



**Oneida Lake Association**  
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Greetings!

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## WHAT'S UP?

### GOT GEESE?

On Saturday **March 25**, 2017 your Oneida Lake Association is facilitating a discussion of lake-centric nuisance Canada goose populations. This free session takes place from **9 AM – 1 PM** at **Paul V. Moore High School in Central Square**. Come listen to expert representatives from state and federal agencies. Meet your neighbors and Town officials and share concerns for resident populations.

Meanwhile, for much of December and January members noted groups of swans at various open areas of the lake. (Yes, mid-lake is still open water on February 20!!!)

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## White Birds

To the left is a **mute swan**. This is NOT a native bird in the America's. This European invader has an S-shaped neck when swimming, and its wings are not neatly resting on its back. The beak is yellow-orange, with a bulb.

Below are **native tundra**



(whistling) swans. They hold their black bill level when swimming (birds on left and center) and their wings are smooth against the back.

*(Photos by Scott Shupe)*



Facebook has postings of swans from Lewis Point to Brewerton. The birds are a mixture of native whistling (tundra) swans and non-native mute swans. All are protected birds. Considerable NYC lobbying of Albany legislative leadership has precluded NYSDEC from implementing a comprehensive mute swan management program. Science is trumped by politics, and the invasive mute swan numbers continue to grow. Mute swans are a concern to many wildlife managers because they are aggressive during nesting season, driving native waterfowl away from wetland nesting sites.

In the last 40 years the estimated eastern tundra swan population January index has increased about 30% to 113,600 birds. Trumpeter swans are a western bird, not frequenting our area at any life stage. Vegetarian trumpeters are the world's largest waterfowl species weighing in at more than 20 pounds-- twice that of a Canada goose. Distinguishing trumpeter swans from smaller tundra swans can be challenging. Trumpeters have longer, straighter bills than tundra swans, and they employ a deep brassy call. The tundra swan's call is somewhat like a muted Canada goose. Mutes -- hence the name -- rarely make a low grunt. Distinguishing tundra swans from mute swans is easier. Like geese and dabbling ducks, swans feed by tipping up and grazing on rooted vegetation. Obviously short-necked ducks tend to feed closer to shore than do white birds with longer necks. It is the neck shape that differentiates identification of tundra and mute swans.

Mute swans swim with necks in a graceful S-curve, bills angled down. Tundra swans have a straight neck and level bill. The adult mute has an orange bill with a large black knob between its eyes. Adult tundra swans often have a yellow spot on the lore (the areas between the back of the bill and eyes). Immature dark birds of both species lack some of these distinguishing features. Only the tip of the immature tundra swan bill is dusky pink, while the entire bill of the juvenile mute is a rose color up to its black base.

On the morning of February 7 a small flock of snow geese traversed the lake, heading toward the turf farm located south of Lakeport. The day before 200+ Canada geese landed in Lyon's cornfield west of Bridgeport. Spring is coming! While the latter could very well be part of our resident population, the snows are most likely the first of the migrants pushing north. Lake residents will see these white (with black wing tips) geese in seemingly awkward flight barely a wingbeat high over the ice. Flocks may be interspersed with a blue phase, and occasionally a stray Canada. Some measure of energy conservation is in play as the migrating birds move from overnight resting

places on the mid-lake ice to feeding fields. Air beneath their wings provides some reinforced lift, reducing the effort of local flight. Later in the afternoon and evening aggregated flocks climb to higher elevations to catch the winds aloft that favor northern migration. If at night you hear a high flock that sounds like a gagged Canada goose, you are hearing snows

In March 15, 2000, I pulled over near State Bridge on Rt 31 to watch about 6,000 snows resting in a cut corn field (that field is now abandoned Oneida Nationland, reverted to a young ash and maple forest feeding beavers). I recorded numbers of several birds sporting yellow neck bands. Contacting the late Wes Stiles at Cortland DEC, I learned through his Canadian counterpart that the birds were banded on a small island at about 85 degrees latitude; we are 43 degrees; 2900 miles away. These birds probably spend the winter in rice fields at latitudes near 32 degrees, another 800 miles south.

The snow goose population has grown exponentially for about 30 years. Waterfowlers on Cayuga Lake in January commonly see virtual clouds over the lake shortly after sunrise. The clouds are flocks of upwards of 10,000 snows moving off the lake to graze inter-lake agricultural fields. With available food to glean from farms from Texas to CNY, the mid-west snow geese leave each spring well fed. Generally unstressed, except for some diseases associated with overcrowding, the snow goose flocks are fit for flights to breeding grounds 3,500 miles to the north. There the flocks are concentrated in a fragile local ecosystem. Geese do not nibble. They pull up vegetation by the roots. This denies other birds from vegetation feeding. Canada Geese nip off the tops of plants while the "light geese" feed by a method called grubbing which is pulling the whole plant out of the ground roots and all. Arctic soils experiencing repeated perturbation by huge populations of snow geese are turning salty, further curtailing regeneration of stabilizing grasses to the disadvantage of a host of arctic native wildlife.

The rate of light (snow and Ross) goose population increase has slowed slightly. American efforts to manage light goose populations for two decades have been inconsequential. While there is a spring hunting season, harvest numbers are diminutive. Only an average of about 8,000 snows are taken in NY. The Eastern population is on the order of 13 Million.

<https://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/pdf/surveys-and-data/Population-status/Waterfowl/WaterfowlPopulationStatusReport16.pdf>

In today's climate we can expect to see more white birds on Oneida Lake in the future whether they are passing snows and tundra swans or mute swans that decide to take up residence. Resident populations are very close at Fair Haven, Sodus Bay, and Watertown area marshes.

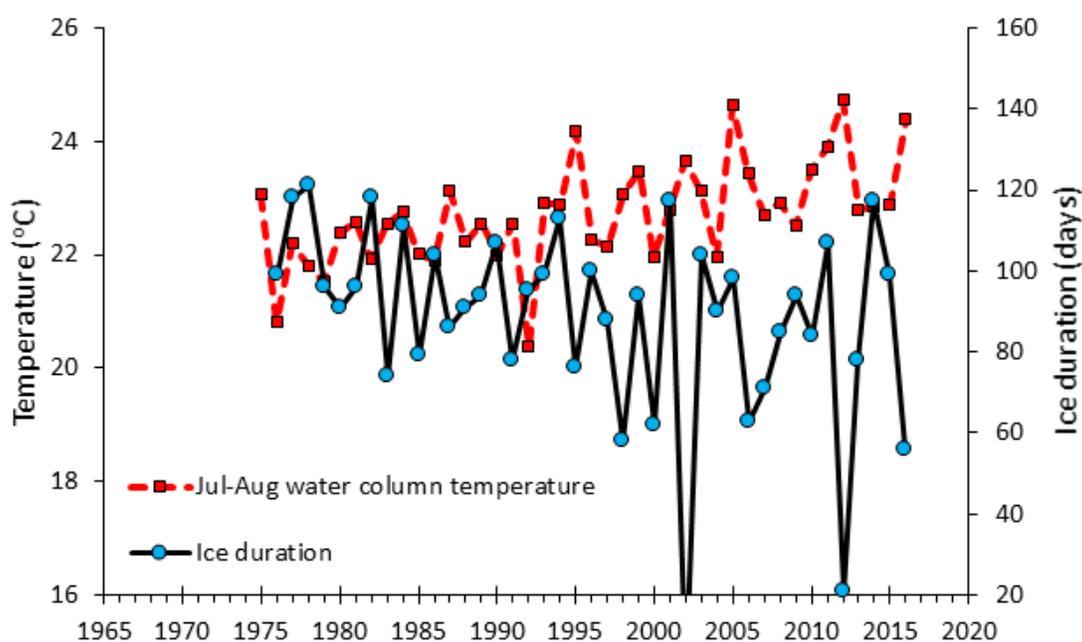
## ICE CONDITIONS

Lars Rudstam provided the following graph of water column temperature and ice cover to supplement the older, long term graph that was in the last OLA *ENews*. The Cornell records were part of an analysis of changes in surface temperatures across the globe\*, including Oneida Lake.

\* Sharma, S. et al. 2015. Long Term Ecological Research Network.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.6073/pasta/379a6cebee50119df2575c469aba19c5>

As noted above, there is a mile-long lead of open water mid-lake. A few ice anglers were seen off Chapman Park and in South Bay over President's weekend. Snowmobilers were racing in slush. White ice thicknesses may be only 2-4 inches, and it is not good ice. Warm weather is now making any venture onto the lake perilous.

We value our Members and friends. Stay alive to join us at the **Annual Meeting, May 3** to be held in the **Gillette Road Middle School** at 7 PM.



## ASH TREES

The American ash trees (*Fraxinus spp.*) are under attack by the noxious alien invasive species (NAIS) called the emerald ash borer. Ash trees are one of CNY's most common species; you likely have them in your yard or neighborhood. But did you know that they now constitute a danger to you?

The larvae of the bark-boring insect girdle the tree by tunneling around the living tissue beneath the bark. Their tunnels block the flow of sap and water within the tree, causing it to die. Ash is a great hardwood, but in death it becomes brittle. Standing trees have a tendency to unexpectedly snap above the ground line. So they are a hazard if in your yard (where they could fall on your boat or garage), or in a public place like the South Shore Boat Launch, or along powerlines.

To prevent outages National Grid has been removing ash from roadside electric distribution lines. The Town of Sullivan removed many ash trees from Chapman Park last summer. Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District Director Mark Burger (and OLA member) reports that about 18,364 board feet of ash trees (140 trees with an average diameter at breast height (dbh) of 17") were identified with "electric blue" flagging for a small timber sale along the ring road of Oneida Shores County Park behind Arrowhead Lodge. Additionally, 72 full cords of firewood/pulp were marked (avg. dbh 9") and 228 stems of "overburden" were identified (less than 6" dbh). The District will be meeting with Parks officials soon to discuss the logistics of this opportunity to recycle trees.

Ash lumber is holding steady at \$450 per thousand board feet. For cut #009 in Oneida Shores Park, that is going on right now, the District urged the bidders to tie in with CNY sawmills. The District notified local saw mills with the contact info for the company (TTS Tree Service) that won the bid. Salvage presents an opportunity to work together to turn ash sawn logs into lumber. Johnson Brothers Sawmill in Cazenovia has had monthly conversations with the District on this opportunity. As more ash is cut, schools, BOCES, and innovative commerce could turn more diseased trees into teaching tools to learn the forestry and related trades to create new jobs. For instance, Cosmo Fanizzi creates incredible pieces of furniture from "urban wood" (1153 W. Fayette Street, Syracuse). In 2015 the District worked with Cosmo to get a NYS Dept. of Agriculture and Markets compliance agreement to accept ash trees, and to connect him to the tree companies doing the take downs.

Remember that it is illegal to transport untreated ash firewood more than 50 miles from where it was cut (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html>). NYSDEC issued a regulation years ago to prevent the spread of the invasive EAB. While this precaution failed, you should not fail to protect your personal property that may be

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## ETHANOL GAS

Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) is asking its more than half-million members – and any recreational boat owner concerned with having a safe fuel supply – to petition the Trump administration and Congress to reform the ethanol mandate, also known as the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). In a communication to members, BoatUS urged boaters to go to [Fix the Ethanol Mandate](#) to easily send a communication to their legislator in Congress and President Trump.

"Boaters must act now to get a fix to ethanol policy rolling in the new year," said Government Affairs Manager David Kennedy. "Our members have an important role in this process and we're counting on them to make their voices heard." **Gasoline with more than 10 percent ethanol has been shown to damage boat engines. Be careful in selecting your fuel for small engines like lawn mowers and older outboards**

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Help OLA function. Memorials and contributions to our program are most welcome. OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving protection of the Oneida Lake environment.

Donate

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## LAKE ONTARIO FISHERIES MEETING

**Monday, March 13:** 6:30 - 9p.m. at the Pulaski High School auditorium, 4624 Salina St., Pulaski, Oswego County. The meeting is co-hosted by the Eastern Lake Ontario Salmon and Trout Association. In the event of heavy lake-effect snow, the meeting will be held at the same time and location on March 14.

Staff from DEC, the United States Geological Survey, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will share presentations, including updates on the status of trout and salmon fisheries in the lake and its tributaries, forage fish, and stocking programs. The meetings will provide ample time at the end of the scheduled program for the audience to interact with the presenters.

## FISHCREEK DRAINAGE PLAN COMMENTS

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is beginning the process of developing the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for 3,464 acres of State Forest land in the Kasoag, Klondike, Orton Hollow, and Stone Hill State Forests. The lands are located in the Oswego County towns of Amboy and Williamstown. UMPs assess the natural, physical, social, and recreational resources of the landscape and provide a solid foundation for the development of long-term land management goals, objectives, and actions.

The public is invited to share ideas about plan development during the scoping period, which runs from **February 15 - March 15, 2017**. Two public input sessions at Williamstown Community Center located at 2910 County Route 17, Williamstown, NY 13493, are scheduled for: **Tuesday, February 28** (snow date Tuesday, March 7) from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., or **Thursday, March 2** (snow date Tuesday, March 7) from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Or send email comments to [R7.UMP@dec.ny.gov](mailto:R7.UMP@dec.ny.gov) by March 15.



[Website](#)   [Who We Are](#)   [What We Do](#)   [How to Help](#)

The Oneida Lake Association is a member of the New York State Conservation Council <http://www.nyscc.com/> and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations <http://www.nysfola.org/>.

**Report environmental violations.** Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and management of Oneida Lake and its drainage basin. Be civil.

***1-844-DEC-ECOS(1-844-332-3267)***

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