

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Summer 2003

DEC Task Force Recommends Tougher Cormorant Controls!

By Jack Henke

There appears to be progress in the Oneida Lake Association's crusade to rid the lake of its destructive double-crested cormorant population.

A Cormorant Task Force was convened by the DEC this past spring. Various stakeholder groups, including the OLA, were represented. The Task Force's purpose was to determine how many cormorants would be permitted to stay on Oneida during summer.

The group officially agreed that 50 nesting cormorant pairs, not to exceed 100 birds, could live on our lake in summer. The agreement was that the number of nesting pairs would translate to the *total* number of birds allowed on the lake.

Currently, there are over 500 cormorants that call Oneida their summer home. Migrants swell this population to more than 2000 in early August. The Task Force's agreement would cap the lake's double-crested cormorant population at 100 – at all times.

The OLA applauds the decision. The accord is a blessing for the lake's environment, for the lake's people, and for the struggling economy of Central New York.

The news leads to a logical question – how would Oneida's cormorant population be reduced?

The United States Department of Agriculture includes a division called the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), for Wildlife Services. This agency has been responsible for Oneida Lake's cormorant hazing program that, during the past 5 years, has rid the lake of most birds after Labor Day.

Rich Chipman, New York State Direc-

tor of APHIS Wildlife Services, recently informed the OLA that his division's role on our lake has expanded. Congressman James Walsh obtained Federal funding that enables Chipman and his associates to increase their effectiveness in reducing cormorants' devastating influence on the lake.

The Wildlife Services' program combines active operations and research in this fashion:

First, cormorant populations will be surveyed on Oneida Lake and several nearby bodies of water. Having these statistics available will enable Wildlife Services' personnel to measure the impact of hazing Oneida's birds on neighboring lakes' cormorant populations.

Second, Wildlife Services has funded a new Cornell University study of our lake's common terns. The present cormorant hazing program does not appear to impact these birds. This fresh investigation will focus on potential effects that additional hazing might have on the terns. Cornell biologist Milo Richmond directs the research.

Third, Wildlife Services' operations' technicians have placed radio telemetry devices on 50 cormorants and set up a data logger on Oneida Lake (that registers the

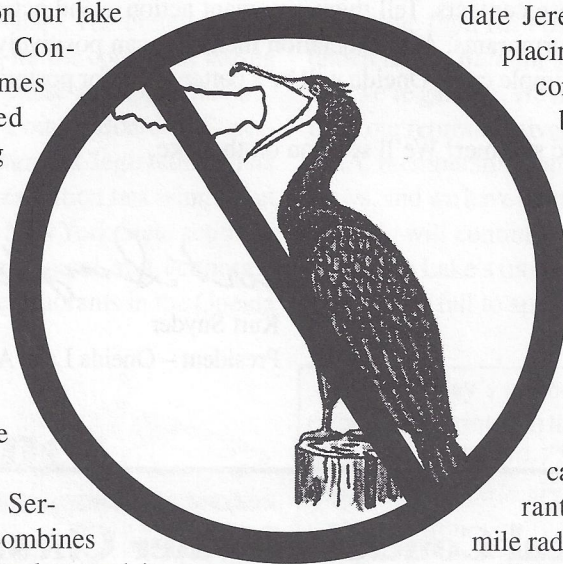
birds' radios' signals). In addition, they have assisted Cornell Ph.D. candidate Jeremy Coleman in placing time-depth recorders on the same birds. Coleman's research will document cormorants' feeding range within the lake. The former devices will track birds when hazing begins (they can identify cormorants within a three mile radius.)

Chipman stated that his agency's goal is to begin this year's hazing program in early August.

If this occurs, it would be an incredible blessing for Oneida Lake's beleaguered walleye and yellow perch populations. The lake's August cormorant population exceeds 2000 birds. Each adult bird consumes about a pound and a half of fish daily. Simple math shows that the lake loses around *1.5 tons of fish every day when cormorant populations peak.*

Expanded hazing will end this tragedy. Limiting Oneida's summer cormorant population to 100 birds would be a giant step toward restoring the natural order in New York State's most productive body of water. The OLA is confident that fish stocks will dramatically rebound.

Cormorant population reductions cannot begin soon enough.



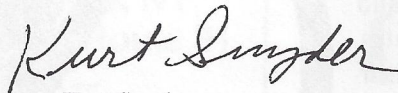
President's Message

Holy cow! The sun is shining, the fish are biting, and the wind velocity has fallen below Mach-3! This message will be short which is, sadly, the way summer has evolved thus far. I'm looking forward to evenings and weekends without cold, damp, blustery weather so that we can venture out and enjoy Oneida Lake.

Before the boat leaves the dock, however, I want to congratulate all OLA members who contacted their elected officials regarding the cormorant issue. You got involved – you voiced your views to the movers and shapers who craft public policy. Our State Senators and Assemblypersons received huge numbers of calls and letters. They are working hard, along with the Department of Environmental Conservation, to solve our cormorant problem.

If you've forgotten, or haven't had time to call or write your representatives, you can still make those contacts. Tell them you want action – and action NOW – to rid Oneida Lake of cormorants. All Association members can positively impact our lake by making a few simple calls. Oneida will be a better place for posterity because of our efforts.

Have a fantastic summer! We'll see you on the lake.



Kurt Snyder
President – Oneida Lake Association

Chemical Control of Water Chestnuts

By Kristy Szprygada

Mechanical harvesting and hand-pulling programs, although extremely valuable, have been unable to keep up with the rapid spread of water chestnuts in Central New York. The Oneida Lake Association was issued a permit to chemically treat chestnuts in the lake in April of 2003. A company certified by New York State applied a granular form of the chemical Aqua-Kleen in June of 2003. The granules will sink to the sediments, dissolve within 4-6 hours of application, and be absorbed by the chestnuts' roots.

More than 75% of the treated water chestnuts should begin to brown, wilt, and die within 3 weeks. Remember, however, that chestnuts have a tremendous seed bank and re-growths can quickly occur. Plant resurgences do not indicate ineffective chemical treatments. Aqua-Kleen is incapable of penetrating the chestnut seed's coat. The main goal of chemical treatment is to eliminate this year's plants before they produce new seeds.

We must combine mechanical harvesting, hand pulling, chemical treatments, and public education to manage and eradicate chestnuts from our area. The Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board coordinated the permit applications that enabled chemical treatments to begin.

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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EDITORIAL

In Appreciation

The Oneida Lake Association's lobbying campaign regarding the double-crested cormorant issue achieved excellent results. Our representatives responded and strongly conveyed their support for the OLA's cause to the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Assemblyman David Townsend, Assemblyman Bill Magee, Assemblyman Jeff Brown and Senator James Wright interceded with the DEC on our behalf. In the finest democratic tradition, our voices became theirs as they modeled an ideal for responsive government.

Senator John DeFrancisco was a driving force within the DEC's Cormorant Task Force. The Senator, who sent staff to every Task Force meeting, championed the

OLA's position. "We represent people who represent Oneida Lake," he pledged. "We're here to make sure that their interests are satisfied."

Assemblyman Thomas P. DiNapoli, of the 16th District, is the Chairman of the Assembly's Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation. Although his district does not include Oneida Lake, Assemblyman DiNapoli empathized with our message and lent his office's clout to our ideas.

Congressman James Walsh again demonstrated an outstanding commitment to Oneida Lake's welfare. His tireless efforts to secure funding for the cormorant hazing program deserve praise and appreciation.

The Madison County Board of Supervisors is that county's legislature. The Board passed a resolution last winter that called for strong New York State action to eliminate the ecological and economic harm caused by cormorants in the Oneida

Lake region. Copies of that resolution were sent to appropriate state officials.

Several Town Boards, among them the Towns of Sullivan and Constantia, approved similar resolutions.

Sincere words of "thanks" go to these representatives.

We can show additional appreciation when November's elections occur. The 3500+ OLA members, their spouses, families, and friends generate in excess of 20,000 votes. There's no better place to remember our political friends than at the ballot box.

But the fight isn't over. The news contained in this *Bulletin's* lead article shows that we're gaining. We may need more help from our representatives. We know that the OLA membership can loudly voice its views, and we have confidence that elected officials will continue to heed its cry.

Oneida Lake's future depends on us. We must never fail to speak out.

The OLA Fishing Corner

A Few Summer Fishin' Tips *by Captain Ray Brown*

It's been an excellent walleye year on Oneida Lake. Lots of fish and lots of keepers have made our lake's anglers happy.

We've taken the vast majority of these walleyes by jigging. Black and purple bucktail jigs proved most productive through the end of June. We place a piece of fat nightcrawler on the jig's hook to increase its appeal. We work these lures slowly, bouncing them off bottom with a steady motion. Walleyes often strike softly so we stay very alert for subtle pick-ups.

A few factors can make a difference between an excellent outing and a fishless trip. I've observed many anglers' habits over the years and want to share some tips that work for me.

First, be persistent. After you decide to fish a spot, scout it thoroughly. Use your electronics to find schools of walleyes and

perch. Slowly move over the area and study your fish-finders. If you have a good system, you'll be able to easily pin point the fish you seek.

Stay persistent as you fish. Don't give up if you fail to catch fish on the first drift. Move your boat and shift the drift slightly. Work the area thoroughly. Change jigs or bait if your present rig isn't working. Keep your offering near the bottom. That's where walleyes and perch usually feed.

Avoid groups of boats that often gather on hotspots. Remember that walleyes are noise-sensitive and move if disturbed. For example, we had fine walleye angling by Messenger's Reef, west of Lewis Point, in June. Word spread. Large groups of boats congregated on the reef. Fishing was poor where the boats clustered because of the noise they created. I fished away from

the group and was rewarded with excellent action.

Fish Oneida Lake this summer. There's a lot of superb fishing, and good times, to be had. Best of luck to all.



Cornell biologist Tom Brooking caught this 51" sturgeon while fishing Messenger's Bay with Captain Ray Brown. The fish weighed over 40 pounds and was stocked in Oneida in 1995. It was, of course, released unharmed.

OLA Tourney Promotes Youth Fishing

If there's any doubt about the quality of Oneida Lake's fish, that feeling was thoroughly quashed by the results of the annual "Take a Kid Fishing Derby," held on June 28 and 29.

At the Derby's East End headquarters at Ta-Ga-Soke Campground at Fish Creek Landing, Co-Chairman Bill Girvan reported that, in the "ages 6 and under" division, Christopher Worden of Verona Beach trolled up an impressive 21-3/4 inch walleye. Tiffany Worden, of East Syracuse, caught a twin to that pike to lead the "ages 7-9" class.

Justin Sigler, from South New Berlin, landed a 17-1/4 inch smallmouth bass to head the "ages 10-12" division for that species. He was followed by Mike Kurdziolek, who nailed a 17 inch smallie.

Mike's brother Joe boated a 16-3/4 inch largemouth. Nick Monaco, of Utica, followed with a 14-1/2 incher.

In that same division, Bobby Worden of East Syracuse caught the East End's biggest walleye – a 22-3/4 inch beauty! He was followed by Verona Beach's Billy Bell with a 22 incher and Holland Patent's Greg Buswell, who landed an 18-1/8 inch fish.

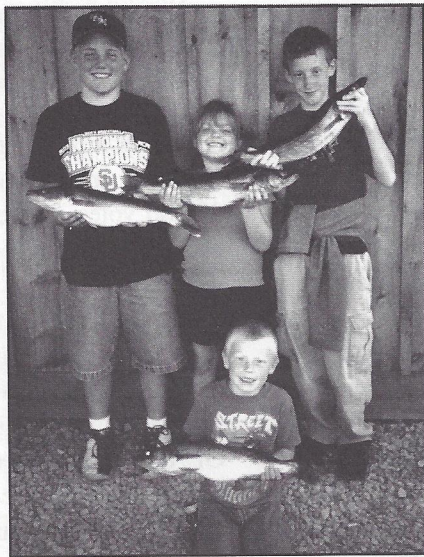
Chris Lewicki, of Utica, brought in a 16 inch smallmouth bass and a hefty 14-1/2 inch bullhead in the "ages 13-15" derby slot.

The derby's West End headquarters was Brewerton Sports. Co-Chairman Steve Rogers reported that kids entered

some very impressive fish at his store. Matt Wilcinski of Bridgeport led the "age 6 and under" class with a superb 24 inch walleye. Jake Damewood, of North Syracuse, proudly entered a 16 inch smallmouth bass

in the same division. Eddie Rogers set the pace in the "ages 10-12" field with an exceptional 18 inch smallmouth. Michael Carey, of Oswego, hauled in an 18-1/2 inch pickerel to add variety to the "age 7-9" division.

About one third of the fish entered were returned to the lake. The OLA encourages this noble practice, which enriches Oneida's fishery and teaches resource conservation to a new generation of anglers.



Family success at the Kids' Derby. Christopher Worden (kneeling) and, left to right, Bobby Worden, Tiffany Worden, and Billy Bell proudly display their fine walleyes.



Happiness is a big bass! Joe Kurdziolek radiates the joy of catching an excellent Oneida Lake largemouth.

Here Come The Bass Pros!

Big names. Big boats. Big money... and Oneida Lake's big bass will highlight the weekend of October 2-4, 2003 as the Northeast BASS Invitational Tournament revs up its competitive fires along Oneida Lake's shores.

The tournament, co-sponsored by ESPN and the Syracuse Convention and Visitors' Bureau, will attract about 350 fishers – 175 in both the amateur and professional divisions. These anglers are serious about their sport - it costs \$1000 to enter the popular fish-a-thon!

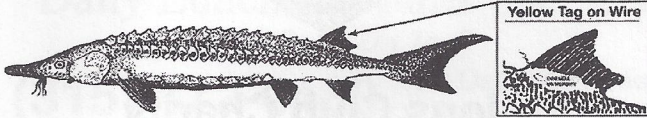
Prizes are, as you might imagine, impressive. The total weight of three days worth of "bassing" (5 fish per day, maximum) determines an angler's placement. Statistics like the total number of fish and the weight of a fisher's largest bass are used for tie breakers. Grand prize is \$15,000 and a new \$35,000-valued bass boat/motor combo. Second place pays \$5000 and a similar boat. Prizes are awarded down to the 50th finisher, who receives \$1000.

Weigh-ins will occur around 3 p.m. on each day at Oneida Shores Park at

Brewerton. Check the *Post-Standard* or call the Syracuse Convention and Visitors' Bureau (315-470-1900) for more details.

Cornell University biologists have trumpeted Oneida Lake's booming bass population for several years. Angling results have confirmed that great numbers of both small and largemouth bass thrive in the lake. It will be interesting to see how many fish a flotilla of aspiring Roland Martins can harvest. All bass are, of course, released after weigh-in.

REPORT TAGGED STURGEON



Sturgeon in Oneida Lake and nearby waters may be tagged. Biologists at Cornell University and NYSDEC need your help to track these fish. Yellow tags may be attached at the base of the dorsal fin. If you catch a tagged sturgeon, please write down the number on the tag and length of fish, release the fish immediately, and call Cornell University at (315) 633-9243 or contact NYSDEC at (315) 785-2262 as soon as possible.



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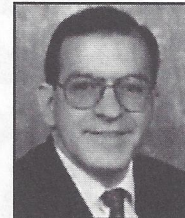
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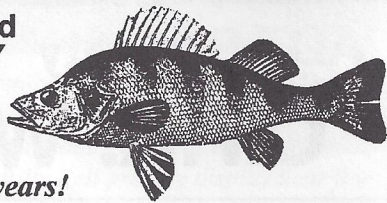
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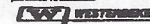
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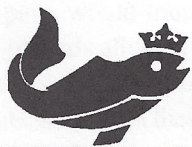
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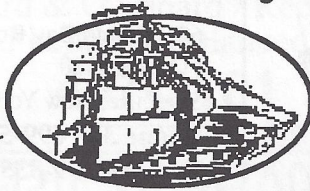
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