

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring/Summer 2000

Of Cormorants, Clarity, and A Conundrum

by Jack Henke

Oneida is a troubled lake in this millennium year. Cormorants, zebra mussels, and a drop in dissolved nutrients have altered the lake's rich food web. Fish populations have suffered. Angling, once a mainstay of the lake area's economy, has been poor.

What follows are a series of commonly asked questions and their answers, related to cormorants, water clarity, and other changes in the lake's ecosystem. While the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Oneida Hatchery, and the Cornell Field Station have provided the *Bulletin* with statistics and analyses, the opinions and some interpretations expressed in this article are the OLA's.

Q How much has Oneida Lake's walleye population dropped?

There's been a steady decline during the past decade. Cornell estimated that the lake's population of adult walleyes (fish that are age 4 and older) was slightly less than 600,000 during 1990 and 1991. Walleye numbers slipped to around 315,000 by April, 1995. The population was about 215,000 last spring.

The latter figures are well below walleye population averages from past years.

Q How have cormorants affected the lake's walleye population?

A lot. Cormorants feed heavily on walleyes. Biologists talk about our lake's walleyes in terms of "year classes." A year class simply means the walleyes born in a particular year. The birds have taken a heavy toll from some year classes in the 1990's. Cornell biologists originally estimated that the 1991 class would contribute about 407,000 adult walleyes to the lake. Instead, the class produced about 144,000. Cormorants ate a large portion of the difference - well over 100,000 fish.

Other year classes in the 1990's showed

significant differences. The 1993 year class should have contributed about 73,000 adult walleyes to the lake, but instead only 8,000 were there at counting time. Cornell predicted that about 112,000 walleyes would reach adult size from the class of 1995, but only 32,000 did. The birds have been eating well.

Q What size walleyes do cormorants eat?

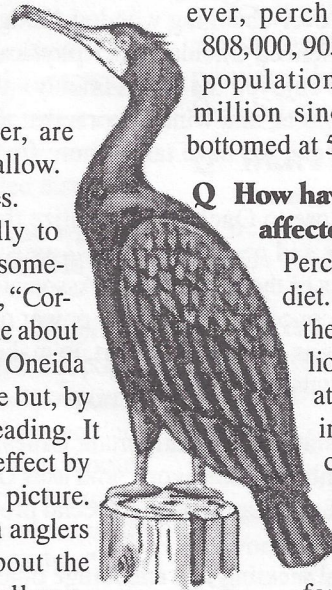
Larger fish, 15" and over, are harder for the birds to swallow. They prefer smaller walleyes.

Now, listen very carefully to this important point. You'll sometimes read or hear things like, "Cormorants and anglers each take about 15,000 adult walleyes from Oneida Lake every year." That's true but, by itself, the statement's misleading. It minimizes the cormorants' effect by not representing the whole picture. The key word is *adult*. Both anglers and cormorants harvest about the same number of *adult* walleyes. However, the birds also consume tens of thousands of *juvenile* fish, those that are ages 1, 2, and 3. Anglers don't take these.

Q How many walleyes will Oneida Lake's cormorants eat in an average year?

We don't know average year numbers, but we can give you statistics from 1996 - 1997. From the spring of 1996 to the spring of 1997, the lake's cormorants gobbled about 33,200 walleyes that were age 1. They also ate 24,300 that were age 2 and 43,100 that were age 3 or older. That's a total of 100,600 walleyes!

These fish had excellent chances of reaching adult size...but the birds got them first. As one Cornell biologist said, "When walleyes get to age 1, they have few natural enemies - except for cormorants."



Q What's been happening to our lake's yellow perch population?

There's been a decline throughout the 1990's. Cornell says that in 1991, 1992, and 1993 the lake had 1,260,000, 965,000, and 1,562,000 adult perch, respectively. In the years 1997, 1998, and 1999, however, perch censuses revealed only 808,000, 905,000, and 765,000 fish. The population has not exceeded one million since 1993 and, in 1996, it bottomed at 561,000.

Q How have cormorants affected yellow perch?

Perch are a big part of the birds' diet. Since cormorants arrived in the 1980's, they've eaten millions of perch. Again, let's look at the 1996 - 1997 year. During that period, cormorants consumed about 67,800 perch that were age 3 and older. Remember, though, that bigger fish are harder for these birds to swallow. In that same year, over 138,000 perch that were age 2 and over 900,000 that were age 1 were devoured by cormorants. These fish were more to the birds' liking.

Just for comparison, walleyes ate about 3,600,000 perch that were age one during the '96-'97 year. However, the lake's walleyes ate *no* perch that were age 2 or age 3 in that year while cormorants, as you can see, took over 200,000.

Q Has the cormorant harassment program worked?

Somewhat. It was estimated that, in 1998, the program saved at least 30,000 walleyes and 90,000 perch. However, even with harassment, cormorants munched at least another 30,000 walleyes and 90,000 perch.

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message

The following quotation was taken from the book, *Oneida Lake - Past and Present*, written by Cleveland native Harmon Landgraaf and published in 1926.

Oneida Lake's general effect is one of great, but quiet, beauty to those who live on its banks for any length of time and see and know all its various moods and phases, in calm and storm, and observe day after day its ever-changing hues of sky and water and its shifting wonders of clouds, or look on its splendid sunsets, when the low-lying clouds on the western horizon are made crimson and golden and cast a vast halo of light...

Three quarters of a century have passed since Landgraaf recorded his observations and Oneida Lake's dynamic images remain with us. As a resident of Bernhard's Bay for over 30 years, I have witnessed Landgraaf's visions. Our home's view allowed my family and me to savor the ever-changing wonders that grace the lake's seasons.

All of us who have experienced Oneida Lake's physical, as well as spiritual, beauty are richer. Many of us have enjoyed the lake's bounty - the fish, waterfowl, companionship, relaxation, water sports, and winter sports that this marvelous body of water affords. And, more than likely, we have taken more from the lake than we have returned.

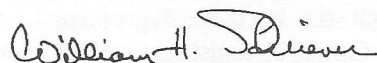
Those of you who are close to Oneida Lake realize that our jewel is under a great deal of environmental stress and needs help. This is assistance that only you and I can give. The Board of Directors of the Oneida Lake Association does all it can as a group, representing you and your concerns. It takes the power of the full membership, however, working as individuals as well as in concert, to make things happen. Some of the items we can do as individuals are:

1. Communicate with legislators about important issues. Stand up and be counted.
2. Encourage friends, neighbors, and anyone who uses Oneida Lake to join the OLA.
3. Positively answer calls for volunteering in special projects, such as water chestnut control.
4. Attend the OLA's annual meeting and encourage others to follow your lead.
5. Encourage conservation of our resources. Measure success by the quality of your day, not by the size of your catch.

Cormorants have decimated Oneida Lake's walleye and perch populations. Positive action, initiated by the OLA, will remedy this problem. Achieving our goal, however, is going to take time. Several government agencies, along with conflicting special interest groups, are involved with the issue. Trust me - when the cormorant problem is solved, we will again enjoy *all* the bounty that Oneida Lake's ecosystem can provide.

Another menace lurks in the lake's future - the water chestnut. If this invasive plant spreads, out of control, it would clog every bay with a green matting so tight that powerboats could not penetrate it. All shallow areas would be affected. Fishing and boating would be severely limited. The OLA has addressed this issue and, last summer, initiated a clean-up of a water chestnut bed near Brewerton.

Only continuing vigilance will make our lake the viable, productive resource that it was intended to be. Don't sit back. Get involved. Help your OLA help your lake.



William Shriever
President - Oneida Lake Association

New OLA Questionnaire

The OLA will be distributing a brief questionnaire at our annual meeting on April 26 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. This survey inquires about your recreational interests, the lake issues that concern you, and your e-mail data. The forms take only a few moments to complete. We hope that you will take this time at the meeting and help your OLA serve you better.

The Oneida Lake Association Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., 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.

Officers

President William Schriever
Vice President Charles J. Engle, Jr.
Vice President John Guilford, Jr.
Vice President Tom Pierce
Secretary Kurt Snyder
Asst. Secretary Robert Gang III
Treasurer Edwin Olmstead

Board of Directors

Term: April 1999 - April 2002

Richard Colesante Harvey Chase
Scott Shupe Arnold Armani
Edward L. Mills

Term: April 1998 - April 2001

Steve Rogers Parker J. Stone
Richard Percival Marshall O. Naumann

Term: April 1997 - April 2000

George Angeloro Robert Cote
Anthony Buffa Robert Ripberger
Tom Giufre Jack Henke
Chuck Abate

Advisory Board Members

Angelo Angeloro Anton Kreuzer
Herbert McElroy Ned Cookingham
William Nass Roy Pulaski
Fred David Millard Rogers
Frank Gruenwald James Scherzi
Julian F. Stanczyk, Jr. Anthony Sauer

Of Cormorants

(Continued from page 1)

When this article was written, we didn't have the numbers for 1999. Cornell said that they'd have the figures by the annual meeting. If, at the annual meeting, they don't mention these statistics, make sure that you ask for them.

Q Do any other factors contribute to the lower numbers of walleyes and perch?

Yes. There are two "life stages" of walleyes and perch that have experienced an increased mortality in recent years. We've talked about one stage - fish from ages 1 upward. The other stage involves fish from when they hatch until age 1. Young walleyes just aren't surviving like they used to. Their mortality is very high. If little fish don't live we sure as heck won't have the big fish. Cornell doesn't know for sure what's causing this. It might be increased water clarity. This would make small fish more vulnerable to predation. We could label this problem as an Oneida Lake conundrum - a puzzling situation.

The cormorants get a big chunk of the fish that survive and they're a primary reason why populations aren't what they should be. As Lars Rudstam, fisheries biologist at the Field Station puts it, "Cormorants are the main cause why we don't get as many walleyes and perch in Oneida Lake as we predicted. We examined other causes, but they didn't measure up. For ages 1,2, and 3 perch and walleyes, the differences between predictions and

reality are, by and large, due to cormorants."

Q What else has changed in Oneida Lake?

Chemically speaking, our lake is very different. It contains less phosphorus. We need this substance to support algae growth. Algae is important because it makes up the bottom of the Oneida Lake food web. Improved wastewater treatment facilities and wiser farming methods within the lake's drainage basin have reduced the amount of phosphorus flowing into that watershed.

In addition, zebra mussels feed on algae. They filter water through their tiny bodies and remove the algae. Our lake still makes plenty of algae, but it makes it later in the summer. The water stays clear for a much longer period of time, even until August. Clarity like this has never been observed in Oneida's recorded history.

Q Does this mean that the walleye and perch populations will stay low?

No. The lake still produces enough tiny creatures to support good-sized fish populations. In Cornell's last yearly report it said that "Because zooplankton production has not declined and benthic invertebrates have increased, there is currently no reason to believe that previous walleye populations are not sustainable." The zooplankton and invertebrates are little aquatic animals near the food web's bottom. Small fish eat these little guys and big fish eat the small fish. Evidently, even

with the zebra mussels, the tiny creatures have enough to eat. That's good news.

Q So, if we get rid of cormorants, the walleye and perch populations will recover.

They'll bounce back, but we may never have as many fish as in the "good old days." Remember that Cornell said the lake can support a larger walleye population. No one knows for sure how much larger. One thing's definite, though. If we have effective cormorant control, we'll have more fish.

Q Will the 18", 3 fish limit help restore the walleye population?

Yes, it will. In fact, coupled with cormorant control, adherence to the new limit provides the quickest way to rebuild Oneida Lake's walleye numbers.

Q What's the OLA's position on the cormorant issue?

We want all cormorants removed from Oneida Lake. Until the last decade, cormorants have never been a major factor in the lake's food web. Their feeding has caused tremendous damage - not only to the lake's ecology, but to our region's economy.

Q What's the OLA doing about the problem?

Working through channels. This is the best way to address the problem. We will be presenting our case to the Fish and Wildlife Division of the Department of the Interior in a couple months. Cormorants are a protected, migratory bird, controlled by the Federal Government. We'd like the authority for cormorant control to be given to the states so that they can deal with problems created by these birds.

Q What can OLA members do?

Nothing, yet. We will need your help in the future. It is absolutely imperative that we avoid a situation like the one that occurred on Lake Ontario, where people took the law into their own hands and killed cormorants. This can only set back our efforts and lessen chances for success. If you know anyone who's thinking about shooting cormorants, discourage them. As long as our laws ban this practice, it must not occur on Oneida Lake.

From the Editor

Welcome to the annual spring edition of the Oneida Lake Association *Bulletin*. This year's paper is very reader-oriented. It contains material dealing with cormorants, water chestnuts, and other issues that are a major concern.

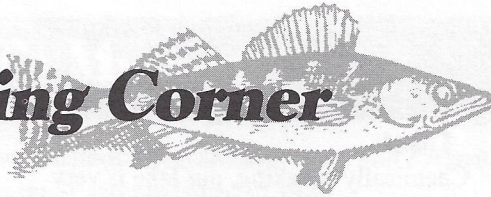
We believe that you, our membership, should be informed about all the details surrounding these issues. Your Oneida Lake Association is working to solve every problem affecting our lake. When we hear of a problem, we inform you as soon as possible.

Our annual meeting will be held in late April. Hundreds of you will attend. Bring your concerns and questions with you and voice them. Ask the biologists and state officials about issues that you want clarified. Ask questions. Demand answers.

Oneida is your lake and you care about it. You care deeply. You have a right to be informed.

Jack Henke

The OLA Fishing Corner



Some East End Advice

by Captain Ray Brown

I believe that the walleyes will have completed their spawning and that most of them will have returned from the tributaries to the lake.

I'll start fishing in front of the Verona Beach State Park and Oneida Creek. I usually begin drifting in about 24 feet of water and drift in to around 7 feet. Generally, I find that the best action during this time of year occurs in the 12 to 16 foot depths, but this can vary with weather conditions.

I'll be jigging slowly - a very deliberate lift of a foot. The fish won't be aggressive in the cool water. I've had great luck with the sand pig jig pattern, though

black, brown, yellow and white also work well. I prefer to use jigs that have a trailer hook, that takes care of short strikes.

I'll work the area until I find walleyes and then concentrate at that depth. Drift speed is critical. Use drift bags to slow your boat. I also cast the jig in front of my drift. This gives you better control and helps maintain contact with the bottom - an essential element of jigging. I will also use a drifted nightcrawler, rigged with a three-way swivel, a #4 Eagle Claw gold-plated hook, and the appropriate weight to carry it just above the bottom. I run this off the back side of the boat.

Another spot that I might try is the

Opening Weekend Walleyes

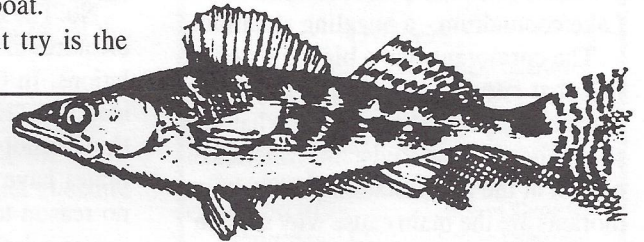


Charter Captains' Tips

pancake bottom "hump" due southeast of Buoy 109. The water's shallower here than in the surrounding area.

If all else fails, I will troll, using downriggers and small stick baits. In past years I have had great success using Storm Jr. Thundersticks in blue/silver and black/silver. As with jigging, I'll troll much slower than I normally would - approximately 1.2 to 1.5 mph.

Good luck and have a great opening weekend!



Walleyes - Where, When, and How?

by Captain Tony Buffa

In a couple weeks, walleye anglers will converge on their favorite spots, seeking angling satisfaction and palate-pleasing fillets. Opening day on Oneida Lake arrives on May 6. For decades, Oneida's walleye production was revered throughout the United States. Now, the lake's fishing is often maligned. "Challenging" is a commonly used term when people refer to Oneida's fishing. Will the outfit be outwitted this year? Who knows? I have celebrated this annual spring rite for the past 24 years and look forward to repeating the event.

Oneida Lake's anglers have dealt with a changing fishery during the past few seasons. Zebra mussel infestations, enhanced water clarity, larger weed areas, cormorant predation, and a persistent drum population, have altered the solu-

tion set to our lake's equation for walleye success.

My angling approach will be basic. Jigging in 8 to 20 feet, near tributaries in which walleyes spawn, should prove as good an option as any. Variations of black, brown, purple, white, green, and yellow bucktails can be productive. Heddon "sonar" lures, bumped off the bottom like bucktails, work well, too.

Adding a little tinsel imparts a "fish scale flash" to the jig and increases your opportunities. May's water will be very cold, which mandates using a slow, deliberate jigging stroke. Even stopping for a second or two as you retrieve the jig, letting it rest briefly on the bottom, can produce strikes. Stinger hooks increase the catch to strike ratio and I use these on all my jigs.

Dress the jig with a nightcrawler to add scent and movement. If the bucktail is not producing, change to rubber or plastic twister tails. Berkeley Power Baits have a good selection of scent-enhanced bodies.

Whatever strategy you choose for opening weekend, include "safety" as an integral part of it. Oneida is shallow and is situated on a northwest-southeast axis. Nasty waves arise in minutes. If you have any doubts about fishing conditions, obey your instincts and don't venture onto the lake. You can safely fish from shore at Brewerton and Sylvan Beach. It's a long season - let's enjoy it.

And remember - "catch a few, release a few, and we'll always have fish for tomorrow."

Annual Meeting at Cicero-North Syracuse High School - April 26, 2000

by Tony Buffa

On Wednesday, April 26, the Cicero-North Syracuse High School Auditorium will host the OLA's 55th annual meeting. Doors will open at 6 p.m. Early attendance is encouraged so that you can enjoy our numerous exhibits.

You can register for the Cicero Lions' Club's Walleye Derby at the meeting. Bonus money prizes for derby winners who are OLA members will be given - for the 9th straight year. Association membership renewals and new sign-ups begin at 6:15. Only members will be eligible for the GPS (Global Position System) drawings. You don't have to be a member to attend our meeting, however.

This year's event will begin with a

short business session at 7:00. Our theme is *Oneida Lake - Problems, Perspectives, and Initiatives...Where Are We Headed?* Officials from the DEC and Cornell's Shackelton Point Field Station will update topics such as our fishery's status, spawning data from the hatchery, and the cormorant harassment program's results.

The DEC is expected to discuss its action plan for enhancing our lake's walleye population through the stocking of pond fingerlings. DEC officials will also justify the rationale for imposing the 18" - 3 fish limit, which takes effect on October 1, 2000. This year's meeting is a *must* to attend if you care about Oneida Lake's invaluable walleye fishery.

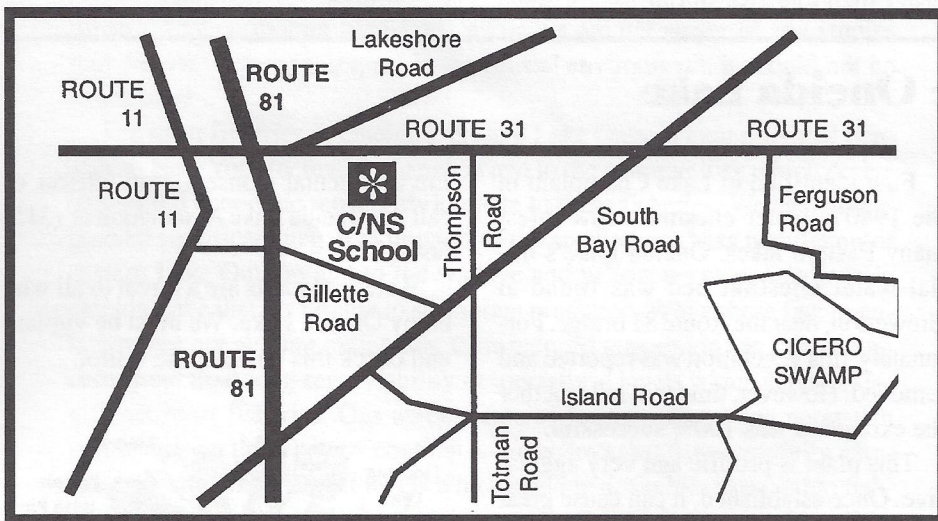
The assembly will close with drawings for the GPS units and the distribution of door prizes. We encourage you to join us. Please - mark your calendars - April 26 - CNS - 6:00 - OLA!

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 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 an OLA active member on request.

The 2000 Nominated Directors are: George Angeloro, Anthony Buffa, Tom Giufre, Chuck Abate, Robert Cote, Robert Ripberger and Jack Henke



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.

A New, Old Fish At Constantia

by Richard Colesante

The Oneida Hatchery began raising lake sturgeon several years ago and visitors to our facility have delighted in viewing these living fossils. Now, as a part of our state's effort at restoring endangered fish species, the Hatchery has become a nursery for another prehistoric specimen - the paddlefish.

Paddlefish deserve some special attention. They are one of only two living species within their fish family. They live for over 20 years and grow to 7 feet. Some paddlefish weigh over 100 pounds! One of the last recorded paddlefish in our state came from Chautauqua Lake, near Jamestown, in 1872. The fish topped the scales at 120 pounds.

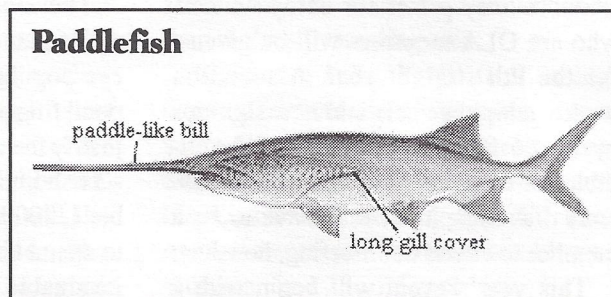
A paddlefish's stated length can be deceiving because a flat, spatula-shaped

snout comprises about half of it. The snout serves a feeding purpose as it deflects water and microorganisms into the fish's gaping mouth. In one of nature's marvelous ironies, huge paddlefish, like whales, feed on zooplankton and similar, tiny water creatures.

The Oneida Hatchery obtains paddlefish eggs from Kentucky. These hatch very quickly and, soon, the small fish begin feeding on a formulated diet. Their snout develops within weeks of their birth and, when the fish reach 4" long, the "paddle" measures 2". Paddlefish grow about an inch a week in summer, faster than any fish in our

hatchery system. We plan on stocking 500 fish each year over the next 4 years. Stocking length ranges from 10" to 15".

Come and visit our hatchery. Experience sturgeon, paddlefish and savor a bit of ichthyological history. We are open daily, April 1 to September 15, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



Water Chestnuts Invade Oneida Lake

by Chuck Abate

As if we didn't have enough worries about Oneida Lake, with zebra mussels and cormorants and all. It appears that we're going to have to contend with another unwelcome invader - the oriental water chestnut.

Don't get the idea that your OLA Board of Directors totally rejects water chestnuts. On the contrary, most of us confess to loving them. It's just that we savor them in our Chinese menu, where they belong, and not in our sporting environment. Left uncontrolled, this glossy, green, triangular-leaved plant can easily choke the bodies of water that it invades. The water chestnut eliminates native plants and reduces oxygen levels, which increases the potential for fish kills. Dense, nearly impenetrable water chestnut growth can make aquatic recreational activities nearly impossible. In addition, the plants' sharply spined nuts pose a threat to swimmers' and waders' unprotected feet.

First identified in Lake Champlain in the 1940's, water chestnuts now infest many Eastern lakes. Oneida Lake's initial water chestnut bed was found at Brewerton, near the Route 81 bridge. Fortunately, this vegetation was reported and removed. However, time will tell whether the extraction was 100% successful.

This plant is prolific and very aggressive. Once established, it can cause great damage to our lake's environment.

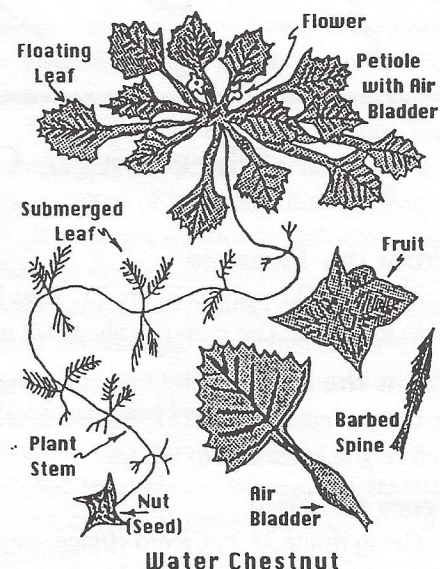
What can we do to help prevent water chestnuts from spreading? First, familiarize yourself with the plant. Learn how to identify it. Please refer to the graphic accompanying this article for identification tips.

If you find water chestnuts on or near Oneida Lake, note the precise location of these plants. If possible, harvest one of them. Keep it damp by wrapping it in a wet paper towel and storing it in a zip-lock bag.

Then, contact your Department of

Environmental Conservation Officer or call the Oneida Lake Association at (315) 668-9276.

Water chestnuts are a threat to all who enjoy Oneida Lake. We must be vigilant and check this unwelcome visitor.



Water Chestnut

DEC Responds Positively to Cormorant Threat

In a letter to the Office of Migratory Bird Management of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency that controls cormorant policy, Gerald Barnhart, the New York State DEC's Director of the Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources strongly articulated his department's position on the cormorant question. Director Barnhart's words are heartening and encouraging. Your Board of Directors received a copy of his letter and we include excerpts of it below:

"State and Federal agencies have a stewardship responsibility to maintain native species at least at a Minimum Viable Population (MVP) size, and to actively assist those depressed below that level. In addition, it is important to recognize that part of the mission of any natural resource agency should include the balancing of public benefits. We are concerned that there does not appear to be any potential for management responsibility between MVP and unchecked cormorant populations, except under very stringent circumstances. This apparently excludes management to benefit native wildlife species, including sport and commercial fish, unless they are threatened below MVP. In our opinion, this is a serious policy oversight...

We have conducted extensive studies on the relationship of sport fisheries populations and cormorant populations in both Lake Ontario and Oneida Lake. These studies indicate that sport fish populations are being negatively impacted by cormorant predation. While we are not aware of any studies that discuss cormorant impact in the coastal environment, it should not be overlooked...

The sport fisheries in Oneida Lake and Lake Ontario long provided benefits to New York recreational anglers and to the communities which derive substantial economic returns attributable to these fisheries. We have documented significant negative impacts to the smallmouth bass population of eastern Lake Ontario and to the walleye and yellow perch populations in Oneida Lake that we impute to cormorant predation. While these fish populations are not nearing extinction, their reduced magnitude has raised concern about their long-term viability - especially at levels which support significant sport fisheries. Our assessments of factors influencing sport fish populations in these waters continues. We believe that to successfully manage the fish populations at levels which provide desirable, sustainable fisheries, we will need to manage cormorant populations impacting these fisheries...

We are equally concerned with the impacts that cormorants have on other colonial nesting species. We believe that cormorants have and continue to cause populations of common terns (a state listed threatened species) to be lower than desirable on Oneida Lake...

It is our position that the Fish and Wildlife Service needs to develop a set of population goals for cormorants that take into consideration all aspects of management and all points of view. In addition, we believe that this population goal should be stratified by region of the country. Once these are determined, each state will be able to establish distribution and population objectives within a common framework."

The Oneida Lake Association commends Director Barnhart and the DEC for their stand on this crucial issue.

MTBE - A New Threat to Our Water Resources

by Bill Shriever

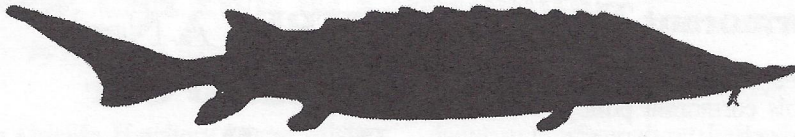
For the last ten years, Oneida Lake and its fragile ecosystem have been assaulted by invaders that have collectively diminished the lake's recreational value. Zebra mussels, water chestnuts, cormorants, and water level management problems have exacted their tolls. Now, a common fuel additive - MTBE - poses another threat.

MTBE, more formerly known as Methyl Tertiary Butyl Ether, has been used for decades to improve gasoline engine performance and to reduce carbon monoxide emissions. This additive replaced lead, which was phased out during the late 1970's.

While MTBE has been effective in reducing vehicles' toxic emissions, it has seeped into water systems and, in recent years, has been discovered in 5 to 10 per cent of public drinking water reserves. It is *thought* that current levels of the contaminant are, in most cases, too low to pose a public health threat. Even these amounts, however, can cause problems with taste and odor. The issue is that we *don't know* what MTBE's effects on the public might be. In 1998 the chemical was placed on the EPA's contaminants of concern list.

Leaking storage tanks, gas spills in ground and surface waters, and recreational watercraft releasing unburned fuel are leading sources of MTBE contamination. These conditions exist around Oneida Lake and throughout New York State.

California and Maine have banned the use of MTBE to protect their waters from the chemical's potential harm. The Oneida Lake Association believes that New York should follow these states' lead.



Oneida Fish Cultural Station Report

by the Station's Staff

The New York State Fish Cultural Station at Constantia was rebuilt following the 1991 production season. The new facility's first walleye egg-taking year occurred in 1993 and, from that date to the present, the Hatchery has stocked 1.24 billion walleye fry in our state. Of these, 942 million went into Oneida Lake. This amounts to 76% of the total amount.

Cornell University, under contract with our Department of Environmental Conservation, studies Oneida Lake's fish populations. In the 1990's, our lake's walleye population has hovered around 250,000. This is a low figure, when compared with walleye numbers from previous decades. Cornell believes that there are three factors responsible for this sustained decline. These factors are:

1. Cormorant consumption of walleyes. Cormorants also eat large numbers of yellow perch, walleyes' favorite prey.
2. An unexplained increase in mortality of small walleyes (those less than 1.75 inches in length).
3. Angler catches.

Since cormorants and the increase in mortality are recent phenomena, these forces have probably had the greatest effect on the size of our current walleye population.

To help reverse the walleye population decline, the hatchery has increased Oneida Lake's fry stocking by 50%. In addition, we may place 500,000 walleye "pond fingerlings" (1.5" to 2" long) in the lake. Compared to walleye fry, fingerlings may have better chances for survival. However, we will only stock them if Cornell determines that conditions are favorable for their survival.

Cornell researchers are now investigating the walleye mortality question. This fall, anglers will harvest walleyes under more restrictive rules. Fish will have to measure 18" and the limit is 3 per day. Cormorant management will continue under current guidelines and may become more effective in the future. Hopefully, if we all do our parts, Oneida Lake's walleye population will expand.

Eggs and fish produced at the Hatchery are a public resource and have never been sold by the Department of Environmental Conservation nor by the Hatchery's employees. Under certain conditions, New York State's hatcheries (including Oneida) have given or traded quantities of fish or fish products to other states and related public agencies. This has occurred only when surplus fish are available. Our state's programs have never been jeopardized. Funding for our Hatchery's operation comes from sportsmen's license sales. Our new building's construction was financed by general tax dollars.

We have always maintained an "open door" policy and visitors are welcome at any time. Your concerns are our concerns. We delight in sharing our knowledge and programs with you.

A Fresh Look at the OLA Web Site!

by Chuck Abate

If you haven't visited the Oneida Lake Association's web site recently, you should check us out again. The site's layout, format, and content have been extensively revised and, in our humble opinion, we think we're looking much more attractive these days!

Our new home page features some nice photography of Frenchman's and Dunham's Islands, as well as a number of additions to our linked pages. Of course, we've retained our traditional material - general information about the OLA, historical lore about the lake and its environs, a copy of the Oneida Lake Profile, information about membership in the OLA, a message from OLA President Bill Schriever, and links to other related and useful web sites.

We've added a number of features to the web site, including timely news about issues that might affect or interest members and friends of the OLA, selected archived articles from past issues of the *OLA Bulletin*, a map and listing of marinas and launch sites on the lake, free downloads, and information on how to contact the OLA via voice mail or fax.

We hope that you like our new look, as well as the fresh features, because this web page was created for you - our members and friends. We're already planning periodic additions to our site, so bookmark us in your browser and visit often.

If you haven't already done so, please take the opportunity to browse through our new and improved web page. We think that you'll enjoy the experience and return often!

Our web address is:

<http://web.a-znet.com/ola>

Or you can visit:

<http://www.yahoo.com>
and search on "Oneida Lake."

The State of Oneida Lake

by Edward L. Mills and Lars G. Rudstam
Cornell Field Station

The state of Oneida Lake and its environment contains mixed reviews. On the positive side, water conditions have improved to a high quality level. Chemical loadings of phosphorus, for example, have significantly declined because of upgraded sewage treatment facilities and improved land management. However, the loss of sediment due to land erosion continues to be a problem in some areas.

While water quality has improved, Oneida Lake can be considered to be under "biological stress." Invasions by exotic species have changed conditions in the lake's ecosystem. A prime example is the introduction of zebra mussels. While feeding by mussels has cleared the lake, plant growth has spread to deeper water and turbid water fish like walleyes must live in lighted habitats that are unnatural to them. It is also disturbing to note that the number of Oneida Lake's mollusk species has dwindled since zebra mussels arrived. Where there were once 40 species in

1918, there are now 21. Water level controls and human modifications of near shore areas have also contributed to this reduction.

Recent drops in the populations of walleyes and yellow perch are of paramount concern. The cause for low numbers of walleyes and perch is increased mortality in two stages of their lives. These stages are 1) the first year of life and 2) from age 1 to age 4. The reason for increased mortality in the first year of life is unknown, but it is possible that increased water clarity may result in greater vulnerability of young walleyes. In early summer's clearer water, young walleyes could be more easily consumed by larger fish. On the other hand, fish such as emerald shiners and freshwater drum are in their larvae stage in late summer - when the lake becomes green and more turbid. Murky water protects these fish and their populations are doing well. If water clarity leads to greater early mortality for walleyes and perch, there is reason for concern.

The cause for additional natural mortality of walleyes and perch beyond age 1 is cormorant predation. Cormorants are fish-eating birds whose populations have recently

rebounded, nationally and locally, in response to improved environmental conditions. Because of the birds' effect on walleyes and perch, we should implement appropriate management practices that strike a balance between those wishing cormorant eradication and those desiring their protection. Fortunately, the long-term data on fish populations and the current analysis of cormorants' impact on these populations allow for a scientifically sound evaluation of different management options.

The exotic species issue was elevated to a new level this past summer when water chestnuts were found in Oneida Lake. These plants' thick growth has the potential to become a major impediment to recreation and can impact the natural plant community.

The lake's future will likely include more invasions by exotic species. For example, Baltic Sea species now in the Great Lakes will soon enter Oneida, thus adding biological stress. These species include fish like the round and tubenose gobies, and zooplankton like the fishhook water flea. The potential influence of these, and other, pests has added uncertainty to Oneida Lake's future.

KIRCHNER'S FISHING KAMP

North Shore
of Oneida Lake

Owners are:
Bill & Nancy Kirchner

15 Years Experience

Clean Modern One or Two Bedroom Cottages
Furnished with microwaves & Cable Television

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boat & Motor Rental | <input type="checkbox"/> Docking (Day, Week,
or Season) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing Licenses | <input type="checkbox"/> Launch on Premises |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fish Cleaning Facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Electric at dock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas at dock | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bait & Tackle | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open for winter ice fishing | |

812 State Rte 49 / PO Box 264 / Cleveland, NY 13042

(315) 675-3662

www.fishoneida.com



Res: (315) 675-3661

(315)668-9572
Fax 668-3121

NORTH SHORE
• PROPERTIES •

CAROL HOLST

Licensed Real Estate Salesperson
2845 Route 49 • West Monroe, New York 13167



BORIO'S RESTAURANT

"Overlooking Beautiful Oneida Lake"

Six minutes from the PennCan Mall
Off Lakeshore Road

■ LUNCHES ■ DINNERS
■ RECEPTIONS ■ BANQUETS

CLOSED ON MONDAYS

699-2249

HARDTER WELDING SUPPLY

PROPELLER SERVICE & REPAIR

Inboard & Outboard / Repaired,
Pitched & Balanced

204 Salina St. **457-3181** Liverpool, NY

BREWERTON PHARMACY

Nicholas & Nancy Chervinsky
Registered Pharmacists

- Cosmetics ■ Film - Cameras ■ Bathing Supplies
- Suntan Preparations ■ Sunburn Remedies

Next to the Bridge
Brewerton, NY

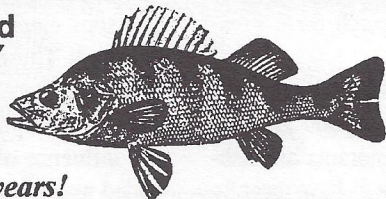
676-4441

Mickey's Bait & Tackle

715 South Bay Road
North Syracuse, NY

458-7998

*An Oneida Lake
Tradition for over 50 years!*



Boat Works

Ltd. One Stop
Headquarters For All
Your Boating Needs

Marine Supplies / Hardware
Accessories / Rigging

- Hobie Cat
- Day Sailers
- Inflatables
- Precision
- Capri
- Dinghies
- Hobie One
- Canoes
- Paddle Boats
- Cleaners & Waxes
- Motor Flushers
- Oils & Lubricants
- Safety Equipment
- Trailer Parts
- Paint

**The Boating Store... that's
not just for boaters!**

(315) 438-8915

CES Certified Environmental Services, Inc.

1401 Erie Blvd. E. / Syracuse, NY 13210-1207
Phone 315 478-2374 / Fax 315 478-2107

- Asbestos Surveys
- Asbestos Abatement
- TCLP Analysis
- Health & Safety Services
- Asbestos & Lead Training
- Waste Characterization
- Underground Storage Tank Removal
- Asbestos Analysis
- Laboratory Testing
- Environmental Audits
- Stack Testing
- Field Sampling
- Sample Pick-Up
- Water Quality
- Site Remediation
- Project Management
- Drinking Water Analyses

New York State Department of Health Certified
NYSDOH ELAP ID # 11246

New York State Department of Labor
Licensed Asbestos Contractor
NYS DOL License # AC-93-0415

- In House Laboratory Services
- Complete Client Confidentiality
- NYSDEC, NYSDOH & USEPA Approved Methodologies
- Documented Chain-of-Custody
- Strict Quality Assurance / Quality Control (QA/QC) Practices

Treasure Island

Cast Your Dreams in Gold!

Alex Mosher, Thousand Island Region Jeweler, now offering cast in 14K gold: intricate, one of a kind productions, of your boat, cottage, local lighthouse or landmark. Deep relief, two dimensional renderings fashioned into highly detailed pendants, pins or tacks.

Diamonds, gems or enamel accents available.

NEW RELEASE!

Oneida Lake in 14K Gold or Sterling Silver. Available as a pin or pendant. Call or e-mail for photos, details and prices.

13 James Street, Alexandria Bay, NY 13607
Phone: (315) 482-2294

E-mail - treasureislands@yahoo.com
Web Site - <http://treasureislands.net>

Weber's Restaurant

German Specialties & Catering

- Fresh Steaks & Chops
- Fresh Seafood
- German Specialties
- Weekend Specials

Daily Lunch & Dinner Specials

"12 Beers On Tap"

(315) 472-0480 820 Danforth Street
Corner of First North



AEGIS

Group of
Central
New York
Incorporated

EDWIN L. OLMSTEAD

The Business & Personal
Insurance Specialists

6250 South Bay Road
PO Box 3580
Syracuse, New York 13320
Phone 315 699-5195
Fax 315 699-8357

FREMAC MARINE

Sales, Service & Marina

Wellcraft, Tracker & Nitro Bass Boats

Johnson, Yamaha, Mercury & Force Outboards
Mercruiser, Volvo Sx Cobra & Yamaha I/O's

(315) 633-2661

Located on Route 31 in Lakeport, NY

COMPLETE
MARINE
SERVICE &
PARTS
FACILITY

BREWERTON

BOATYARD, INC.

All Inboard & Inboard/Outboards
Wood Fiberglass & Metal Hull Repairs

315-676-3762

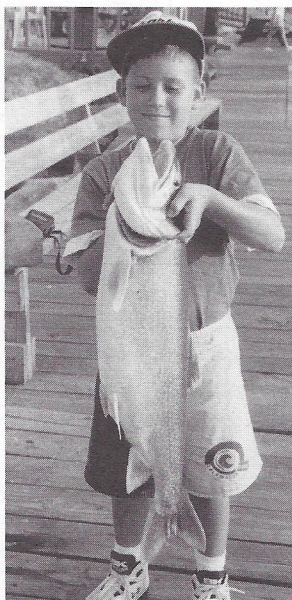
5405 Bennett St.
Brewertown, NY

Large Ship Store
Open Year Round!



Captain
Tony Buffa's

FISHING CHARTERS



Lake Ontario

*Noted for trophy size Trout
& Salmon*

"The Bandito II"

30 Foot Sportcraft with a 10 Ft
beam and a 6 pass. capacity

Port: Oswego Marina,
Oswego, New York

Oneida Lake

*New York State's
Finest Walleye Fishery*

"My Gal Cal II"

28 Foot, OffShore with
a 6 Passenger capacity.

Port: Thrall's Lakeport Marina
Lakeport, New York

(315) 633-2694

Contact OCSB for all your
business and banking needs.

OCSB BANK

ON US

Oswego County Savings Bank

OCSB North Syracuse:

700 N. Main St., N. Syracuse 458-8131

OCSB MAIN: 44 E. Bridge St., Oswego 343-4100

OCSB WEST: 30 West Utica St., Oswego 343-1100

OCSB FULTON: 1930 State Route 3, Fulton 593-2164

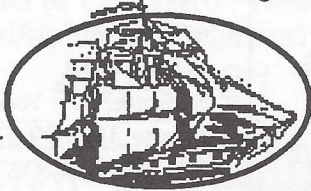
OCSB PULASKI: 4879 N. Jefferson St., Pulaski 298-5117



MEMBER
FDIC

Like having **BOSTON**
in *your* backyard!

Public
Boat
Launching!
Seasonal or
per Launch



Marine
Mechanic
on Premise

JOHNNIE'S PIER 31

— Restaurant & Marina —

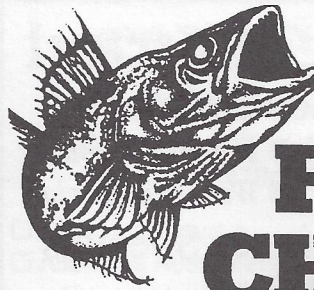
OPEN-YEAR-ROUND

Seafood-Steaks-Pasta

Overlooking Beautiful *Oneida Lake!*
Just 10 minutes from the Turning Stone Casino

Thruway Exit 34, Canastota, NY
3/4 mile west of Route 13 on Route 31

(315) 697-7007



Captain
Ray Brown's

FISHING CHARTER

Expert Walleye & Perch Fishing
on Oneida Lake

Fish aboard the 26' Thompson Hardtop

"OBSESSION II"

Conveniently Located at Marion Manor Marina

Fully Insured / USCG Licensed Captain

We use Daiwa Total Quality Equipment!

For Information & Reservations
on our 6 and 3 Hour Trips, call:

(315) 623-9886

e-mail: rbchart@dreamscape.com

Internet <http://www.fish4walleye.com>

ONEIDA LAKE

ASSOCIATION MEMBER

MEMBERSHIP \$3.00

**It's Your Lake
Help to Preserve It**

Complete information,
cut along dotted line and mail.

Oneida Lake Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 3536 Syracuse, New York 13220-3536

Membership VALID for January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2000

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone () _____

Please Support Your Advertisers

OLA

ONEIDA LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC.
PO BOX 3536
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK 13220-3536

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

SYRACUSE, NY
PERMIT NO. 575