of walleyes in 2010 estimated the number of adults at around 500,000 fish. Catches from our gill nets in 2011 indicated that the population remained near that level. This number is well above levels observed from 1994 through 2003, when the population experienced severe declines.

While walleye numbers are still lower than in the earliest years of our studies, the walleye population is capable of generating angler catch rates as high as when these fish were more abundant. The quality of fishing on Oneida Lake has not suffered; it is still one of the premiere walleye lakes in New York State. Anglers in 2011 were able to harvest slightly over 40,000 walleyes. Most were caught early in the season



Cornell technician Kathleen Maneen hefts one of Oneida Lake's sturgeon.

before gizzard shad and emerald shiners began to offer plentiful prey.

The walleye population should be able to sustain current levels of effort and harvest into the near future, but we are concerned at the poor survival of fish hatched from 2007-2009. On average, walleye year classes over the last decade contributed around 50,000 fish annually, roughly the same number as anglers harvest in a good fishing year. Early indications show that the young walleyes produced in 2010 are surviving well and may give the population a boost in 2014, but we have noted consistently poor survival of most year classes of young walleyes in recent years, so increases in fishing effort or harvest could lead to future declines.

In 2011, we initiated an angler interview program at boat launches to monitor walleye catch and harvest rates, and we will continue that program this year. If you are approached by one of our clerks, please take a few minutes to answer their questions. This will help us better understand current trends in the walleye fishery, facilitating our work to insure quality fishing opportunities in the future.

Yellow Perch Stable

The yellow perch population remains around 900,000 - 1,000,000 adult fish. As with walleyes, this number is less than levels observed from the 1950s to the 1980s. We suspect that changes in the lake associated with establishment of

zebra and quagga mussels have reduced the survival of very young yellow perch. Thus, for the immediate future, we expect this fish's abundance to remain below long-term averages. Anglers can still enjoy good catch rates of yellow perch, and they should continue to be a staple of the winter fishery. Poor ice conditions during the past winter kept many anglers off the lake, so the harvest of yellow perch may have been reduced, allowing more fish to survive.

A Smallmouth Bass Explosion

Our catches of smallmouth bass continue to indicate a population as much as three times larger than before the mid-1980s. Our monitoring in 2011 revealed another successful class of young bass, and our catches of adult bass were the highest on record. Angler catch rates of bass are among the best in the state.

The lake now hosts over sixty bass tournaments annually, many sponsored by national groups. Bass fishing on Oneida Lake boosts the area's economy.

White Perch Grow

White perch continue to be very abundant. In three of the last five years our catches of white perch in standard netting exceeded catches of yellow perch, suggesting that these fish are one of the most abundant fish in the lake. Many white perch have reached a respectable size (up to fourteen inches) and fight tenaciously for anglers using lighter tackle. White perch are a delicious fish as well and are preferred over yellow perch in Maine and New Hampshire. They create an excellent additional fishing opportunity.

Sturgeons Approach Breeding Size

Lake sturgeons stocked between 1995 and 2004 continue to thrive. In 2010, we caught an eighty-five pound sturgeon in our nets, the largest documented thus far. Sturgeons do not mature until fairly late in life and, up to last fall, we have only recorded mature males. When the females start to mature, which should be soon, we hope to have the opportunity to assess the ability of Oneida Lake's sturgeons to establish a self-sustaining population.

Remember that the sturgeon is listed as a “threatened” species in New York State and must be immediately released when caught. We have tags in many of the sturgeons and encourage anglers to call us if they catch a tagged fish (315-633-9243). Please record the catch’s location and the fish’s tag number.

Other Fish

As shoreline vegetation increases with the clearer water conditions brought about by zebra and quagga mussels, so have our catches of fishes typically associated with shallow, vegetated habitats. We continue to see more largemouth bass, pumpkinseed sunfish, longnose gar, pickerel, and bowfin in our samples, all signs that the near shore fish community is expanding in response to the increase in their preferred habitats. Anglers fishing shallower waters should enjoy a diverse catch.

In Conclusion

As we approach the summer of 2012 we expect that Oneida Lake will continue to offer a cornucopia of high quality fishing and recreational opportunities. The lake will remain a vital resource for our region even while it adjusts to the changes that have occurred over the past decades. With the clearer water that resulted from the establishment of exotic mussels and expanding vegetation, Oneida is a different lake than in the 1970s and 1980s, but it is still one of the area’s most valuable natural and economic resources.

We rate the health of the lake as “very good,” but its ecosystem continues to absorb major changes. And the future may witness additional flux. The round goby has been confirmed in both Onondaga and Cross Lakes and only one more barrier separates them from Oneida. While the lake will probably always be a regional asset, it is clear that changes have become the norm.

All who value Oneida Lake must work together to protect it. We will continue to monitor the lake’s health in order to help reach that goal.

Update: The Oneida Fish Hatchery

by Carl Rathje, Assistant Manager

This has been an unusually mild winter for the Oneida Lake area, with little snow and thin ice. Some anglers reported good catches of walleyes and yellow perch, but the lack of ice fishing has left a lot more fish in the lake. That’s good news for the fishermen and the hatchery staff, who will be setting trap nets to collect thousands of spawning walleyes for our annual propagation program.

In 2011, we netted 20,293 adult walleyes between April 4 and 12. The fish weighed from three to twelve pounds and yielded just over 327 million eggs. From that, we stocked roughly 212 million walleye fry in fifteen New York waters, including 173 million in Oneida Lake.

Our fish culturists also raised 304,200 two-inch fingerlings and 87,000 advanced fall fingerlings (five inches long). These walleyes were stocked into thirteen different waters around the state. To view stocking locations, visit the website www.dec.ny.gov and click on “outdoor activities, fishing, stocking lists” for your area.

The hatchery assisted the state’s endangered fish species program by acquiring approximately 10,000 paddlefish eggs from Kentucky and producing 6,650 paddlefish. Because survival was so high, New York returned 4,500 surplus fish to Kentucky’s program. The hatchery retained 2,150 paddlefish through the summer and stocked them into Chautauqua Lake, Allegheny Reservoir, and Conewango Creek. These fish were fourteen inches long and each received a coded wire tag for identification. Fishery management crews report that paddlefish populations in these areas are making a nice comeback.

In June, regional fisheries and hatchery staff netted lake sturgeons in the St. Lawrence River near Massena. Many mature sturgeons were captured alive in gill nets and checked for sex and potential egg collection. Their eggs were fertilized by males and then transferred to our hatchery for incubation. Unfortunately, none of the eggs hatched and we were unable to produce any fish for stocking in 2011. The causes are being investigated and we will try again this year. Previously stocked lake sturgeons are surviving well in Oneida, Cayuga, and Lake Ontario.

Currently, the hatchery is holding a few thousand round whitefish fry, which will be stocked in May. These endangered fish are native to many Adirondack lakes and ponds. The hatchery is helping reestablish populations of round whitefish in waters that lost this species because of environmental changes. We hope that these stockings will lead to new, self-sustaining whitefish populations.

Everyone anticipates an early start to the walleye egg collection this year. Adult spawning fish generally start swimming into Scriba Creek by late March, and our crews will set the nets shortly after they arrive. Egg collection usually lasts about ten days and our hatchery will be open from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. during that time for visitors to watch daily operations. It’s best to call in advance to discover what activities our crew will be performing. There will be fish in the hatchery and the creek for visitors to see during early April and during the year. Our display tanks always fascinate the kids! Our video presentation orients visitors to fish propagation’s diverse activities. In any season, a visit to the Oneida Hatchery can brighten the day.

Our staff looks forward to your visit. Because of efforts at facilities like ours, “Fishing is great in New York State!”

The OLA Fishing Corner

Opening Day Walleyes - Your Directors' Tips

Your *Bulletin* editor asked the OLA's board of directors for their best angling advice for early May walleyes. Responses were diverse and very specific. Read on, take note, and good luck to all!

Bill Girvan: Embrace the moment and tradition of opening day and make the most of it. Put your waders on and keep it simple. You want to take advantage of that low light period just before dawn and into the first couple of hours after sunrise. These times will produce for all of May when the wind blows. Any area where a tributary creek enters the lake is a prime spot. Points are also good locations.

You will be fishing post-spawn fish, so walleyes should be on the prowl looking for sandpike and minnows during this transition period. If overcast skies and a breeze occur, the fish will hang closer to shore longer. Use a light action seven-foot spinning rod with fresh line (six or eight pound test). Fill your spool to get more distance on every cast. If you can net some sandpike, use them with either a 1/16 oz. or 1/8 oz. plain jig head with a small stinger hook. These rigs cast well. Swim them with a slow retrieve. Small swimbaits of 1/16 oz. or 1/8 oz. also work well. You can't go wrong with stickbaits like floating Rapalas or Husky Jerks if you have a light wind, or countdown Rapalas in stronger winds.

Move slowly in your waders, fish quietly, and never walk around noisily because you will spook the fish. Your presentation speed should be slow, punctuated by stop/pause retrieves. You should have a good shot at catching your three fish daily limit by 8 a.m.

Tom Giufre: I start fishing on opening day near the Lakeport Shoals in ten to twenty feet of water using black and purple jigs. While I'm jigging, I drift a second line with just a worm harness. Here, I use a Dixie spinner rig with the

spinners removed - just two hooks and a nightcrawler. If the shoals don't produce, I will move north toward the Hogsback Bar and fish in twenty to thirty feet. The following day, I will fish deeper water - thirty to forty feet - and troll with perch colored spoons or perch stickbaits on the end of lead-core line.

Jim Novak: Early in the season, through June, jigs and blade baits (sonars) are the best for taking walleyes. For jigs, black and purple in 3/8 oz. and 1/2 oz. are my "go-to" lures. You can tip the jig with a 1" piece of nightcrawler to add a bit of scent to the bait. I almost always do this, but there have been times when "bare" jigs worked just as well.

I cast a jig with the wind, let it settle to the bottom (the line goes slack), reel to tighten the line, lift the rod to "jig" the lure off the bottom one to two feet, and then let it fall back to the bottom. Repeat this until the jig gets to the boat and then do a "yo-yo motion" to trigger any fish that follows.

If a good drift exists, another way to jig is to let the jig down behind the drifting boat, let out line until the jig hits the bottom and then lift the jig and let it drop back. You'll have to let out more line as the boat moves. After about fifty yards, reel in the jig and repeat the process. Walleyes almost always take the bait on the drop and on the next lift you'll feel it snagged in their toothy jaw. Then, the fight begins!

Blade baits work similar to jigs. Lures in the 1/4 oz. to 1/2 oz. range work well in shallows. Use heavier lures for deeper water. Cast out the lure, let it settle to the bottom, reel up the slack line, and then sharply lift the lure to get it vibrating off the bottom. You can feel the lure vibrating on the lift. Blade baits can get tangled on your line and foul easily on weeds and zebra mussels, so if you don't feel

the vibration, reel in and check the lure. Walleyes have a line along their sides that allow them to "feel" vibrations from other fish and the blade bait takes advantage of this. Blade baits come in a rainbow of colors. I have found that black, copper, gold and silver all work well on certain days. Don't be afraid to try different lures.

Bruce Shantz: Opening weekend walleyes are normally in the same areas year after year. I like to fish drop-offs, where the bottom slopes from roughly fourteen to twenty-five feet. I often find walleyes on both ends of those drop-offs.

I like to toss 5/8-ounce bucktail jigs, tipped with a small piece of worm that does not extend much beyond the jig's hook. I normally use darker colored jigs, though I don't believe that color is all that important. The import element is the jig's action. I make sure to keep the jig near bottom and do my best to keep slack out of my line. Walleyes generally hit the jig when it drops, so I am always prepared to set the hook when I lift the jig. Once I hook a walleye I keep a tight line because they can easily toss the jig if slack occurs.

Matt Snyder: Dress for success. Even after mild winters. Raw, cold weather can be expected well into May. To stay warm, dry, and on the water longer - and reduce the risk of hypothermia - anglers should layer insulated or wicking clothing with waterproof or breathable outerwear.

Navigate safely. Low water temperatures, brisk spring winds, and (in some years) high water and floating debris can make boating a challenge. Smart anglers compensate for this by allowing extra time to navigate to their hot spots, and every boater should make sure that all mechanical and safety equipment is in good working order before launching.

Know what to expect. The lake's fishery changes every year - and the latest updates are made public at the OLA's annual meeting, to be held Wednesday, May 2 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Bring your family and angling buddies to learn the latest about what the fishing may hold this spring.

About the actual catching of fish, the only tip I have is "be lucky!"

Teaching Oneida Lake's Ecology

by JoAnne Getchonis, Station Manager-Program Assistant, Cornell Field Station

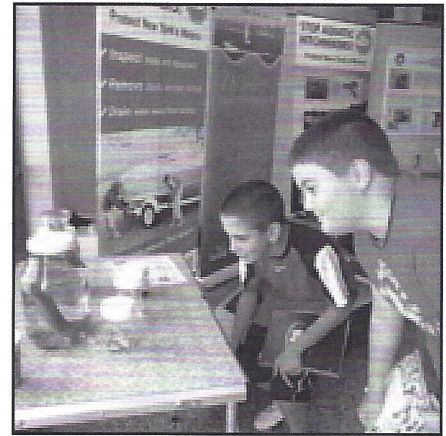
The Oneida Lake Watershed Education Initiative (OLEI) began as a pilot effort in 2005. The program germinated from a study titled, "The Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and Its Watershed" that was completed in October, 2004. This study contained a comprehensive list of recommendations for priority water resource issues throughout the lake's five-county watershed. These recommendations were developed to provide long-term protection and improvement of the lake and its tributaries. The Oneida Lake Watershed Education Initiative is based on the recommendations in this document and is designed for upper elementary and middle school students and teachers, agencies and organizations, homeowners, and lake users throughout the five-county watershed.

The Initiative has been enthusiastically embraced by the school districts bordering Oneida Lake. The schools' programs boast a successful track record and were very well received throughout the region. Under the Initiative, teachers incorporate inquiry and firsthand experiences into curriculum modules, following the New York State Math/Science and Technology Standards. The benefits of such programs are great and long term. Understanding of the complexities of general environmental issues is enhanced by applications of the concepts to a local resource. In addition, the program promotes stewardship of Oneida Lake by furthering the appreciation of its watershed.

We successfully completed a three-year Hatch Grant in 2010, partnering with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County and New York Sea Grant. The grant's dual purpose was to take Oneida Lake into the classroom and to bring classrooms to Oneida Lake. Part of the grant provided for an update to the OLEI (www.oneidalakeinfo.org). Check out the website for some great Oneida Lake videos!

This past year, Dave White (New York Sea Grant) and I were involved in several in-school events, including an "Oneida Lake Day" at Roxboro Road Middle School. Last summer, teachers from several school districts received hands-on training at the Field Station during a program about invasive species. Spring and summer of 2012 will witness an "invasive species education program" at boat launches and public events around Oneida Lake.

Future funding could allow for a continuation of teacher training during the summer months. This would be modeled after a current Sea Grant program and one that was held at the Field Station during the 1960s and 70s. The proposal would immerse ten to fifteen science teachers per year in an Oneida Lake investigation aboard a research vessel.



Children and Oneida Lake biology - the OLEI's wondrous mix.

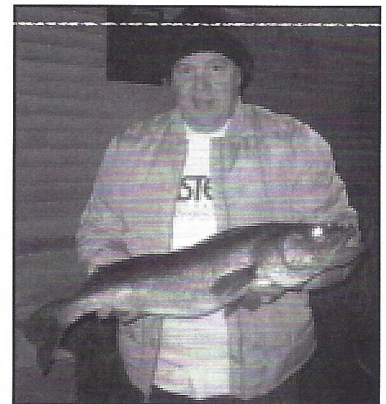
During the training, teachers would experience the full range of scientific tests and equipment, including plankton tows, sediment sampling, and water chemistry. This knowledge could then be shared with their students. We await word on a submitted proposal.

Editor's note: the OLA wishes you every success in this noble endeavor.

Warren Darby Joins OLA Board

The Oneida Lake Association warmly welcomes Warren Darby, Undersheriff of Onondaga County, as the newest member of the association's board of directors.

Warren brings a lifetime's experience in law enforcement and community service to our board. In addition to his current position, he has been Police Chief for the Town of Cicero, Chief of Operations for Eastern Paramedics, and Deputy Chief for the Syracuse Police Department. He has served as a consultant and lecturer at Syracuse University and an adjunct faculty member of Onondaga Community College. Warren has volunteered as an EMT,



Warren Darby and a 30-inch Oneida Lake walleye.

firefighter, and commissioner with the Brewerton Fire Department and is an active member of the Lake Forest Sportmen's Club. He is an avid angler and Oneida Lake aficionado who delights in spending as much spare time as possible on the water.

In his brief tenure on the OLA Board, Warren has already made an outstanding contribution to the association and Oneida Lake history. He has digitized copies of *The Oneida Lake Bulletin* from the last twenty years and the OLA's "founders' archive," a scrapbook that documents the association's genesis. His digitization will appear in the association's updated website.

A graduate of OCC, King's College, and Syracuse University, where he earned his M.P.A., Warren resides in Brewerton with his wife, Joan.

Welcome aboard, Warren Darby!

Verona Beach to Host Outdoors Exposition

by Joseph Morisette, Park Manager

On Saturday June 16, from ten until seven, the Verona Beach State Park will come alive with its first annual "Outdoors Exposition." The event is family-oriented, with attractions for all ages.

Experts in the following fields will demonstrate and instruct the basics of their avocations: freshwater fishing, wilderness and recreational hiking, field orienteering, wildlife identification, boating, kayaking, camping, and hunting. Participants will learn outdoor essentials such as tying knots, casting lures, paddling a kayak or canoe, and navigational and boating equipment safety, among other skills.

Among the groups attending and exhibiting are the DEC, the Rome Fish Hatchery, the New York State Park Police, Leave No Trace Educators, the Verona Beach Lighthouse Association, the Sylvan Beach Fire Department, New

York Sea Grant, and Seven O's RV dealership. Planning at this writing was in its infancy and many more organizations are expected to participate. Informational displays and vendors who deal with outdoors' activities will also be on hand. Verona Beach itself will open at eleven and the park operates a concession stand along the lakefront.

Verona Beach is a gem of an Oneida Lake resource, accented by a gorgeous lakefront, a majestically shaded picnic grove, miles of hiking/mountain biking trails through a unique woodland/wetland



Verona Beach on a busy summer day.

environment, softball and basketball facilities, and ample parking. This event provides a superb opportunity for visitors to discover and enjoy the park's invaluable assets.

For more information, please contact the park's office at (315)-762-4463.

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Coming Soon - A New OLA Website

By Patricia Cerro-Reehil

Keep a look out for the new, improved OLA website that expands our current pages and includes a tremendously enlarged information base.

On our refreshed web pages, readers can find OLA mission statements, committee reports, and contact data. Links will connect viewers to important Oneida Lake news items, articles about past accomplishments, and information about the annual meeting.

Membership applications and on-line payment through PayPal will continue in the site. This is probably the easiest way to renew your membership or to enroll your friends in the OLA.

The fishing pages will be greatly expanded. Anglers will be able to find DEC guidelines, maps of the lake, lists of boat launches, hatchery reports, depth charts, names of bait and tackle stores, tips for boating and ice fishing safety, and links to fishing charters. And of course, some great photos will disprove any exaggerations about the "big one that didn't get away!"

The website's value as a research database has been greatly enhanced. Not only will digitized images of current *Bulletins* be available, but also copies of every *Bulletin* published from 1991 to the present, complete with a subject index for quick, efficient research. Also, the site contains links to numerous other Oneida Lake publications and a list of websites that capture Oneida Lake history and biology. Interested in the 19th century Oneida Lake canals? Curious about when the cormorant issue arose and how it progressed? You can discover this information through the new OLA website!

The website also features recognitions of advertisers that support the OLA and links to other environmental organizations and the DEC.

Check out the new OLA website. It's bigger, better, and beautiful. It's an Oneida Lake adventure that can easily satisfy any lake lover's information quest.

Many thanks to OLA member Tom Bailey for redesigning our website!

Busy Winter

(Continued from page 1)

anglers and hunters generate significantly larger economic returns on investment than most other government programs. Unlike any other outdoor sportspeople, anglers and hunters directly finance this benefit through license fees and surcharges on equipment. These funds are legally required to be used to promote a healthy environment.

In 2009, government fees for Oneida Lake's anglers and hunters dramatically rose when we were hit with license fee increases of 20-30%. Unfortunately, as New York's budget woes mounted, the state's executive branch put the squeeze on agencies like the DEC. This department has experienced significant reductions in its funding since 2009, leading to staffing cuts exceeding 15% in the Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources. The number of conservation officers has been pared, engendering noticeable declines in the DEC's capacity to provide law enforcement. Fisheries management, hatchery operations, stewardship, and access for

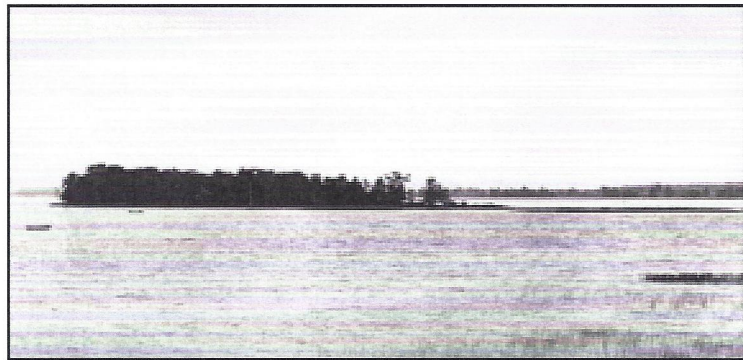
public lands and waters have also suffered. To challenge these reductions, the OLA is formulating a public position on state funding and accountability for the DEC. At the March board meeting, your directors unanimously approved this resolution, with the goal of encouraging all elected members of state government to work together, "across the aisle," to ensure that the DEC is efficiently staffed and equipped to protect and preserve Oneida Lake.

Got Issues?

These are just a few of the issues your directors have been working on this winter. As always, the OLA's greatest strength - an active, engaged membership - is our best way to keep in tune with the challenges facing Oneida Lake! If you have concerns or issues related to the lake, contact a director by mail, in person, or through our website.

Oneida Lake History Quiz

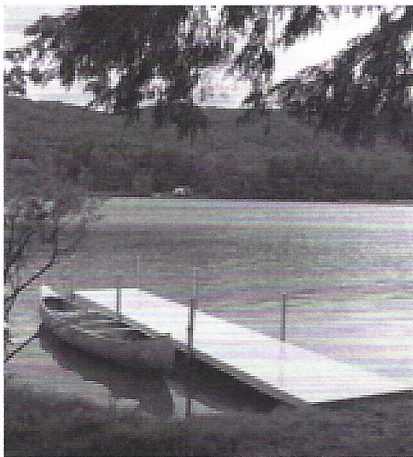
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A - Shackleton Point - Dutchman's Island is the photo's centerpiece.

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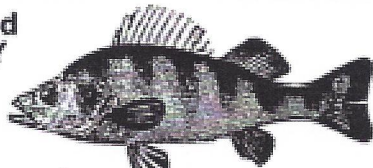
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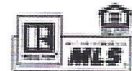
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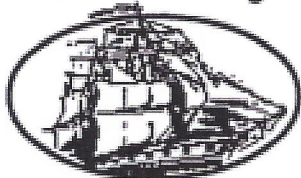
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