

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2008

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Welcome to the OLA!

The Oneida Lake Association's board of directors welcomes all returning members and the hundreds of new members who have joined us in the fight to preserve and protect one of New York's invaluable aquatic resources.

Directors often hear this question when people sign up for the OLA: "What do we get for our membership?" Here's a concise bullet-point list that summarizes some of our organization's benefits.

- Members become a part of one of the strongest environmental advocacy groups in the country. Among the OLA's successes are controlling the lake's destructive double-crested cormorant population, persuading New York State to upgrade the Godfrey Point and South Shore Boat Launches, establishing public fishing access sites by the Route 81 Bridge, and rebuilding the Constantia Hatchery into a state-of-the-art walleye propagation facility. Every member adds strength to the OLA.
- Members' voices are heard through the OLA's board of directors. Contacting a director is often an easy matter because most live in lakeside communities. If you don't know a director, however, you can use the "Contact Us" link on the OLA web site's home page. In addition, you can write: OLA Board of Directors, Box 3536, Syracuse, NY 13220. You'll be reached shortly after we receive your message. The board values every member's opinion.
- Members receive the *Oneida Lake Bulletin*, the OLA's biannual publication. The *Bulletin* addresses all current issues that affect Oneida Lake and its people. This newsletter also contains timely articles about ecology, boating, and history.
- The board often contacts members when critical issues arise. For example, hundreds of members responded to the board's requests for letters/emails during the OLA's crusade for cormorant control. One state official labeled this successful campaign a "classic lobbying effort."

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To Our New OLA Members:

We welcome you to our association and thank you for the confidence and support your membership signifies. You have joined one of the oldest environmental protection organizations in the United States and can take pride in its history and, especially, in its continuing efforts to protect Oneida Lake. You are a part of those endeavors; your membership helps to make a clean, healthy lake an everlasting reality.

Your board of directors looks forward to representing your interests in our common efforts at bettering the Oneida Lake environment. We hope that you will contact us with your concerns.

The OLA thanks you for your support. Welcome aboard.

Sincerely,
Lance Vella
President

Membership Drive – A Tremendous Success

Last summer, the OLA initiated a membership drive that contacted people who lived within a quarter mile of the lakeshore. Three thousand two hundred households received letters that detailed the OLA's philosophy, cited the association's goals, and appealed to public concern for the lake's preservation and enhancement. The letter asked residents to consider joining the association, stating that doing so is an excellent "investment in Oneida Lake's future."

As a result of this canvassing, over nine hundred new members joined the OLA! Compared with nationwide statistics for similar efforts, the OLA's drive achieved outstanding success.

How does a larger membership help the OLA? Basically, it gives our organization an increased clout in its advocacy efforts for causes that benefit our lake and its people. Every year, critical issues affecting Oneida Lake arise; the OLA is the only group that is totally dedicated to addressing these problems. In doing so, the OLA often contacts elected officials and basic American democracy teaches that public servants listen very carefully when associations with more than 4,000 members express their views.

The OLA asks all members to help expand on this success. If you have family or friends who reside near the lake, tell them about the OLA. Spread the association's message; sign up more members.

Oneida Lake is our efforts' ultimate beneficiary.

President's Message

Prospects look good for the OLA in 2008. As I draft this letter in late winter, I can see scores of fishermen atop Oneida Lake's icy surface. Fantastic fishing produced hundreds of happy anglers this season.

Great fishing testifies to the effectiveness of our cormorant harassment program. Cornell biologists estimate that our lake's adult walleye population hovers around 400,000 and that, without the program, these numbers would fall to about 150,000. The harassment program has been an invaluable tool for restoring Oneida's fishery.

The OLA can smile this spring because our membership now exceeds 4,000! Past President Richard Colesante initiated a membership drive last summer; many of you responded and joined us. It is truly gratifying to realize that so many people understand the importance of protecting, preserving, and enhancing Oneida Lake.

We are currently working with state and local officials to create a new public access site at Oneida Lake's east end. A launch facility affording free public access would be an incredible asset. More news will appear in upcoming *Bulletins*.

Don't forget to follow state guidelines for containing VHS (Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia). As far as we know, this fish-destroying virus hasn't reached Oneida Lake. Let's do our part to keep it that way.

I look forward to seeing you at our annual meeting on Wednesday, April 30, at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Have a great spring – and a better summer!



Lance Vella
President - OLA

Water Chestnuts Kept in Check

by Kelly Somerlot

The "Adopt-A-Shoreline" program's volunteers, coordinated by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County, donated more than 130 hours last summer. These community-spirited people look for invasive plants and also pull water chestnuts, nurture native water lilies, and distribute informational publications. Volunteers currently work on Oneida Lake and several neighboring waters. About half of Oneida Lake's shore has been "adopted." To view a map of the area, visit www.cce.cornell.edu/onondaga and click on "Water Resources" - "Volunteers" - "Adopt-A-Shoreline Maps."

The Oneida Shores Rotary Club enjoyed another successful water chestnut "pull" at the fishing access area by the I-81 Bridge in Brewerton. About twenty volunteers (including Chris Condon - in the photo) spent a July evening removing a much-reduced chestnut colony. The colony's diminished size shows that eradication efforts during previous years worked well! Follow-up pulling sessions will occur next summer.

More volunteers are needed in 2008 to participate in an important pull at Big Bay, where observers have reported large beds of water chestnuts in the northern reaches. This year's plans also include continued monitoring of European frogbit infestations that are scattered throughout the lake. Individuals or community organizations that want to assist with any of the 2008 chestnut control efforts can contact Cooperative Extension at (315) 424-9485.

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 Kurt Snyder
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Terms Expiring April 30, 2009

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EDITORIAL

Of Buoys and Thin Ice...

Oneida Lake boasts an invaluable buoy system. The New York State Canal Corporation maintains the tall green and red buoys that mark the lake's navigational channel. These buoys are essential aids for Oneida Lake's boaters.

The Canal Corporation, however, neglected to install many of these buoys last year. Instead, they replaced these highly visible (eight to ten feet tall) buoys with smaller (around four feet high) markers at many locales (109, 111, 115, 117, and 119 among them). The diminutive buoys confused boaters and compromised navigational clarity. Indeed, during the lake's frequent storms, the shorter markers often temporarily disappeared in swells between wave crests. Many navigators couldn't see the buoys.

The OLA strongly encourages the Canal Corporation to return to past practice and install the larger buoys for the

upcoming navigational season. These buoys marked the lake's channel for decades. For maximum boating safety, they belong there today.

Oneida Lake supports both open water and ice cover navigation. Hundreds of snowmobiles and ATVs cruise the lake during winter. Unsafe ice areas, such as the spots where tributaries empty into the lake, are perennially dangerous locales. Moving water creates thin, unstable ice that often can't support winter recreational vehicles.

One particularly problematic area occurs where Chittenango Creek flows into the lake north of Bridgeport. This season, the Bridgeport Volunteer Fire Department was called three times in one evening alone to rescue six individuals who were riding snowmobiles that fell through ice at the creek's mouth. Bridgeport Fire Chief Paul Smith told the *Bulletin* staff about a night

several years ago when his department pulled nine sleds and twelve people from that same place. Fortunately, no fatalities occurred; shallow water probably saved lives.

What can be done to correct the problem? Snowmobiling has been an Oneida Lake right and tradition since the first machines appeared on the lake in the 1950s. The OLA would like to see the sport's safety enhanced. Potential solutions exist. Perhaps the DEC could maintain an updated website containing daily "thin ice" postings. Local snowmobile clubs might sponsor similar sites or contribute to the DEC's. A marking system, whereby warning buoys bracket dangerous areas, has potential, but shifting ice and currents often move boundaries of unsafe ice masses. This negates the markers' purpose. At the very least, a dialogue could be opened between interested stakeholders. The DEC, the Canal Corporation, or the Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Department (which controls the lake's smaller "danger buoys") could take the lead and explore ways to correct this potentially deadly situation.

The OLA Fishing Corner

So, You Don't Like to Jig?!

by Capt. Tony Buffa

It's amazing. After a half-century fishing Oneida Lake (with thirty-three of those years as a charter captain), I still hear the same old refrain, "I know it works, but I don't like to jig!" The reasons abound...too much work...too difficult...I only catch zebra mussels. To this I say, "Stop complaining, start jigging, and you'll catch fish!" If you don't succeed at first, you'll learn through repetition. Make a commitment and you'll soon be jigging up limits of wall-eyes.

How do anglers jig effectively?

Let's start with rod requirements. Rods should be one-piece, stiff, sensitive, and preferably six and a half to seven feet long.

Graphite or boron is preferable. The modulus rating of a rod blank is a measure of its stiffness. Today's better graphite/boron blanks are constructed with 65 to 85 million modulus. Graphite/boron fibers act as transmitters and amplifiers; this accounts for today's sensitive rods. I prefer a medium-heavy spinning rod rated at 85 million. This is a fast action rod that puts the harmonics of the rod and the jig in perfect sync. Whippy, tippy rods just won't work.

Add to this a ten ball bearing spinning reel spooled with Berkeley Fireline Crystal (6lb. test) and you have a fine-tooled jigging weapon ready for "eye to eye" contact. This outfit's "feel" will surpass any of your



A fine example of Oneida Lake's quality fishing since cormorant controls arrived: Phil Sollecito, Jim Sollecito, and Congressman Jim Walsh (left to right) hoist their limit of hefty walleyes, caught last November with Captain Tony Buffa.

previous jigging combos, especially if you used a less sensitive rod and a reel filled with monofilament line. Mono stretches too much. This dulls the message coming from the jig's contact with the bottom - or with a fish!

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Oneida Lake, 2008

by the Cornell University Biological Field Station Staff

Oneida Lake is one of New York State's premier natural resources and is closely linked to our area's economic health. Although the lake's ecology has changed in recent decades, Oneida continues to offer diverse, high quality recreational opportunities. All indications point to Oneida Lake remaining an economic stimulus for the region's future.

Excellent Angling

Good fishing ruled in 2007 as walleye anglers caught 0.19 fish per hour, down slightly from the previous year, but still at levels that indicate a healthy population. Oneida's fishing fraternity spent nearly 370,000 hours on the lake, according to our surveys. This statistic, a good indicator of the lake's popularity, was the highest number we've recorded in a decade. More than 57,000 walleyes were caught, and 47,000 kept.

Superb smallmouth bass fishing continued in 2007, as anglers targeting "smallies" averaged 0.74 fish per hour. Changes in Oneida Lake over the last fifteen years created conditions favorable for smallmouth and largemouth bass and we expect their populations to thrive. Oneida was one of eleven lakes included in the 2006 B.A.S.S. Elite Tour, and was one of three stops in the 2007 B.A.S.S. Majors Tour. Next August, the lake will again host the Elite event. Oneida's bass fishery should continue to contribute strongly to our area's tourist economy.

Lower Yellow Perch Numbers

The lake's adult yellow perch population currently hovers around one million fish, well below the long-term average. We don't expect that to change soon. Despite the relatively low numbers of yellow perch, anglers targeting them averaged an impressive 1.8 fish per hour in 2007. Many factors contribute to angler success, including food abundance and weather, for example. While today's yellow perch population can produce good fishing, we would like to see it increase to ensure quality angling.

A Record White Perch Population

White perch, a non-native Oneida Lake fish, continue to be abundant and should remain so for several years. Eight strong year classes have hatched since 1995. This tremendous production should sustain a large adult population. Whites are fun to catch and delicious besides. Fry them, using your favorite yellow perch recipe. You won't regret it.

Sixty-Pound Sturgeons

Oneida's lake sturgeons continue to thrive. Our surveys netted many fish over fifty inches and a couple that exceeded sixty pounds! With these growth rates, we expect the oldest fish to attempt to spawn in the near future. Only time will tell if the sturgeon population can be self-sustaining. Remember that the lake sturgeon is listed as a "threatened" species and, when caught, must be immediately released. We encourage anglers who land tagged sturgeons to call us with the tag number and location (315) 633-9243.



Cornell intern Katherine White cradles a fifty-pound sturgeon.

VHS Update

Invasive organisms and plants continue to threaten Oneida Lake. The most recent menace to the lake is Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS). VHS, a new disease pathogen, affects freshwater fish, including walleyes, yellow perch and bass. VHS has not been identified in Oneida Lake, but has appeared in Conesus and Skaneateles Lakes and the Seneca-Cayuga Canal. Efforts to slow VHS's spread have led to new regulations on the harvest and use of baitfish. Please respect these rules because VHS is a serious threat.

In Conclusion...

2007 was one of the best years in Oneida Lake's recent history. Fishing was excellent, the lake waters were clear, and phosphorus levels and runoff conditions were optimal. A dry summer prevailed in the watershed, but these conditions did not limit access and use of the lake.

Despite a healthy report card in 2008, Oneida Lake needs to be continually evaluated. Approximately 400,000 adult walleyes inhabit the lake, but the population needs a strong year-class to maintain its size in the future. Oneida's yellow perch could also use a boost from an excellent year class.

The lake's summer temperatures have steadily increased and warmer winters have led to fewer days with stable ice cover. During last winter, for example, ice formed on December 19, completely broke up on January 9, and refroze on January 22.

Invasive species such as water chestnuts persist and VHS may be coming. Vigilance by individuals and communities can help control these problems.

Oneida Lake's environmental health is a barometer of the economic wealth of the Central New York region. Good fishing, boating, swimming, sailing, and sight-seeing, all the products of a clean lake, bring prosperity to our area. Every effort should focus on sustaining this positive connection.

Duck Dates: the OLA and the Citizen Task Force

by Matt Snyder

The subtle take of a walleye, followed by a bowed rod and flashing net...this is one of the most cherished thrills of the Oneida Lake sporting life.

But for many Oneida Lakers, putting walleyes "in the box" is only a prelude to late fall, when rods and tackle are set aside in favor of bobbing decoys, fast-tolling bluebills, booming shotguns, and the splashing of a happy retriever. Like the lake itself, the Oneida Lake Association is about more than fish and fishing. In keeping with the lake's proud heritage as a duck hunting mecca, the OLA works hard to advocate for waterfowl hunters, populations, and habitat.

In recent years, the OLA has been an invited member of the New York State DEC's Citizen Task Force, which sets season dates in our waterfowl hunting zone. The DEC established the task force system in 1997 to address the challenge of balancing the interests of all hunters in a large state like New York. Despite multiple duck season zones (New York has five, approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), this can be a daunting chore. Migratory patterns, water levels, weather, and hunters' traditional preferences vary significantly. The task force provides waterfowl hunters with opportunity to express their concerns and have a direct influence on establishing seasons.



A retriever proudly displays an Oneida Lake duck hunter's prize – a banded mallard drake.

All waterfowl zones except Lake Champlain boast task forces, each composed of about ten hunters. Members come from organizations with waterfowl interests or are chosen "at-large" by the DEC. A member of the board of directors, selected by the president, represents the OLA each year. Each task force participant has his/her contact information published by the DEC at <http://www.dec.ny.gov>, and in media outlets. These persons are required to seek out other waterfowl hunters' input.

After every duck season, the OLA's task force representative gathers ideas from members and the general public, considers the latest information on duck migrations, and reviews notes from previous seasons. The OLA Board of Directors considers these details before voting to recommend season dates that benefit Oneida Lake hunters without hurting sportspeople in other zones.

Every spring, the OLA's representative attends the task force meeting for the zone containing Oneida Lake. Here, members work throughout the day to decide on season dates. Decisions are by "consensus," which requires that all task force members be willing to engage in fair, thoughtful compromises on behalf of hunters



Oneida Lake waterfowlers set their spread of scaup decoys.

zone-wide. The DEC's Bureau of Wildlife reviews the task force's recommendations for season dates and youth days. In September, following the final federal season frameworks, the DEC announces each zone's official duck season dates. Historically, the DEC's final dates have agreed with the task forces' recommendations.

A DEC survey of hunters in 2005 showed a statewide satisfaction rate of more than 80 percent with task force performance. The OLA looks forward to continuing this important partnership with the DEC on behalf of Oneida Lake's many avid waterfowlers.

Do you hunt ducks and wish to share your opinion? Send your comments to us at: Duck Season Dates, c/o Oneida Lake Association, Inc., PO Box 3536, Syracuse, NY 13220.

Welcome to OLA

(continued from page 1)

• Members can connect with the OLA's updated website by keying <http://www.oneidalakeassociation.org> into their web browser's address box. The site boasts a wealth of material; check out the article about it in this *Bulletin*.

- Members can be a part of the OLA's annual meeting, held in late April at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. The meeting is a fabulous Oneida Lake show! Scientists and DEC personnel guide members through fascinating presentations about the lake's biology. Exhibits directly related to the lake entertain the crowd. The evening's camaraderie, that feeling of being with five hundred Oneida Lake aficionados, is memorable. Simply put, it's one great event.

OLA Annual Meeting at Cicero-North Syracuse High School April 30, 2008

by Tony Buffa

The OLA will hold its 63rd annual meeting at the Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium on Wednesday, April 30. We invite you to join us for an evening of celebration and information about Oneida Lake and its environment. Doors open at six and the meeting starts at seven. Arrive early and enjoy our numerous exhibits! We are happy to again announce that Bass Pro Shops, Gander Mountain, and Lowrance Electronics will exhibit their latest fishing tackle. These companies have also donated generous door prizes. Lake historian and director Jack Henke will sign copies of his books at the OLA's "history table."

You can renew your membership or sign up new members starting at 6:15. You don't have to be a member to attend the meeting, but we encourage you to join forces with us to continue our long tradition as the largest and most active lake association in New York - and perhaps the entire country!

This year's meeting will open promptly at seven with a short business session. Our theme is "A Bigger and Better Association in 2008." Biologists from the DEC and the Cornell Field Station will discuss the status of our fishery. USDA Fish and

Wildlife personnel will explain the cormorant control program. Hatchery officials will highlight walleye spawning statistics from Constantia's Fish Cultural Station. A representative from Cornell Cooperative Extension will talk about water chestnut control efforts. Other topics such as invasive species and the potential VHS problem also receive program coverage.

The OLA will award its coveted "Conservationist of the Year" plaque to an outstanding local environmentalist. The meeting will close with our door prizes' distribution and drawings for three handheld GPS units. One winner will be chosen from the attendees, the other two from our membership at large.

This is a "must" meeting to attend. Constant challenges threaten the lake's environmental integrity. Come to the meeting and show your concern for Oneida Lake's future. Support the OLA.

Mark your calendars - WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30, 6:00 PM, OLA - CICERO-NORTH SYRACUSE HIGH SCHOOL.

We encourage you to join us for an evening of fun, facts, and OLA solidarity.

Directions to C-NS High School Route 31, Cicero

From the Thruway

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

From the East

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

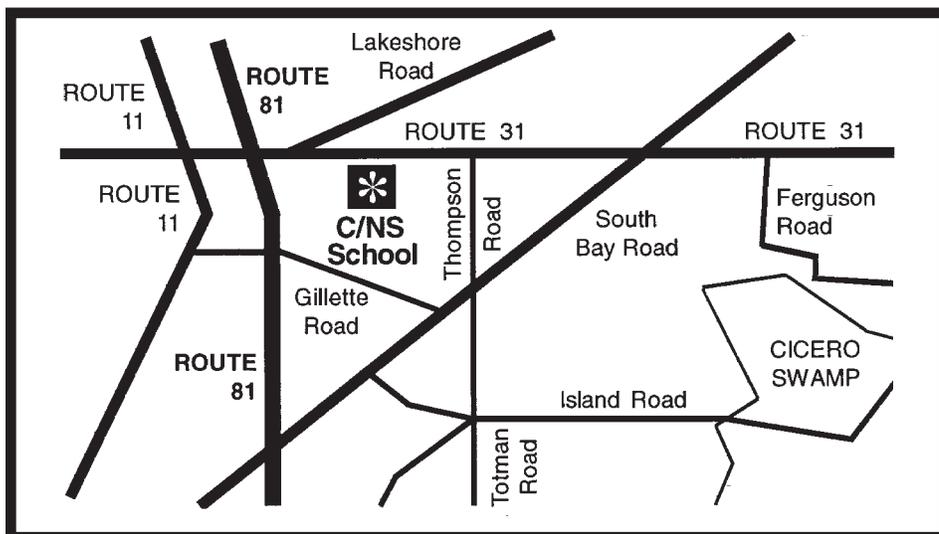
From the West

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

Notice of Board of Directors' Elections

Attention OLA members! Don't miss your chance to vote at the 2008 annual meeting, to be held April 30, 2008 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Members in good standing who attend the meeting will have the opportunity to vote on the following slate of eight OLA members who are seeking re-election to the OLA Board of Directors this year:

Paul Metot
Ed Mills
Richard Percival
Bob Ripberger
Bruce Schantz
Scott Shupe
Parker Stone
Matt White



Oneida Hatchery News

by Carl Rathje and Mark Babenzien

Last spring's walleye egg collection was a great success; we anticipate this spring's results to be just as impressive. Despite a wintry start to 2007's walleye "run," the hatchery staff managed to net more than 30,000 adults and collect 329 million eggs from April 5 – 20. These fish were very healthy, weighing from three to eleven pounds.

Last year's water temperature fell below normal during egg incubation but, by May 11, we were able to hatch enough fry to stock 173 million into Oneida Lake and another twenty-six million into twelve other New York waters. In addition, 680,000 fry were transferred to the South Otselic and Chautauqua hatcheries for pond fingerling production.

During the summer, the Oneida Hatchery raised 163,000 fingerling walleyes (five inches long) for September stocking in seven New York waters. We also raised 175 paddlefish and released them into Conewango Creek, Allegheny County,

as part of the state's endangered species restoration program.

This past season, New York adopted biosecurity regulations to prevent the spread of the potentially devastating VHS fish disease. Your hatchery staff responded to this crisis. We experimented in 2007 with iodine disinfection procedures to insure that walleye eggs are disease free. New York hatcheries are determined to find ways to protect all species. Future testing of wild adult walleyes and other fish captured in nets will continue to monitor VHS and related diseases.

The hatchery's staff asks the public to police themselves when visiting our facility or fishing on Oneida Lake. Please do not bring boots, fishing equipment, pails, nets, etc., into the hatchery building. Please do not carry any fish or fishing gear into the hatchery or on the grounds without permission. Use only certified bait when fishing Scriba Creek at the hatchery or anywhere on Oneida Lake. Follow all DEC



Hatchery technician Rick Bryant shows the effects of a harsh spring day on Oneida Lake.

regulations concerning baitfish.

We anticipate another great year. Stop by and see the hatchery in operation. The spring walleye egg collection begins in early April. The hatchery will be open for visitors and tours throughout the year. Call (315) 623-7311 for information.

A Fresh OLA Site on the www!

Here's a quick trip that you've got to take. Log onto your computer and connect to the Internet. Key in the address <http://www.oneidalakeassociation.org> and let a fascinating, entertaining voyage into the association's world appear.

You'll be amazed at the OLA's new web site's contents. Among the site's many highlights are the following, all found on or through the home (first) page:

- You can download the latest *OLA Bulletin*. Click on this item under "What's New" on the left.
- Convenient membership renewals are available on-line, with payment through Paypal. Simply click on the "Join Us" link at the home page's top and follow directions.

- The "About Oneida Lake" link under the masthead leads you to a copy of the "Oneida Lake Profile," a neat biological-geological-historical pamphlet published by the association and Cornell University.
- The "Photo Gallery" gateway, also under the masthead, unveils some gorgeous views of our lake, along with some fun family pictures.
- Other links on the page take you to "Hot Issues," the "President's Message," and a "Contact Us" item whereby you can ask association officers questions.
- Two additional, important pathways appear on our home page. "Recommended Links," in the left column, leads

you to over twenty-five sites directly related to the association's work. Among these are pages for the Cornell Biological Field Station, the Oneida Lake Watershed and Management Plan, and the New York State DEC's fishing page. The other pathway, "Oneida Lake Area Accommodations," sits on our home page's upper right corner, just above the lake's photo. This link leads to a list of marinas and boat launches, many of which are linked to their websites.

Your board of directors is interested in your reaction to the new website. Please use the "Contact Us" link and send your opinions.

And, meanwhile, have a great virtual adventure!

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Living with Canada Geese

by Martin Lowney, N.Y.S. Director - USDA APHIS - Fish and Wildlife Services

There are an estimated 195,000 resident Canada geese in New York. These birds breed here, unlike their cousins who reproduce in Canada. Resident Canada geese are becoming more abundant every year and their numbers cause trouble for property owners. This article provides information for solving goose-related problems.



When a species is overabundant, it can become a nuisance. Our resident Canada geese damage property through their excessive fecal droppings on lawns and beaches. Noxious odors and unplanned cleanup costs often bother homeowners. Resident Canada geese threaten human health and safety by endangering aviation, contaminating drinking water with fecal coliform bacteria, and attacking people during nesting season. They also eat ornamental flowers and turf, which distracts from the aesthetic value of businesses, golf courses, and parks. Dangerous collisions with planes forced the Federal Aviation Administration to order all airports to implement a zero tolerance policy towards geese.

What can homeowners do when geese overrun their property? The Wildlife Services program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture helps landowners make decisions about reducing wildlife damage. Two avenues for combating goose damage exist. People can “go it alone” or they can join forces and address the problem as a community.

Using several strategies for fighting goose problems works best. These methods include harassment, exclusion, changing human behavior, and population control. Several techniques highlight each strategy.

Harassment

No federal or state permits are required to harass Canada geese. One of the more effective harassment methods involves using 15mm pyrotechnics. Pyrotechnic cartridges

come as screamers or bangers. They are discharged from a launcher that resembles a starter pistol for track and field events. The cartridges fly twenty-five to a hundred feet and make high-pitched whistling sounds prior to exploding. Local police – and your neighbors – should be notified before using 15mm pyrotechnics.

A well-trained dog that responds to voice and hand commands can also effectively harass Canada geese. Many geese tire of being chased and leave the area. Border collies work especially well.

Another effective, non-lethal method for keeping persistent geese off the lawn is a paint ball gun. Geese that allow people to approach within twenty-five yards can be shot with paint balls. The geese don't like getting popped!

Exclusion

Snow fences can keep geese off a beach. A simple mylar tape barrier along the water's edge will deter geese from your property. A single mylar strand about eighteen inches tall works well.

Changing Human Behavior

People like to feed ducks and geese; this only makes a difficult situation worse. Besides attracting birds to your property, feeding is bad for the geese because it provides an unhealthy diet and concentrates birds unnaturally, placing them at risk for disease. Soil erosion and significant damage to vegetation also occur. Strongly discourage people from feeding these birds!

Population Control

Population management is the quickest way to reduce damage from geese. This is usually a community-supported method. People decide how many birds they wish to tolerate. Once a number is reached, numerous means are available to achieve the goal. These include legal hunting seasons, treating eggs, and roundups during the summer molt. Landowners and communities can register online with the U.S. Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (www.fws.gov/permits/mbpermits/GooseEggRegistration.html) to oil eggs with corn oil or puncture them. In addition, Wildlife Services will conduct summer round ups at properties that have demonstrated a good faith effort at resolving the damage but were ineffective at reducing it to acceptable levels.

More information about managing Canada geese is available at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7003.html or by calling Wildlife Services at (518) 477-4837 or (315) 698-0940.

Oneida Lake Photo History Quiz

Try to identify the larger buildings in each of these photos.

Hint – one was a restaurant, the other a hotel.



Answers on next page

Cormorant Management, 2007

Last year marked a decade in the history of Oneida Lake's precedent-setting cormorant management program. Fittingly, outstanding success graced the efforts of the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services' biologists and staff who administer the program.

Statistics tell the superlative story. Harassment by Wildlife Services personnel reduced the average daily number of cormorants on the lake from spring through fall to 103. Since the program expanded to encompass all open water seasons, that number has declined from 225 birds per day, to 154, 129, and now 103.

Another impressive statistic is the average amount of cormorants on Oneida during fall. This totaled only 127 birds per day during 2008, a sharp decline from the 203 that used the lake daily in 2006.

To understand the importance of these numbers, we need to contrast them with statistics from the pre-harassment program years. Then, an average of 500-700 cormorants used Oneida Lake daily; that number swelled to nearly 2,000 during the fall migration. These birds destroyed vast quantities of Oneida's fish.

Fish populations have benefited from the program. In days when minimal harassment occurred, cormorants killed between 100,000 and 300,000 walleyes and sometimes more than 1,000,000 yellow perch annually. A large percentage of these walleyes were one-year old fish that had a tremendous chance to survive to adulthood. Cormorant predation reduced walleye year classes to 1/3 of their projected size and the lake's adult walleye population bottomed at 200,000 or below. Fishing suffered accordingly. Since the cormorant hazing program expanded, walleye numbers more than doubled to 400,000-450,000, and quality fishing returned to Oneida's anglers.

In 2007, Wildlife Services specialists harassed 26,260 cormorants on Oneida Lake

(some birds are encountered several times). They oiled the eggs from fifteen nests on Long Island and eliminated the productivity of twenty nests in the Great Swamp Conservancy, just south of the lake. Harassment techniques included pyrotechnics, mylar tape, effigies, and boat chases. Similar efforts are planned for 2008.

The OLA salutes the dedicated professionals from Wildlife Services whose efforts have contributed to the lake's angling renaissance.



Fishing Corner

(continued from page 3)

Lest the outfitted be outwitted, let me now tell you how to fish the jig. It's good to "dress" the jig with a nightcrawler. This adds scent and a natural look. Most often, jigging occurs in fifteen to forty foot depths; it's important to know where the jig is at all times.

To understand this, practice the following technique when you're anchored and then take what you've learned and use it while drifting.

1. Cast as far as you can and leave the bail open until the line stops spilling off the reel.
2. When the line slackens, the jig rests on the bottom.
3. Now - start putting tension back into the line by reeling the slack up slowly. When you feel the line tighten, drop the rod tip towards the water and be sure the slack returns. This means that the jig is ready to be pulled along the bottom.
4. Stop reeling at this point. Then, sweep the rod horizontally to the water and away from the jig. A two to three foot swing should do.
5. You should be able to feel the jig making contact with the bottom because the rod and line amplify the messages transmitted by the jig.
6. Reel up the line you pulled when you moved the jig. Pause. Sweep the rod again. You're bouncing the jig off the bottom.
7. Repeat this action as you steadily move the jig toward your boat.
8. Set the hook immediately when you feel a harder contact.

The more time your jig spends swimming across the bottom, the greater the opportunity for a strike. If you don't get a hit by the time the jig has returned to a position directly under the boat, the "verticality" principle kicks in. Vertically jig by lifting and dropping the rod tip without reeling. I emphasize without reeling. When you drop the rod, slack line should return. If it doesn't, then the jig isn't on bottom. Open the bail and let the jig fall until slack returns. Now, bounce the jig off bottom by raising and lowering your rod tip. You'll feel a walleye hit when you lift the tip.

Water depth determines jig size. If you're in shallow water (ten feet and under), use 1/8 to 1/4 oz. jigs. For eleven to twenty feet use 3/8 to 1/2 oz., twenty-one to thirty use 5/8 oz., and for thirty and deeper use 3/4 oz.

Jig color makes a difference. Most of the walleyes caught by jigging during May and June are taken on a black/purple pattern highlighted with a few strands of flash. If the darker hues aren't working, then use a jig with yellow perch colors.

Answers to History Quiz

1. Labella's Pancake House, Sylvan Beach
2. Vanderbilt Hotel, Constantia

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