

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2009

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Oneida Lake: The Heat is On

by Randy Jackson and Edward L. Mills

How can global warming change Oneida Lake? While we don't know the full answer to that question, our scientific investigations note that lakes are excellent barometers of large-scale environmental trends because they respond rapidly to physical and biological changes.

Scientists at the Cornell Field Station have recorded thousands of water temperature measurements annually in Oneida Lake since 1968. This long-term data provides an excellent opportunity to study trends in the lake's conditions and relate them to global warming.

Because Oneida Lake is shallow, wind-induced mixing in summer produces similar temperatures from the surface to the bottom. This makes assessment of seasonal temperature trends easier than in lakes that stratify (colder water on bottom, warmer on top).

The data collected by the Cornell Field Station show significant increases in water temperatures during the summer months since 1968. In fact, the average water temperatures from May through September are typically three degrees higher in recent years than they were when we began collecting data.

Another change involves Oneida Lake's highest recorded temperatures. The average daily water temperature reached seventy-five degrees on only one day from 1968 to 1990. In 2005, however, that temperature exceeded seventy-five degrees twenty-nine times! Many of the warmest summer water temperatures on record have been observed since 1995.

Historically, ice fishing and winter recreation have provided a significant boost to the local economy, but winters in recent decades have tended to be milder, often reducing the length of time when safe ice occurs. Anglers regularly drilled through over two feet of ice thirty years ago; now, twelve to fifteen inches are more common.

In addition, stable ice cover stays on Oneida Lake for shorter periods, on average, in recent decades. The diaries

of James Bernhard, a 19th century north shore resident, allow us to compare records maintained by Cornell with conditions a century ago. Bernhard, a meticulous observer, precisely recorded the dates ice "closed" and "left" the lake every year. The hill behind his farm gave him a superb vantage point for viewing most of the lake. Through his diaries, we know that stable ice covered Oneida for 117 days in 1899-1900, as compared to seventy-one days during

2007-2008. Other years revealed similar contrasts.

No secure ice cover formed during the winter of 2001-02. In contrast, last winter rekindled decades-old memories when safe ice crystallized by January 1. While the trends observed over recent decades show a shortening of Oneida's ice cover's duration, 2008-09 reminds us that every year can be different, and only through careful attention

to longer data sets can we recognize underlying trends.

Sustained Oneida Lake warming will reduce habitat for coldwater fish species. The burbot, sometimes known as a "ling" or "lawyer," is the only native coldwater fish that lives in Oneida Lake. Burbot prefer water temperatures between fifty-two and fifty-seven degrees and begin to suffer from thermal stress when water reaches seventy. During recent hot summers, burbot could not find cool water refuges. Thus, our catches of these fish declined significantly, suggesting that population numbers are down from historic levels. Continued warming may change Oneida Lake so that it no longer supports burbot.

Some veteran Oneida Lake anglers recall ciscoes (sometimes called "lake whitefish" or "tullibeas"). The cisco is a cold-water species native to Oneida Lake and is even less tolerant of warmer water temperatures than the burbot. Ciscoes were common in our gill nettings through 1983, but declined and we haven't captured one since 1987. Oneida Lake lies at the southern edge of ciscoes' geographic range

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Oneida Lake's average daily water temperature reached 75 degrees on only one day from 1968-1990. In 2005, however, that temperature exceeded 75 degrees twenty-nine times.

President's Message

Let's be glad spring is here! Winter was long and hard, but Oneida Lake generated lots of fun. Wonderful, stable ice formed early and stayed all winter, reminiscent of the 1970s. Many enjoyed ice fishing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and other winter activities. Now, as spring and summer approach, take time to savor the Oneida Lake region's assets – great fishing, colorful bird watching, unequalled boating, hunting, biking, hiking, and site seeing.

Our country faces budget issues and challenges. The OLA is, of course, concerned about cormorant harassment this season, but officials from the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services have assured us that funding for this effective ecological and economic revitalization program looks secure for now.

In another matter, the NYSDEC is considering new restrictions on selected public access areas on the lake this summer. The OLA knows how important public access is to our members, and how important it is for users to treat public lands and waters with respect. We are working with the DEC to find a good balance of these interests.

This April marks the end of an era on Oneida Lake as Dr. Edward Mills, Director at Cornell Biological Field Station at Shackelton Point, retires. The Oneida Lake region has benefited greatly from Ed's dedication and service. The OLA is fortunate to have him as a member of our board and we look forward to many more years of partnering with one of the leading scientific advocates in the lake's history. Ed, the Oneida Lake Association thanks you and wishes you the best of retirement years.

As always - YOU - our members are the OLA's most important assets. When you renew your membership this year, ask some friends or family members to join. Remember - strength lies with numbers and a robust membership makes it easier for us to protect, preserve, and enhance Oneida Lake.

One final note - our annual meeting occurs on April 27 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School at 7:00 p.m. Please note that this is a **Monday** evening, not the customary Wednesday. I hope to see you there. Have a magnificent summer.



Lance Vella
President, Oneida Lake Association

The Oneida Lake Association Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the Association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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Oneida Lake Fishing Regulations: 2009-10

Spring is here! The Oneida Lake Association reminds its members that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has published the following 2009-10 fishing seasons and limits:

May 2-March 15

Walleye – 15" minimum, 3-fish limit

Northern Pike – 18" minimum, 5-fish limit

Pickereel – 15" minimum, 3-fish limit

May 2-June 19

Bass – Catch and release only, artificial lures only

June 20-Nov. 30

Bass – 12" minimum, 5-fish limit

Year-round

Yellow Perch – no minimum, 50-fish limit

Black Crappie – 9" minimum, 25 fish limit

Sunfish and Bluegill – no minimum, 50 fish limit

White perch are subject to no limitations and the OLA and Cornell encourage their harvest. These fish provide superb sport angling on light tackle, are easy to catch, and create an excellent "kid pleasing" experience. And, to top it off, they're delicious.

The OLA Board of Directors values its partnership with DEC, which gives us the opportunity to represent YOUR views on the seasons and limits. Oneida Lake's fishery is unique, and its recent steps to recovery have brought as much as \$50 million and 1500 jobs to the local economy. Sensible seasons, cormorant harassment, and diligent work by law enforcement help keep the momentum going. The strength of our membership and wise management by DEC are key to preserving this resource for future generations.

The OLA Fishing Corner

Oneida Lake: The Fishing Gem Along the Canal

by Captain Tony Buffa

Oneida Lake, positioned at the Erie Canal's epicenter, boasts a vibrant fishing past. Anglers recognize this eighty square miles of fishing history as the most productive walleye factory within the state, if not the best this side of the Mississippi.

Oneida Lake's annals of antiquity boast tales of incredible walleye angling during the 1940s. In the 1950s, however, conservationists witnessed over-fishing's negative impact. The lake's seemingly unlimited walleye resource appeared threatened. The New York State DEC contracted with Cornell biologists John Forney and Gus Swanson at the Shackleton Point Field Station. Their assignment involved discovering the factors influencing walleye population dynamics so that science-based environmental policy could be crafted. That challenge became John Forney's lifetime job and his contributions to Oneida Lake in that role proved invaluable.

Shackleton Point's half-century old walleye statistics' database is among

the most recognized and referenced in the world. Add to that a state of the art hatchery at Constantia and we have an impressive collaboration that made a difference in the quality and magnitude of a sustained walleye population.

Every April, the Constantia hatchery raises 100+ million walleye fry destined for Oneida, and several thousand fingerlings for walleye reclamation projects throughout the state. Without this annual effort, our walleye population would eventually be seriously threatened. Additionally, the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services arrives in April to begin cormorant harassment. Their expert team continues through summer and into early fall to insure minimal predation on walleyes and yellow perch. Technicians destroy nests



Sean Stanistreet, of Camillus, proudly displays a nice walleye he caught with Captain Tony.

and oil eggs to prevent new hatchlings.

The harassment project and the hatchery's fry stocking are necessary insurance policies to maintain Oneida as a continuing "fishing gem" along the canal. Our lake currently supports a stable adult walleye count of around 350 to 400 thousand. Wildlife Service's and the Constantia Hatchery's efforts must be sustained to insure the Oneida Lake walleye population's health.

"Pike" are not our lake's sole attraction! National Bassmasters tournament organizers have recently held some of their top-flight competitions on Oneida. The word "impressed" understates the bass competitors' respect for our lake as some anglers caught seventy bass per day!

Excellent water quality, structure, the abundance of predator and prey fish, and panfish of gargantuan proportions combine to make Oneida Lake a world class fishery.

"Can You Go Easy on Us?" - Law Enforcement on Oneida Lake

The following account, provided by Captain Woody Erickson of the DEC's Region 7 Division of Law Enforcement, documents Environmental Conservation Officers' (ECOs) efforts at protecting Oneida Lake.

On November 4, 2008, ECO Matt Harger received a phone tip that two men were taking more than their limit of walleyes from Oneida Lake. The caller gave an exact location and stated that these subjects regularly break the law. ECO Harger drove to the location, but unfortunately the subjects had left.

After ending his day and signing out a short time later, Harger received a call

from the same informer stating that the two fishermen returned. He contacted ECO Gary Wilson, who was on call that evening. Wilson immediately visited the subjects' location.

Two individuals, a father and son, were confronted while fishing; they had eleven walleyes. Since most of the fish were alive, ECO Wilson instructed the two to release five since they were allowed to possess three each. He then followed the anglers to their residence, where he persuaded the violators to produce an additional twenty that were caught earlier. Both men were cited for taking fish in excess of the daily limit.

The father, upon receiving his summons, asked "Can you go easy on us?"

But the ECOs and the judge refused. Convicted of poaching violations, each man was fined \$250 in the Town of Constantia court.

This case underscores the need to report violators to the DEC. The department's hunting and fishing manuals, available with license agents, list numbers that concerned sportspersons can call. Specific tips enable ECOs to arrest those whose illegal activities threaten Oneida Lake's invaluable resources.

Beneath Oneida's Waves: the Lake in 2009

by the Cornell Field Station Staff

Oneida Lake, one of New York State's premier natural resources, fuels a crucial part of our area's economy. Scientists at the Cornell Biological Field Station have been monitoring the lake for over 50 years and appreciate this opportunity to share an update on lake's ecology.

The Walleye Population

We estimate that the adult walleye population ranges from 350,000 to 450,000 fish, a drop from the recent peak of just over 500,000 in 2006, but still well above levels observed from 1994 through 2003. When our creel studies ended after the 2007 season, walleye catch rates per hour were fairly stable. The lake's walleye population can sustain these rates in the near future.

Fishing effort increased during our creel study (2005 - 2007), reaching 370,000 hours in 2007. This generated catches of between 150,000 and 300,000 walleyes annually, with harvests ranging from 6,000 to 55,000 fish. The current walleye population should be able to support this harvest level into the near future.

We are concerned, however, by the smaller year classes observed since the early 1990s. On average, walleye year classes contribute around 50,000 fish to the lake, roughly the same number of fish harvested during 2006 and 2007. Under these circumstances, the walleye population is unlikely to increase. Continued monitoring can ensure that future declines do not go undetected.

Yellow Perch Numbers Dip

The lake's yellow perch population hovers around 900,000 to 1,000,000 adults, the lowest since 1999, but greater than numbers observed in the mid-1990s, when perch abundance bottomed. Our research focuses on understanding the factors that might limit perch success in Oneida Lake. We expect this population to remain below long-term averages in the immediate future. Anglers still enjoy good catch rates of yellow perch,

however, especially during the ice fishery.

Smallmouth Bass Flourish

Our smallmouth bass nettings run as much as three times higher than they were before the mid-1980s. Angler catch rates for bass are among the best in the state. Many of the changes in Oneida Lake that occurred in recent decades, including clearing and warming of the water, favor bass. We expect that bass populations will continue to thrive.

White Perch Plentiful

White perch continue to be very abundant in the lake. While recent year classes of white perch are smaller than those of 1995 to 2003, adult numbers remain high and these fish should continue to be a major cog in the lake's food web.

Seventy-Pound Sturgeons!

Lake sturgeons' growth rates in Oneida are among the fastest observed for that species. We caught a 72-pound sturgeon in our sampling last year, the largest we have seen. These are slow-maturing fish and natural reproduction in our lake hasn't occurred - yet. We tagged many of them and encourage successful anglers to call us, with location and tag number, at 315-633-9243, after releasing their fish.

**Don't Forget
Annual Meeting
MONDAY - April 27
CNS High School**

More Weeds, Different Fish

As shoreline vegetation spreads in clearer water conditions brought about by zebra mussels, so have our catches of fishes typically associated with shallow, weedy habitats. We see more largemouth bass, pumpkinseed sunfish, longnose gars, and bowfins in our nets, all signs that the nearshore fish community diversified as habitat increased.

Quagga Mussels Multiply

Two features on Oneida Lake and its environs highlighted our 2008 research. First, Oneida Lake's waters in 2008 were the second clearest on record (behind 1995). Also, in a potentially related discovery, we found quagga mussels, close relatives of zebra mussels, in the lake. Quaggas have probably lived in Oneida for at least two years.

Like zebras, quagga mussels got to the Great Lakes in the ballast water of ocean-going vessels. Quaggas filter tiny algae and bacteria from the water and can live on soft lake sediment. In contrast, zebra mussels only attach to hard surfaces like rocks, break walls, and metal. Oneida Lake's quaggas are thriving; these bivalves constitute nearly 30% of the total mussel population. These new mussels may be linked to the lake's increased water clarity.



Public school teachers sort fish from a seine as part of the Cornell's Oneida Lake Education Initiative.

VHS Update

We are pleased to report that all Oneida Lake fish checked during 2008 tested “negative” for VHS. However, VHS continue to be a serious concern in all New York waters and anglers must continue to use certified baitfish and follow DEC regulations to contain its spread.

In Conclusion...

2008 was another good year for Oneida Lake’s users. The lake offers rich, diverse recreational opportunities, making it a vital spoke in our region’s economic wheel.

While we rate the health of the lake as “very good,” major changes continue to occur. The quagga mussel, another invasive species, may exert impacts yet uncharted. Current trends of increasing summer water temperatures, if they continue, could alter the lake’s species composition in dramatic ways.

“Change” has become a constant in the Oneida Lake biological profile, mandating that all who value the lake work together to protect and preserve its invaluable resources.



Walter Otto Schiess, Bill’s father, poses with their day’s haul of bass in the early 1940s. The senior Schiess’ jacket, tie, and hat made up his traditional Oneida Lake attire.

Angling Memories

by Dr. William Schiess

The Oneida Lake Association is proud to count Dr. William “Bill” Schiess, of Cicero, among its members. Bill is a lifelong hunter and angler, and his well-worn sporting passport has stamps from the ends of the earth - literally - marking expeditions to Russia’s trout streams, New Zealand’s lush landscape, and Chesapeake Bay’s duck marshes, among numerous others.

At age 88, Bill still considers Oneida Lake his favorite stomping ground. He’s an avid duck hunter and as skilled as ever with rod and reel. His memories vividly connect us to a vastly different, yet perhaps purer, Oneida Lake angling world.

Oneida Lake Angling in the 1930s and 1940s

My first remembrances of Oneida Lake fishing date to 1930, when my family started renting a cottage on Van Antwerp Drive, about halfway between Borio’s Restaurant and Williams’ Beach.

Summer fishing began every year with pike season’s opening (we always called walleyes “pike”). Our tackle consisted of five-foot Heddon bamboo poles, twenty-pound test line made from braided silk, and Pflueger Supreme reels. We mostly cast lures, usually spinners with a treble hook and feather dressing, with a #5 lead sinker knotted above the lure. Shimmer spoons were productive, too.

My father, my brother Walt, and Floyd Pattens, a neighbor who knew every good spot to fish on the lake’s west end, accompanied me. Among our favorite places were the drop-off in front of our cottage (still a productive spot, especially for summer bass), and the areas between Dunham’s and Frenchman’s Islands and to the south of those islands. There, the bottom was covered with ribbon grass, which made for great bass fishing. Further inshore it was weedier, and populated by grass pickerel and northern pike (or “lake pike,” as we called them).

Three Mile Bay was also productive, especially inside the drop-off in eight to nine feet of water. So was the north side of the islands in about 10 feet. There were no weeds then, just a clean, stone bottom. At times we had great luck there, trolling with stick baits and MirrOlures, and later with Rapalas.

By August, still fishing replaced trolling, and we switched to 8-foot steel rods with simple reels. Two rods were allowed per fisherman, just like today. We baited up with a “crab” (crawfish) and a worm on one line, and a crab and a bassbug (dragonfly nymph) on the other. We occasionally used minnows, mostly shiners that we netted with a small seine.

The drop-off at Three Mile Bay always produced smallmouth bass, rock bass, sunfish and perch, as did the northeast corner of the Eel Island area and the gravel point off Dunham’s.

Smallmouth fishing reigned in autumn. We fished either with minnows or crankbaits (“plugs,” as we called them). My father’s favorite was a red and white River Runt. Muskrat Bay (near what is now Oneida Shores) was our favorite fall fishing hole. We worked ten to twelve feet of water and drifted larger minnows or cast plugs. No weeds bothered us. Humps of materials dredged

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Mills Retires From Field Station

This April witnesses the retirement of Dr. Edward “Ed” Mills, Director of the Cornell Field Station and a biologist whose commitment to Oneida Lake and its people merits the OLA’s thanks and praise.

Hired by Dr. John Forney in 1975, Ed worked closely with his mentor on many, diverse projects. Studies of the lake’s nutrients, plankton, and yellow perch rank among his primary interests. Ed’s thirty-four year tenure at Shackleton Point helped Oneida Lake attract international acclaim for its ecological research program and its world-class fishery.

As a veritable Oneida Lake aficionado, Ed Mills dedicated his life to enhancing the lake and its environs. He is currently an Oneida Lake Association Director, vice-chair of the Oneida Lake and Watershed Advisory Council, chair of the Oneida Lake Watershed Technical Committee, an author of the Oneida Lake Education Initiative, and a leader in the creation of the Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan.

Ed’s contributions to environmentalism in New York are legion and have been recognized by numerous conservation groups. In addition, Ed has been instrumental in focusing attention on the

invasive species problem in New York and the country through his service on the New York State Invasive Species and the National Invasive Species Advisory Councils.

In retirement, Ed plans to remain active with Oneida Lake issues, especially the promoting of education, stewardship, and enjoyment of one of our greatest natural resources.

The OLA salutes and thanks Dr. Edward Mills for his tireless, vital efforts at insuring Oneida Lake’s environmental integrity.

Cormorant Management Summary - A Fruitful 2008

by Martin Lowney, New York State Director - USDA-APHIS - Wildlife Services

Our agency manages Oneida Lake’s cormorants primarily to boost the economic benefits that recreational fishing brings to local communities. Last year, the National Wildlife Research Center finished its economic analysis in the Oneida Lake region. Results showed that increased cormorant numbers can have a severe negative impact on the local economy and that WS management activities provide the ideal antidote to cormorant-engendered economic woes.

In terms of numbers, the economic

analysis showed that cormorants caused losses of up to \$538 million and 12,862 jobs from 1990 to 2005 and that the management program saved \$171 million in revenue and 5,014 jobs from 1998 to 2005. Considering the program’s relatively low cost, that’s one tremendous “bang” for the taxpayer’s “buck.” Observers might easily label our program the “ultimate aquatic economic stimulus package.”

Last year, funding reductions necessitated that staff hours be reduced by about a third on Oneida Lake. Consequently, the average number of cormorants observed on the lake increased to 115 birds in 2008. This is still a mere fraction of the hundreds of birds that ravaged the lake’s fish prior to our program’s inception.

All total, 37,793 cormorants got harassed, some multiple times. We used more than 4,360 rounds of 15mm pyrotechnics. An additional 225 cormorants were killed to reinforce harassment. Some cormorants get used to our techniques quickly and lethal removal becomes the sole way to rid the lake of them.



Wildlife specialists Elizabeth Cranker and Dan Hojnacki place a satellite transmitter on a cormorant.



Wildlife specialist Jeff Suraf harasses cormorants near Wantry Island.

No cormorant nesting was observed on Oneida Lake in 2008. This tremendous news further underscores our program’s effectiveness.

Several research projects continued in 2008. Genetic examinations of cormorants highlight an upcoming publication. These genetic studies support the development of cormorant regional management plans. These strategies should benefit Oneida and other lakes in New York by reducing the number of breeding cormorants in the Eastern United States.

OLA Annual Meeting at Cicero-North Syracuse High School MONDAY, April 27, 2009

by Tony Buffa

On **Monday, April 27**, the OLA and its members will hold their 64th annual meeting at the Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium. Come and join us for an evening of celebration and information regarding Oneida Lake and its immediate surroundings.

Please take special notice that the meeting this year is on a Monday evening, which is a departure from the traditional Wednesday night affair.

Doors open at 6:00 p.m. We encourage early attendance so that you can enjoy our numerous exhibits. We are happy to once again announce that Mickey's Bait and Tackle, Bass Pro Shops, Gander Mountain, and Lowrance Electronics will be on hand to help us with their exhibits and door prizes.

Membership renewals and OLA sign-ups begin at 6:15. Membership is not a requirement to attend, but we invite you to join forces with us to continue our long tradition as the largest and most active lake association in NYS and perhaps in the entire country.

This year's meeting opens promptly at 7:00 p.m. with a short business session.

Our theme is "Your Lake is Changing – Listen to Its Story." Biologists from NYSDEC, researchers from the Shackleton Point Field Station, and technicians from USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services will update the health of our lake, the status of our fishery, the wall-eye spawning statistics from the Constantia hatchery, and efforts regarding cormorant and water chestnut control. Problems regarding invasive species will also be discussed.

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

Come to our meeting! The lake's well-being is constantly being challenged. Only the OLA can effectively meet those demands. Be a part of Oneida Lake's past, present, and future. Mark your calendars "**MONDAY, APRIL 27, 6:00 PM - OLA - CICERO NORTH SYRACUSE HIGH SCHOOL.**"

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.

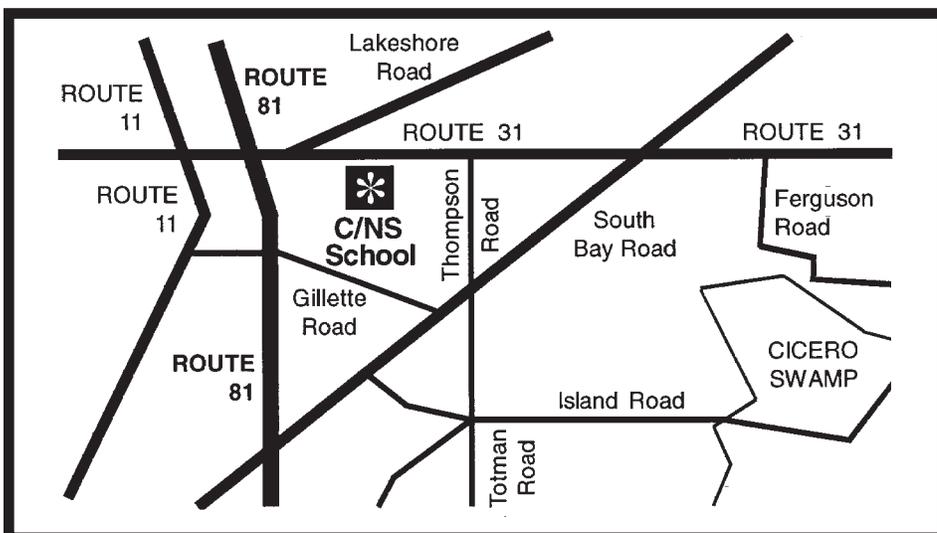
From the West

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 2009 annual meeting, to be held Monday April 27, 2009 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium. Members in good standing who attend the meeting will have the opportunity to vote on the following slate of eight OLA members who are seeking election to three-year terms on the OLA's Board of Directors:

Arnold Armani
Anthony Buffa
Richard Colesante
Robert Cote
Robert Gang III
Bill Girvan
Jack Henke
Jim Novak



Oneida Hatchery Highlights

by Assistant Manager Carl Rathje

The Oneida Fish Cultural Station enjoyed another exciting year. As the ice moved east on April 6, 2008, hatchery crews set twelve trap nets at Scriba Creek's mouth. Nine days of netting yielded over 25,500 adult walleyes, from which we collected nearly 320 million eggs. Our visitors delighted in observing thousands of spawning walleyes in Scriba Creek throughout the entire egg collection process. We captured lots of large walleyes, with a few big females over 10 pounds! Last April's walleye performance inspired many people to exclaim, "Wow!"

Our walleye fry stocking proved very successful as 210 million fry were placed in New York waters during late April. Oneida Lake received 174 million and eleven other state waters took over thirty-five million. The hatchery transferred 635,000 fry to our South Otselic and Chautauqua counterparts to raise in outdoor ponds. State cooperators received 361,000 for later stocking.

During the remainder of the summer, our staff kept busy feeding fingerling walleyes and paddlefish. Later, our fish technicians completed the fall stocking of 35,000 five-inch advanced walleye fingerlings and fifty tagged paddlefish that had grown to fifteen inches. Oneida Lake received none of these fish.

A fascinating story surrounds paddlefish. They were native only to the Allegheny River region of the state. For the past few years, NYS Fisheries Management has tried to reestablish this population, using the Oneida Hatchery's expertise. Paddlefish eggs and fry from Kentucky have been transferred to our facility and nurtured until ready for stocking.

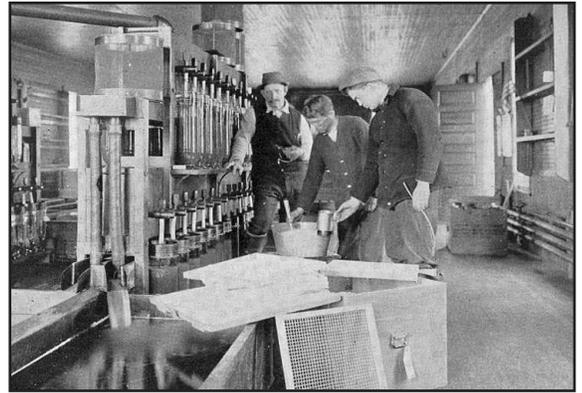
Another endangered species that we raise are lake sturgeons. Our hatchery's staff assists the state's lake sturgeon restoration program by raising thousands of fingerlings. Concerns related to

spreading VHS from Lake Ontario to Oneida Lake placed this stocking program on hold in 2006. Ongoing discussions regarding advanced testing, which would prevent any threat of contamination, may help restore the program.

Past stockings were a huge success. Reports of Oneida Lake sturgeons over 50 pounds are common and Cornell research crews netted 72.5 pounder last summer!

Oneida Lake's annual walleye "run" rapidly approaches! Workers are mending nets and preparing gear for the spring migration. Our hatchery is "down" one staff member because fish culturist Mike Dixon, who worked for the DEC for over thirty years, retired in September 2008. Mike made great contributions to the hatchery's success. The state budget's hiring freeze left his position vacant.

Spring is the best time to visit the hatchery. Guests can get close to the fish, observe daily operations, view educational videos and displays of



Hatchery workers mix walleye eggs and milt.
Photo credit: University of Washington

mounted fish, and even get a guided tour from a volunteer Oneida Lake Association tour guide. We are open from 8:00am to 3:30 pm daily. Come and take a fascinating voyage into Oneida Lake ecology!

In this recession, a solid public backing becomes increasingly important. The Oneida Lake Association has been a catalyst of support for Oneida Lake and the hatchery for years. By joining the OLA, you make an important contribution to protecting Oneida Lake and its fishery.

Oneida Lake Photo History Quiz



Q. The bridge on the right of this photo dates to the 1870s. Where was it?

Answers on page 9

Q. This home and its adjoining cabins overlooked an Oneida Lake bay. Which one?



Oneida Lake: The Heat is On

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and their disappearance is consistent with fish changes caused by continued warming.

The greenhouse effect not only reduces populations of species intolerant of high water temperatures, it also allows the spread of other organisms that are better adapted to warmer waters. Along with the clearing of the lake due to zebra and quagga mussels, and the associated increase in nearshore vegetation, warmer temperatures have likely contributed to increases in Oneida Lake's

bass population. Smallmouth bass may be three times more abundant than they were in the early 1980s. Largemouths have also thrived.

Global warming may affect the lake area's economy. Warmer summers and falls can increase the length of the open water seasons, providing added revenues from the lake's fisheries. Severe storms, however, may increase during periods of warmer temperatures, leading to flooding and erosion of shorelines. Warming can nurture aquatic plant growth,

leading to summer plant infestations that clog shallow bays and marinas. Upper South Bay on the lake's east end has experienced this phenomenon in recent years.

In sum, our data match reports of worldwide temperature trends. As warming changes the lake, monitoring programs must stay in place so that we can use the long-term data to better understand the "whys" that cause these transformations.

Angling Memories

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from the lake's navigation channel were deposited here. Whenever we drifted over a hump, we expected a bass hit. My father often had his best luck trolling a River Runt. One of his enviable catches included five smallmouths over 18" long!

As good as the bass fishing was in fall, we had other outdoor sports on our minds. In October and November we split time between hunting ducks and catching bass.

Bobby Hughes, one of my close boyhood friends, was my age and lived nearby. In addition to cutting lawns and doing yard work, we fished for pike and sold crabs for bait. We caught walleyes in the morning and sold them to Walt Taylor's Tavern, long since demolished. I believe we got a quarter per pound of live weight. Marketing Oneida Lake pike was legal then. We seined crabs in several farm ponds and used a small net to capture our quarry, which we sold to bait shops on Hiawatha Boulevard, near the present-day location of the ballpark. This was an ideal location for a bait shop because it bordered the road to Oneida Lake and Lake Ontario. The proprietors made a healthy profit from our crabs, buying them for twenty-five cents per dozen and selling them for fifty.

By Bill Schiess's account, long before fishermen and marketers dreamed of metal-flake-painted boats, electronic fishfinders, and televised tournaments, Oneida Lake was a place where a boy and his family could enjoy the lake's riches and even make a buck or two. Thanks to the efforts of all who've supported the Oneida Lake Association through the years, young people can still fill a stringer with fat fish and the lake's recreational opportunities support thousands of jobs in Central New York.

History Quiz Answers

A. The bridge spanned Chittenango Creek in Bridgeport.

A. Messenger's Bay. However - we haven't been able to identify the exact location.

Please contact the OLA at info@oneidalakeassociation.org if you can help us.



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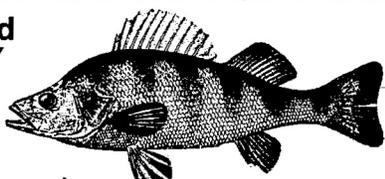
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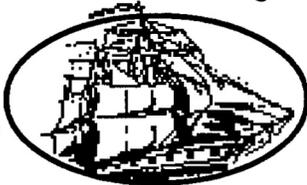
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