The Oneida Lake Bulletin

FALL EDITION 1994

Oneida Lake!
Will the lakes
natural resources
still be available for use
by this future OLA member?

Sylvan Beach Pier Update Water Level Regulations

President's Report

Oneida Lake Bulletin Fall 1994

Greetings OLA members. It's fall and I hope that all of you had a great summer filled with pleasant memories. I am particularly hopeful that your fondest memories are those of beautiful summer days spent enjoying New York's number one natural resourse, ONEIDA LAKE. I know from the many stories I've been told by OLA members that the lake continues to provide a great number of recreational activities and that the activities our members enjoy participating in, are diverse. I also know that the lake conditions sometimes gets in the way of certain activities. For example, the algae bloom which occurred this year certainly put a dent in the number of hours spent by those who most enjoy contact recreation such as swimming and water skiing.

Fisherman, shoreline resident and naturalists have expressed concern over conditions such as excessive weed growth, increases in the cormorant and zebra mussel population, and the need for shoreline access sites. And it goes without saying that the flooding experienced the last two years remains a great concern for all of those who live on or use the lake. However, the concerns expressed by the OLA members over lake conditions at any given time should not lead one to conclude that the lake itself is in serious trouble. Rather, the concerns and the different opinions offerred to solve any given problem is a testament to the fact that this great resource is "loved" and used by a great many people for a wide variety of activities. Solutions aren't always easy and proposed solutions to any given problem must be carefully examined to ensure that we are not solving one problem while creating a new, and possibly more serious problem.

The Oneida Lake Association, your association, is dedicated to preserving the natural resources of

Oneida Lake and its environs. While the Board of Directors have also spent this past summer enjoying what the lake has to offer, we were also busy protecting the lake and therefore, your interests. This 1994 fall issue of the OLA Bulletin provides a good deal of information regarding major issues of concern to the Association members. Articles containing information on flooding and lake levels, zebra mussels, the algae bloom and its effect on water clarity, as well as the Sylvan Beach improvements should bring you up-to-date on the issues the Board has been working on. I would like you to pay particular attention to the OLA position statement regarding flooding and water levels, since the approach recommended to address this issue is one that applies too many of the issues our members are concerned with, Basically, the OLA has recommended a rational, balanced approach to decision-making with respect to alleviating flooding to the greatest degree possible without significantly harming or destroying natural systems. In order to accomplish this goal, the OLA recognizes that, prior to implementation of proposed solutions, involved agencies and the public at large, must be informed of the possible consequences of such actions. Examining the consequences includes recognizing the possible effects of corrective actions on the "natural health" of the lake itself as well as the impact on the people using the lake, including shoreline and downstream residents. Only with this type of balanced approach can we ensure that we are implementing solutions that will not create bigger problems for future generations.

In addition to these issue related articles, be sure to read the general information articles which give information on subjects such as "catching the big fish", and a summary of waterfowl hunting regulations.

I'm sure you'll find the Bulletin both informative and amusing. Feel free to drop us a line and let us know

ONEIDA LAKE ASSOCIATION INC. FOUNDED IN 1945

Published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the Association. 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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your opinions and comments on the information presented. We take all our members comments seriously.

I hope you have a great winter and that you enjoy all Oneida Lake has to offer the Fall and Winter enthusiasts. *In the meantime*, your Board of Directors will continue to work on your behalf.

Joseph J. Mastriano OLA President



The OLA Fishing Corner

ONEIDA LAKE Perch Fishing

by Gerry Randall

By the time you read this article, Oneida Lake perch fishermen should be approaching the ultimate in fishing enjoyment and success. Historically, it will continue for the next several months (yes, even into winter), and provide a great deal of action to novices and experts alike. The fall perch fishing usually starts around mid-September when the water begins to cool and the fish congregate into large schools. I have seen areas of about one square mile that held tremendous schools of perch. They usually show up in the areas along the entire East end of the lake, from (Oneida Creek to North Bay in 12-25 feet of water. Other popular locations are: Lower South Bay, Three Mile Bay, Shackleton Shoals, and a large area just East of Frenchman's Island. Although less consistent, Big Bay also produces large quantities of nice perch.

When you approach these areas, zig zag carefully (and slowly), trying to locate a good reading on your sonar that might indicate a sizable school. Mark the spot with a shall marker buoy, and then come in from the windward side and drift into your buoy. Slowly drop the anchor and wait a few minutes for the boat to stabilize. With any luck, your fun is about to begin.

I use two ultra-lite rods with 4 pound test line. One rod is set up with a #6 or #8 hook and a light sinker about eight inches above the hook. Bait the hook with a live buckeye minnow (fatheads will work if buckeyes are not available). The minnow should be hooked through the dorsal fin, with the point facing the head, and will be fished about

10-18 inches off the bottom. Occasionally drop it to the bottom and slowly raise it up to the desired depth. Many times a perch will hit the minnow when you are slowing raising it from the bottom. Repeat this process, especially when the perch are hitting slow. Another technique is to slowly raise the rod 2-3 feet on occasion. The perch might hit hard and furious, but I suggest you take your time bringing in the first two or three fish.

My rationale for this, is that perch are very competitive and will quickly attract others. So, leave the first perch on and allow it to swim around your boat for a couple of minutes. Meanwhile, have your second rod ready with a gold or silver Kastmaster, Phoebe, Sonar, Sidewinder, (or similar lure). The smaller Mister Twister type jigs also work great. They should be tipped with a perch eye from the first fish you caught.

Simply drop the jigging lure near the bottom and start jigging with two or three very short snaps, and then a pause. Repeat this motion over and over. Another method is to cast the jigging lure in different directions and retrieve it in short jigging motions.

Sometimes you will locate another school of fish using this method. Meanwhile, keep your eye on the other rod (with the minnow). Sometimes they will stay with the minnows and ignore your jig. However, many times they will aggressively attack the jig while continuing to hit the minnows. When this happens, you will have your hands full to the point that you can only use the jigging rod.

You can experiment with different areas, depths, and different lures. For example, last fall we had tremendous catches of perch in the middle of the lake (38-40 feet). A

huge school remained in that area for more than a month. I am only passing on what has worked for me over the years, so don't get locked into any one area, or any one method. This outstanding Fall fishing will continue until the lake freezes, and you can no longer use a boat.

When the lake has completely frozen and you can safely start ice fishing, you should start all over again because everything changes, including equipment and locations. The time span between "Fall boat fishing" and "'safe ice fishing" varies from year- to -year. It could be as short as one week, or as long as one month. Therefore, you should use this time to prepare yourself (and equipment) in preparation for continuing action for Oneida Lake perch.

To keep it simple, you need warm clothes, including boots, and two short jigging rods. A small selection of perch ice lures can be obtained by talking to a representative at one of the local bait shops which are conveniently located around Oneida Lake. Also, live minnows and grubs will continue to be a favorite throughout the winter.

The first ice fishing usually starts at one of the bays on the West end of the lake, (e.g. Lower South Bay, Big Bay). As the ice thickens, the entire North Shore is an excellent area to catch perch (e.g. Godfrey Point, Constantia, Vienna Bar). On the East end of the Lake try the Edgewater, Sylvan Beach, and the Lewis Point areas. As with Fall fishing, use one rod with live minnows (with or without a bobber); and the other rod should be used to jig with the jigging lures recommended by the local bait shop. The technique remains the same, two or three short jigs, and then a pause. In addition, you may want to use tip-ups which can also be very effective for Oneida Lake perch. Do not become stagnant while ice fishing. In other words, if you are not getting any action, simply move a few yards in (continued on page 6)

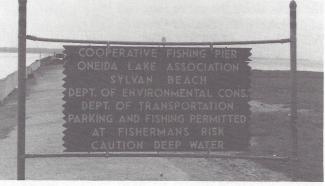
Sylvan Beach Guide Wall

by William Schriever









After the high water in the spring of 1993, Engineering Divers were used to inspect the sub structure of the Sylvan Beach Guide Wall and Pier. The entire structure was found to be unsafe.

The original Guide Wall and Pier was built as part of the Barge Canal System. The design included wood cribbing filled with rock cobbles.

Wood cribbing is a sound concept when it comes to underwater construction, however in the last 25 years or so, the annual drawdown of Oneida Lake has left some of the wood used in construction of the cribs exposed to the atmosphere. When this happens, the wood begins to rot and the weight of the deck on top of the crib crushes the rotting timbers. *Unfortunately*, this does not happen uniformaly. The deck begins to pitch, and then slide and then break up.

A valiant effort was made by Sylvan Beach and their mayor Joe DeFazio, to save a portion of the Guide Wall and Pier. The timber cribs were just too far gone and the effort failed.

The Thruway Authority came up with a design concept which included removal of the existing structures, installation of sheet pile, back filling and capping with pre-cast concrete deck slabs.

The project was awarded to the contractor in December 1993 and work began in January 1994. The \$1,518,000 Guide Wall was completed on July 15, 1994. Seven hundred plus feet of sparkling new Guide Wall and walkway,comfortably wide, level, easily accessable with safety railings, handicap access and parking was now open to the public.

THANKS THRUWAY
AUTHORITY -

Keep Up The Good Work!

Skin Abnormalities on Walleyes!

Scientists at Cornell University and the Cornell University Biological Field Station are working together to understand the skin abnormalities found on walleyes that are called walleye dermal sarcoma. For a number of years, fish collected at the Field Station and with the cooperation of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Oneida Fish Hatchery at Constantia have provided information about these skin abnormalities during the ice-free period on Oneida Lake.

However, we know very little about the condition on walleyes during the winter, due to the difficulty in collecting fish. The assistance of ice fishermen could be instrumental in overcoming this difficulty. If you capture a walleye with the dermal sarcoma condition while ice fishing, and don't want the fish, we would be very interested in being able to perform a laboratory examination on it.



Dermal sarcoma usually appears as an external spherical, smooth, firm skin abnormality (see photo). This is in contrast to another skin abnormality found on walleyes that is called lymphocystis.

Lymphocystis appears very "granular" in contrast to the smooth surface of walleye dermal sarcoma. The dermal sarcomas commonly range in size from 1/4 to 1/2 inch in diameter. Some fish may have only one, while other fish may have many.

Walleyes with dermal sarcoma can be brought to the Cornell University Biological Field Station (315 633-9243) for transport to the Cornell University campus in Ithaca.

We would be very appreciative of any assistance the sportfishing public could provide in helping us to better understand this abnormality in the walleyes of Oneida Lake.

OLA (Oneida Lake Association): Water Level Position Statement

The ecosystem of Oneida Lake has stabilized and adjusted to the impacts associated with the 1951 Caughdenoy dam construction. We believe an ecosystem approach to management of water levels in Oneida Lake is necessary to minimize future impacts. We therefore adopt the following position:



(1) Water level management in Oneida Lake should consider the entire Oneida Lake ecosystem while maintaining lake levels between 368' b.c.d. (present winter draw down) and 372.4' b.c.d. (flood stage). The OLA supports ecosystem-based water level management to prevent property damage from spring flooding by maintaining lake levels less than 372.4' b.c.d.

THEREFORE,

(2) Any strategies developed to prevent Oneida Lake from exceeding flood stage *must*:

- (A) not involve lowering of Oneida Lake to an elevation less than 368 feet b.c.d.
- (B) not involve removal of any natural shoals upstream from the Caughdenoy dam that may fix the winter water elevation in Oneida Lake.
- (C) consider residents and possible adverse effects on residents downstream from the Caughdenoy dam.

Study Proposes how to *prevent flooding* near Oneida Lake!

Ideas tackle swamp floods. "This is half the problem."

Reprint: By Gary Gerew

State officials believe they have found a way to eliminate at least some of the flooding that's washed over residents near the southern shore of Oneida Lake and the Muskrat Swamp.

A study by the state Thruway Authority has proposed building five new drainage points from the swamp and several other measures to prevent the swamp floods.

State Assemblyman Michael Bragman said he doubts any measures will be in place to prevent possible flooding next spring. "But I'm sure we can move ahead next summer," said Bragman.

Property owners along Beach Road and Muskrat Bay Road in Cicero have been plagued in recent years by combined floods from high lake levels and high water in the swamp. "It's really been a double hit," said Bragman aide Laura Pechaitis.

Last year, Bragman asked the Thruway Authority to study the swamp to see if that could be reduced as a source of flooding.

The \$15,500 study that resulted makes these recommendations:

- ☐ Construction of five new discharge points from the swamp into the lake at a cost of \$35,000.
- ☐ Annual fall and spring inspections of the three existing drainage points to prevent blockage.
- ☐ A \$1,000 per year program of beaver dam removal.
- ☐ Establishment of a town erosion and sediment control plan for the Muskrat Swamp drainage basin.
- ☐ A \$2,500 per year inspection program for silt accumulation in existing channels.
- Removal of existing channel silt; (continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

☐ Widening the Short Point Bay outlet at a cost of \$15,000.

The thruway Authority said if these measures don't prevent swamp flooding, a \$300,000 system of drainage ditches and pipes should be constructed to remove additional water.

Bragman said he is trying to set up a meeting with Cicero officials and representatives from the Thruway Authority and the State Department of Environmental Conservation to review the plan within the next two weeks.

"People living in that area realize that this is half the problem and we'll meet later in the fall to discuss lake levels," he said. "But I believe this can alleviate half the problem."

Bragman said the swamp flooding has been a problem even in years when Oneida Lake has remained within its banks. "This flooding at the very least causes serious inconvenience, and at its worst, it is a danger to the health and safety of residents," he said.

THE O.L.A. WILL CELEBRATE ITS FIRST 50 YEARS OF "TAKING CARE OF ONEIDA LAKE"

Next year, 1995. Since the formation of the O.L.A., volunteer Board Members have spent countless hours serving the purposes of the organization. The O.L.A. general membership by reason of its large membership and dedicated interests, has been the keystone that has activated programs, legislation, hatchery construction and other activities that have continued to make Oneida Lake what it is today- the most outstanding inland fishing lake in New York State.

In commemoration, the association has commissioned a 7 1/2" fillet knife as a very special memorial of the 1945-1995 Anniversary. This knife,

manufactured by the world famous Camillus Cutlery Co., is made of a stainless steel, has a black Kraton finger-grip handle and is contained in a black molded plastic belt sheath. The overall length is 12 1/2". This special knife is labeled with the Camillus registered name of "Western" and it is available now! The retail price is \$13.00.

This knife will make a fine gift for many occasions, and is perfect as a special Christmas gift. It can be ordered by mail. The price is \$13.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. Orders should be sent to:

> Robert R. Ripberger 121 Cortland Place Syracuse, NY 13207

(continued from page 3)

Oneida Lake Perch Fishing

any direction, and continue roving until you have located some fish. The same applies to lure selection by changing lure colors on a regular basis.

You can save a lot of time (and a lot of grief) by simply teaming up with an experienced ice fisherman. Most are more than willing (and happy) to get you started by allowing you to tag along on their journey onto the lake. Regardless, of whether or not you prefer Fall fishing or ice fishing for Oneida Lake perch, I cannot emphasize strongly enough that you should take a youngster fishing with you. This type of fishing will most certainly keep them interested and excited.

ONEIDA LAKE WATER REGULATION 1992/1993

by: John Zmarthie ThruWay Authority

The gates at the Caughdenoy Dam were opened full on December 9,

1992 the lake level was 370.2 Barge Canal Datum (BCD).

The lake level dropped to elevation 369.4 BCD December 28, 1992. It then rose to elevation 370.5 BCD on January 8, 1993 after receiving approximately 3 inches of precipitation over this two week period.

The lake level then dropped to a winter low elevation of 368.5 BCD on March 8, 1993 and remained at that elevation until March 25, 1993 when the lake began to rise due to melting snow.

The melting record snowfall coupled with three times the normal amount of rainfall for April caused the lake to rise to elevation 374.5 BCD April 25, 1993. As the run-off receded, the lake level dropped to elevation 371.1 BCD on May 17, 1993. Regulation of the lake level was begun this date as the Canal Corporation began to gradually close gates at the Caughdenoy Dam to maintain navigation level. The lake level was regulated through the navigation season with minor fluctuations in lake level.

1993/1994

The gates at the Caughdenoy Dam were opened full on December 13, 1993, the lake level was 370.75 BCD.

The lake level dropped steadily to elevation 368.8 BCD on January 27, 1994. The level fluctuated between 368.9 BCD and 368.7 BCD through February 21, 1994. The lake level began to rise due to melting snow.

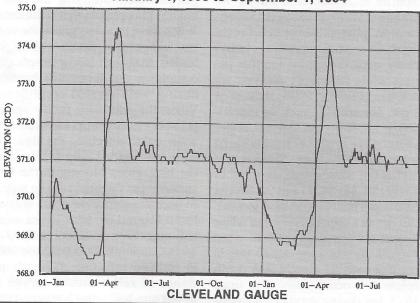
Melting snow with high moisture content caused the lake to rise to elevation 374.0 BCD on April 18, 1994. As the run-off receded the lake level dropped to elevation 371.1 BCD. Regulation of the lake level was begun on this date to maintain navigation levels.

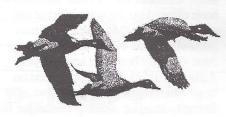
The lake level has been regulated through the summer with minor fluctuations in elevation.

SEE WATER LEVEL CHART ON THE NEXT PAGE

ONEIDA LAKE WATER LEVELS

January 1, 1993 to September 1, 1994





WILDFOWLERS ASSOCIATION Central New York P.O. Box 241 North Syracuse, NY 13212

Understanding Waterfowl Hunting Regulations

Discharge of a shotgun over water

The traditional prohibition of discharging a firearm within 500 feet of a dwelling does not apply to the discharge of a shotgun over water by a person hunting waterfowl. For example, you may hunt in front of a dwelling as long as there is no person or dwelling within 500 feet of your line of fire.

Blinds

A hunter may place a blind or boat anywhere below the high water mark specified by the United States Geological Service (USGS) for the purpose of waterfowl hunting. Use common sense and courtesy when hunting in the vicinity of homes and camps.

Duck hunting blinds placed in the waters of lakes within New York State must be prominently marked with the owners full name and address. All duck blinds must be removed from the water no later than March 15, following placement (NYS DEC Waterfowl Hunting Regulations 1994). Because you build a blind on NYS waters or public lands does not entitle you to exclusive right to that hunting location. First come, first served! Use common courtesy and respect.

Baiting

If it's too good to be true, it probably is!

When waterfowl are seen feeding on a small area in usually large concentrations or display a lack of natural caution, there is a strong chance of it being a baited area. No baited area may be hunted until 10 days following removal of all the bait. However, there is no set distance that the hunter must be from the bait. Whether or not a violation occurs varies on a case by case basis. Call the NYS DEC or the US Fish and Wildlife Service for assistance.

Hunters can legally hunt:

- Standing crops
- Flooded standing crops

Properly shocked grain crops or areas containing grain present as a result of normal agricultural planting or harvesting

Baiting information obtained from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Waterfowl Baiting Regulations Review, August 1992.

Transportation of shotguns through local and state parks during the Waterfowl hunting season

Although there is no set rule or law, in general a hunter is allowed to transport a cased shotgun for purposes of launching a boat or accessing NYS waters for the purpose of waterfowl hunting. *Use common sense!*

New York State Hunter Harassment Law

A person is guilty of interfering with the lawful taking of wildlife when, with intent to prevent the taking of wildlife, in season, in a place where hunting is lawful, and by a person properly licensed to take such wildlife, he: (a) strikes, shoves, kicks. or otherwise subjects the licensed person to physical contact, or attempts or threatens to do the same: or (b) follows the licensed person in or about such place and engages in a course of conduct or repeatedly commits acts which alarms or seriously annoys such licensed person and which serves no legitimate pur-

Notwithstanding any other provision of the law to the contrary, no one shall be arrested for violation of this section by other than a duly designated peace officer acting pursuant to his special duties, or polive officer.

NYS Environmental Conservation Law S 11-0110,

This is only a guide. Please refer to your state and federal waterfowl rules and regulations.

Important Phone Numbers

NYS DEC Region 6, (315 785-2263)

NYS DEC Region 7, (315 426-7400)

TIP (1 800 TIPP-DEC)

Oneida Lake Blooms!

By Lars Rudstam and Edward Mills Cornell Biological Field Station.

The end of August and September has shown us how productive Oneida Lake really is! Large quantities of bluegreen algae color the water green, and where they accumulate in protected bays downwind, the colors become unreal, the swirls of green, blue-green and lighter greens makes us think more of a paint factory in disarray than of a lake. Some might like the artistic beauty of the swirls if it was not for the stench accompanying the decaying algae. What are these organisms and what causes the blooms?

What we see are large amounts of a bluegreen algae, or more correctly cyanobacteria, called flos-aquae Aphanizomenon [Bluegreens are more closely related to bacteria then to plants and other algae]. You can recognize Aphanizomenon by the shape of its strand, they look like grass clippings on the water. It is fairly common to see bluegreen blooms in productive lakes like Oneida in the summer and fall. These large algae have several advantages over other species that lead to their dominance in summer and fall. They are less vulnerable to grazing by zooplankton, they can regulate their depth in the water column and can therefore move up to the surface to catch the light, and they can fix nitrogen, one important nutrient, from the atmosphere. However, they are large. Small algae are better than large ones at extracting phosphorus, another important nutrient, from the water column because their surface to volume ratio is greater. Which algae dominate therefore depends on which factor is limiting. When phosphorus is limiting we tend to get smaller species, when nitrogen is limiting we tend to get bluegreens.

In Oneida Lake, we usually get bluegreen blooms in the summer and fall. This year is no exception. But the blooms do look extra bad this year. Is that true or do we forget how the lake looked like in years

past? At the Cornell Biological Field Station at Shackelton Point, we measure various nutrients, zooplankton, phytoplankton and Secchi depth (a measure of water clarity) every week during the ice free period. while laboratory analysis are not complete for 1994, indices of algae abundance, such as chlorophyll, are high but not off scale. Chlorophyll levels on September 14 were about 20 ppm. Similar and higher fall values were recorded in 75-77, 80, 81, 84, 91 and 92. Secchi disk depth has been below 6 feet [we can detect a special black and white disk at a water depth of 6 ft. since August 26 this year. Again this is not that unusual. Secchi disk depth below 6 ft occur every year since 1975, but during varying time periods. In 1992, we had similar swirls of bluegreens (same species) in the protected bays in the fall. However, the 94 Oneida blooms are certainly worse than last year and worse than many of the years since 1975. And even though the chlorophyll levels are not that unusual for the fall period in Oneida Lake, most of it is concentrated in the top 3 feet, making the bloom very obvious to us when observing the water surface. What could be causing worse blooms this year than many other years. The smell is certainly almost over-bearing when the wind is right. Algae can not grow without nutrients. The bluegreen blooms indicate that a considerable amount of nutrients are available. Are there any reasons why the nutrient availability is higher this year then others. We believe so. We did have a large spring flood this year, which typically give extra nutrients to the lake. But 1993 was also characterized by a strong spring flood. We did have a period of warm and relatively calm weather in July and beginning of August. Such weather prevents Oneida Lake from turning over. Normally Oneida Lake waters are well mixed. When

we have periods of calm weather

during mid-summer, this does not

occur. IN 1994, we did have a period of warm and relatively calm

weather in July and August. Such

calm periods lead to declines in oxygen in waters overlying the lake's mucky, phosphorus rich sediments. When there is no oxygen in the bottom water, phosphorus will be released from the iron-phosphorus complexes that binds this nutrient during well aerated conditions. When the lake then mixes again, phosphorus is transported into the water column feeding the alga. Finally, we can not help to note that the blue green blooms in the late summer and fall appear to be worse in later years after the zebra mussel has colonized the lake. Zebra mussels now reach densities of 2000 to 10,000 individuals per square foot in suitable substrate. (The abundance of zebra mussel larvae is about one-half what it was in 1993 -maybe good news). Is there a possible connection? Zebra mussels have cleared up the water during the early summer, Many of you may remember the clear water during June and July both this and last year. Although zebra mussels can feed on large bluegreens, they do it less efficiently than on small green algae. Thus greens are selectively removed and bluegreen have less competitors for nutrients with than without zebra mussels. Also, the ability of bluegreens to regulate their depth distribution allows them to avoid grazing by zebra mussels, which are restricted to the bottom water. bluegreen blooms and mats of algae on the lake bottom have been noted in the Great Lake's Saginaw Bay and Lake Erie and taste and odor problems have been cited in Lake Ontario - all since colonization by zebra mussels. We believe that the combination of anoxic water in the summer and zebra mussel grazing on competitors may have favored bluegreen swirls in our lake this fall. Field Station researches will continue to follow the bluegreen bloom in 1994. Oneida Lake seems to be exhibiting dynamic changes biologically and we will keep you posted on future changes.

SEE CHARTS ON NEXT PAGE!

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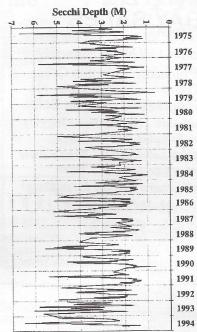


Figure 1. Time series of Secchi disk depth from 75 - 94

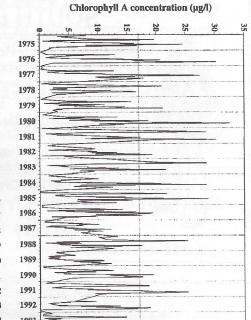


Figure 2.

Time series of Chlorophyll from 75 - 93. The horizontal line represent chlorophyll levels of t7 ug/L measured September 14, 1994, off Shackelton Point.

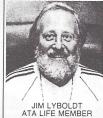
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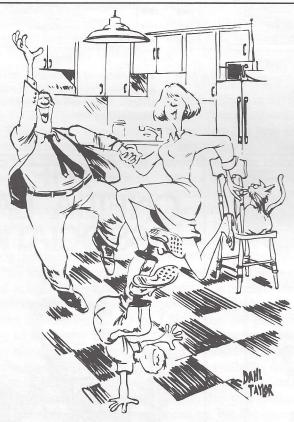
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